

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



EXODUS

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

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Exodus

1. Mothers of Faith | *Exodus 1:22–2:10*
2. Faith for the Family | *Exodus 2:1*
3. The Rod of God | *Exodus 2:11–12*
4. All the Way out of Egypt | *Exodus 8:1*
5. Genuine Confession | *Exodus 9:27*
6. Families Under the Blood | *Exodus 12*
7. Knowing God Intimately | *Exodus 12–15*
8. Don't Pass Over the Passover | *Exodus 12:1–4*
9. The Lamb of Promise | *Exodus 12:1–6,11*
10. Going Deeper | *Exodus 12:1–14*
11. The Kidnapper | *Exodus 12:1–14*
12. The Passover | *Exodus 12:8*
13. Detours, Dead Ends and Dry Holes | *Exodus 13:17–22*
14. Turning Bitterness into Blessing | *Exodus 15:22*
15. Our Daily Bread | *Exodus 16:4*
16. How to Feed on Daily Bread | *Exodus 16:15–16*
17. Four Principles of Victory | *Exodus 17:8–11*
18. Going on to Victory | *Exodus 17:8–16*
19. Victory over the Flesh | *Exodus 17:8–16*
20. God's Remedy for Worn-Out Preachers | *Exodus 18:13–26*
21. The First Commandment | *Exodus 20*
22. The Second Commandment | *Exodus 20*

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

23. **The Third Commandment** | *Exodus 20*
24. **The Fourth Commandment** | *Exodus 20*
25. **The Fifth Commandment (Part 1)** | *Exodus 20*
26. **The Fifth Commandment (Part 2)** | *Exodus 20*
27. **The Sixth Commandment** | *Exodus 20*
28. **The Seventh Commandment** | *Exodus 20*
29. **The Eighth Commandment** | *Exodus 20*
30. **The Ninth Commandment** | *Exodus 20*
31. **The Tenth Commandment** | *Exodus 20*
32. **The Way to Worship** | *Exodus 20:1–6*
33. **Learning Family Worship** | *Exodus 20:4*
34. **Learning Family Worship** | *Exodus 20:4*
35. **Graven Images** | *Exodus 20:4–6*
36. **Name Above All Names** | *Exodus 20:7*
37. **Thou Shalt Not Cuss** | *Exodus 20:7*
38. **How to Make the Rest Day the Best Day** | *Exodus 20:8–12*
39. **Darwin, Dinosaurs and Devilish Deception Part 1** | *Exodus 20:11*
40. **Darwin, Dinosaurs and Devilish Deception Part 2** | *Exodus 20:11*
41. **Has Nuclear Family Bombed** | *Exodus 20:12*
42. **Honor Thy Father and Mother** | *Exodus 20:12*
43. **Honoring Father and Mother** | *Exodus 20:12*
44. **Honoring Father and Mother** | *Exodus 20:12*
45. **How to Be the Child of a Happy Mother** | *Exodus 20:12*
46. **How to Be the Child of a Happy Mother** | *Exodus 20:12*
47. **How to Be the Mother of a Happy Child** | *Exodus 20:12*
48. **Families That Choose Life** | *Exodus 20:13*
49. **The Key to Magnificent Marriage** | *Exodus 20:14*
50. **Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery** | *Exodus 20:14*
51. **Integrity: Don't Leave Home Without It** | *Exodus 20:15*
52. **Truth or Consequences** | *Exodus 20:16*

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

53. **The Secret of Satisfaction** | *Exodus 20:17*
54. **The Secret of Satisfaction** | *Exodus 20:17*
55. **The Holies of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant** | *Exodus 25*
56. **Study of the Tabernacle #1** | *Exodus 25*
57. **Study of the Tabernacle #2** | *Exodus 25*
58. **Study of the Tabernacle #3** | *Exodus 25*
59. **Study of the Tabernacle #4** | *Exodus 25*
60. **Study of the Tabernacle #5** | *Exodus 25*
61. **Study of the Tabernacle #6** | *Exodus 25*
62. **Study of the Tabernacle #7** | *Exodus 25*
63. **Study of the Tabernacle #8** | *Exodus 25*
64. **Study of the Tabernacle #9** | *Exodus 25*
65. **Study of the Tabernacle #10** | *Exodus 25*
66. **Camping with God: The Tabernacle** | *Exodus 25:1–9*
67. **Feed the Flame** | *Exodus 25:21, 29*
68. **The Table of the Tabernacle** | *Exodus 25:23–30*
69. **Overlook of the Tabernacle** | *Exodus 25:23–30*
70. **The Well-Dressed Baptist Priest** | *Exodus 28:31*
71. **The Laver of the Tabernacle** | *Exodus 30*
72. **Christ Our Supplication** | *Exodus 30:1–5*
73. **Developing People** | *Exodus Exodus 31:1–11*
74. **God Has a Purpose for Your Life** | *Exodus 31:1–11*
75. **The Strange Case of the Golden Calf** | *Exodus 32:1–6*
76. **Practicing His Presence** | *Exodus 32:30–33:3*
77. **How to Enjoy the Presence of God** | *Exodus 33:1–3*
78. **What to Do When God Seems Far Away** | *Exodus 33:1–3*
79. **How to Practice the Presence of God** | *Exodus 33:1–4*
80. **Knowing the Ways of God** | *Exodus 2–14*
81. **Knowing God Intimately** | *Exodus 33:11–16*
82. **Knowing the Ways of God** | *Exodus 33:12–14*

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

- 83. **Knowing God Intimately** | *Exodus 33:13–14*
- 84. **How to Practice the Presence of God** | *Exodus 33:14*
- 85. **Hearing God** | *Exodus 34:1–2*
- 86. **The Life That Glows** | *Exodus 34:29–35*
- 87. **Hearts and Hands for the Harvest** | *Exodus 35:4–29*

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

Mothers of Faith

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 1:22–2:10

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Root of Faith
 - II. The Requirement of Faith
 - A. Start Early
 - B. Build Values
 1. A Code to Live By
 2. A Creed to Believe In
 3. A Cause to Serve
 - C. Show Love
 - D. Use Discipline
 - E. Set an Example
 - F. Pray for Them
 - III. The Rest of Faith
 - IV. The Reward of Faith
- Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and open, if you will, first of all, to the Old Testament—Exodus chapter 1 and verse 22. We have two texts this morning: one in the Old Testament and one in the New. Exodus chapter 1, verse 22, and then we'll read right on through into the second chapter. All right, do you have it? *“And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive. And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags”—that is, “in the bulrushes”—“by the river’s brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river’s side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews’ children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh’s daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women,*

that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Now, ladies, God is saying the same thing to you: "Take this child, raise it for me; and I'll pay you well"—the wages of a godly mother. *"And the women took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water"* (Exodus 1:22–2:10).

Now that's the exciting Old Testament story. Let's learn the New Testament commentary. Would you turn, please, to the Book of Hebrews. Hebrews chapter 11 is God's hall of fame. We have a baseball hall of fame, a football hall of fame, but here the heroes of the faith are listed. This is God's hall of fame. And it may interest you to know that the mother of Moses is listed in God's hall of fame. But her claim to fame was not that she was the mother of Moses; her claim to fame was her faith. I want you to see this, because I'm speaking on "Mothers of Faith." And I believe if there's any one ingredient that is missing today in modern childrearing, it is faith. Many times we teach them right. Many times they have the proper sanitation, the proper nutrition, the proper this and that; but even in our Christian homes it's the element of faith that is so often missed.

And so notice, if you will, please, in Hebrews chapter 11, verse 23. Notice God's commentary on this Old Testament story that happened thousands of years prior. The Bible says, *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible"* (Hebrews 11:23–27)—and so forth. What a wonderful story here about the mother of faith!

Let me say something to all of us here this morning. You cannot possibly have a successful home, you cannot possibly raise those children for God, unless you are willing to practice Bible faith. Now there are four things about that faith that I want you to see in the New Testament passage that we're looking at—Hebrews 11, starting in verse 23. First of all, I want you to see the root of faith. I want you to see the soil and the substance out of which faith grows. Secondly, I want you to see the requirement of faith. I want you to see what faith demands of us. Thirdly, I want you to see the rest of faith. I want you to see the peace that Jesus Christ can give you in this matter of childrearing.

And, last of all, I want you to see the reward of faith. I want you to see how God undertakes mightily to help those who are willing to trust Him in this matter of raising children in this day and in this age.

I. The Root of Faith

Now, first of all, I want you to notice the root of faith. For the Bible says that Jochebed—and that was Moses' mother's name: Jochebed—the Bible says by faith she hid Moses. Now, where did she get this faith? I think we see a clue right there in verse 23, for verse 23 tells us that she saw that he was a proper child. Now, what does that mean: a proper child? That he used good manners? Or, that they had to prop him up? What does it mean when it says that he was a proper child? It actually means that he was a fitting child, that he was a suitable child. Fitting for what? Suitable for what? There's little doubt in my mind but that Jochebed and Amram knew the promises of God that God had given many years ago in Genesis 15, where God spoke to Abram, who later became Abraham, and said, "Abram, I'm going to make of you a great nation. They're going to be held captives in the land of Egypt." But God said, "I'm going to deliver them. Abraham, I'm going to bring them out, and I'm going to deliver them."

They knew this, and things were getting dark in the land of Egypt for the people of Israel. They knew that they needed to be delivered. And they knew that God had promised to deliver them. They knew that God was going to send a deliverer. Now, can you understand what it means when they saw he was a proper child? They said, "If ever there was a time, this is the time. If there was ever a need, this is the need. We're going to give our son to God to be the deliverer." I believe that's what it means—I really do. They saw that he was a fitting child, a proper child. Well, how did they know that God even intended to bring them out of the land of Egypt and into the land of promise? They knew the Bible.

Friends, listen. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). I don't know how much faith you have, but I'll tell you this, sweet friend. It is in direct proportion to your knowledge and love of the Word of God. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." And we need to saturate our souls and saturate our homes with the Bible, the Word of God. So many homes are being disintegrated today, because they have *true love*; they have television; they have *Playboy*; they have everything but the Word of God. Oh, we give deference to it. We get a big Bible, a big family Bible, and store everything from a squirrel's tail to a recipe for elderberry wine in it. But we don't read it.

I heard of a preacher one time who came into a home, and the mother tried to impress the preacher, and so she said to the little boy, "Go get the old book that mother loves so well." He came back with the Sears catalog. We have these things there in our

homes, but there's enough dust on the average Bible to write "damnation" with your fingertips.

*These hath God married, and no man shall part:
Dust on the Bible, and drought in the heart.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

You're not going to have faith; you're not going to have knowledge; you're not going to know the will of God, the way of God, the plan of God, the power of God, until you get into the Word of God. Faith cometh by hearing; hearing by the Word of God.

The Word of God ought to have a proper place in our homes. It ought to be taught in our homes; it ought to be loved in our homes; it ought to be revered in our homes—if you're going to be parents of faith. How much of the Bible do you know, love, revere, teach in your home? What place does God's Word have in your home? I challenge you to go home and say that the Bible will have a new and a fresh place in your home, if you want your home to be a home of faith. The root of faith is the Word of God.

II. The Requirement of Faith

Secondly, the requirement of faith—because faith requires something of us. Notice again, in verse 23, the Bible says, "*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents*" (Hebrews 11:23). Now, notice, it was by faith that Moses was hid. They hid little Moses by faith. Now you would think that faith would say they wouldn't hide him. You would say, "Well, we're not going to hide him; we're just going to trust God. Now we're not going to go sneaking around about this thing. God is greater than Pharaoh, so why hide? Let's just be bold about the thing. Let's just be smart about the thing." But the Bible doesn't say that. The Bible says by faith they hid little Moses. You see, the requirement of faith is to do the work of God. The root of faith is the Word of God; the requirement of faith is the work of God, to do something.

You see, we have three things that are very similar but, oh, so different. There is faith, and then there is fatalism, and then there is fanaticism—and some people don't know the difference between faith and fatalism and fanaticism. Now by faith they did something. They did something reasonable; they did something logical; they did something as best they could do. They did all they could do, but they did it by faith. It was a faith that works. For the Bible tells us plainly, in James the second chapter, that faith without works is dead, just as dead as it can be (James 2:17, 26). Real faith is belief with legs on it. They did something about it.

But suppose there had been some people. Suppose they'd been—this is what I call fatalism; they call it faith—they say, "Oh, well, whatever will be will be. And if God wants to deliver Moses, God can deliver little Moses." You know, they just believe. They call that predestination: like the old woman who fell down the cellar stairs, got up and

brushed herself off, and said, “I’m glad that’s over with.” I mean, she just felt like it had to happen, you know. Personally, I don’t buy that philosophy. I believe that they could have said, “Well, if God wants to deliver Moses, He can; we’re just trusting the Lord. We’ll just leave him right out there in the broad open daylight.” He would have died, because that kind of faith is not faith at all. It is presumption. And God cannot bless it. The faith that God blesses is the faith that works. And faith without works is dead.

Now, let me tell you, there’s the other side: not fatalism, but fanaticism. There are other parents who are just the opposite. They would have put Moses in the river, but without a boat. They would have said, “What a great God we serve! There he goes!” and he would have drowned. They are people like this. They are sick, and the doctor says, “Take the medicine.” They say, “Now, Lord, the doctor says take the medicine, but watch how much faith I have: I’m not even going to take it.” And they die. Sure, you see, dear friend, God doesn’t teach us to do that. “Oh,” you say, “but doesn’t God heal?” With all of my heart I believe that God heals, and I believe that God can heal with medicine or without medicine. But I believe it is sheer presumption to ask God to do for us something that we’re not even willing to help be done ourselves.

For example, the Bible says we’re to pray for our daily bread. Sure we are: “*Give us this day our daily bread*” (Matthew 6:11). But do you want me to tell you the other side of the coin? “If a man won’t work, don’t let him eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). I wish some people in Washington would read it. “If a man won’t work, don’t let him eat.” Now you can say, “Well, I’ll just trust God for my daily bread,” and starve to death. And the fault will not be God’s. It will be yours. That is not faith. That is fanaticism.

Now, let me tell you, in between fatalism and fanaticism is Bible faith. And we need that more in this day and in this age than ever before. It is belief in God, it is trust in God, it is looking to God; but it is doing all that we humanly know to do to take care of our children. By faith Moses was hid. By faith he was hid. They didn’t just sit around. They did everything humanly possible that they knew to do. And after they did everything humanly possible they knew to do, and after they had prayed, and after they had done it by faith, then they committed it to God; and God gave them peace in their heart. Now that makes sense to me.

I want to list six things that I think you ought to be doing by faith if you’re going to raise your children right. I gave these to our kindergarten graduation the other night. If you’re here, I hope you will not mind me repeating.

A. Start Early

But number one: Start early enough with your children. Jochebed started when Moses was a little baby. Character is set extremely early. And you’d better start early enough. You know, the Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 19, “*Chasten thy son while there*

is hope” (Proverbs 19:18). You know, so often parents wait until they get a great big teenage rebellious thug, and they say, “Now, what shall we do?” Friend, you’re waiting a little late.

One pastor had a daughter; he hadn’t chastened her. She was a great big thing: she ate everything in sight; she weighed 300 pounds. Sixteen years old, she would spit in his face, just a regular hellion. Finally, he came in for advice, came in for counseling. You know what his counselor said? Well, you ought to pray and do the best you can; but I believe you waited sixteen years and 300 pounds too late.

I mean, the Bible says, “Chasten thy son while there’s hope.” The Bible says, “Train up a child in the way that he shall go; and when he’s old, he’ll not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). That doesn’t mean he’ll come back to it. That means he won’t get away from it. He’ll not depart from it when he’s old. But we need to begin early.

Let me give you some captions of recent magazine articles. Listen: “The First Five Years Shape All of Life.” “Behavior Is Set by Five.” “Train Citizens in the Cradle.” “Don’t Wait for the School Bell.” “Age Five Is Old Physiologically.” “Combat Crime in Infancy.” Now, let me give you one from the Bible—2 Timothy 3, verse 15: *“From a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation”* (2 Timothy 3:15). That’s God’s plan: to take these children when they’re little, as they’re children, and rear them up.

B. Build Values

I say, number one: Start early. Number two: Build some values into your children—some values. Every child needs three things. Number one: He needs a code to live by. Number two: He needs a creed to believe in. Number three: He needs a cause to serve.

1. A Code to Live By

He needs a code to live by. He needs somebody to say this is right, and this is wrong; for the Bible says so, and God says so. They are awash like a ship without a mast and without a rudder and without a compass on a sea of immorality; and there’s nobody to say, “This is right, and this is wrong.” We need to say, “This is what God says.” They need a code to live by.

2. A Creed to Believe In

The second thing they need is a creed to believe in. Not Far Eastern mysticism, not modernism; but they need God’s Word. They need to believe the Bible as the Word of God. They need to believe Christ as the Son of God. They need to believe there is a heaven, there is a hell, there is a way of salvation, that God is real; not some sentimental mush.

3. A Cause to Serve

The third thing they need is a cause to serve. Pity the child who’s raised in a home

with materialistic parents whose motto is “Get all you can, and can all you get.” God help the parents who exist to draw their breath, and draw their salary, and get through and try to serve themselves, and to give themselves pleasure without having a cause that is greater than this life! But if you give teenagers a code to believe in, a creed to believe in, and a cause to serve, I believe God will help you to raise healthy and happy and holy kids.

C. Show Love

Now, look. Start early enough. Build values. Thirdly, show love. Mister, the finest thing that you can do for your teenage son is to love his mother overtly; show affection. Show love to him. Spell that love *t-i-m-e*. It’s possible to be in the presence of our children without spending time with our children.

D. Use Discipline

Now the next thing I would say is, use discipline. Now, kids, I know you won’t like me for this, but the Bible says, in Proverbs 13, verse 24, “*He that spareth his rod hateth his son*” (Proverbs 13:24). You say, “Oh, I just love little Throckmorton so much I can’t spank him.” Friend, you’d better raise him by spank and not by Spock. I’m going to tell you, God knows more about it than he does. There’s so much in the Bible that speaks of this. Now I don’t have time to read the scriptures. Look them up—Proverbs 23:13–14; Proverbs 29:15; Proverbs 13:24.

One man said, “Oh well, you know, I’m having trouble with my teenage son.” He spoke to Dr. John Rice, and Dr. John Rice said, “Well, the Bible says, ‘Train up a child in the way that he’ll go, and he’ll not depart from it.’” This man said, “Well, I trained mine up in the way that he should go, but he departed.” Dr. Rice said, “Well, since he made God a liar, I decided I’d investigate the thing a little more.” And he asked him among other things, “Have you ever whipped this child?” “Oh, no,” he said, “I could never whip him. He’s nervous.” Dr. Rice said, “Yes,” he said, “and when I was a child, I was nervous too. But my father cured that. He got more nervous than I did.”

E. Set an Example

Oh, friend, listen. Use discipline. And then, set an example. That’s the next thing. If you want him to give up pot, you give up your liquor, your beer, your booze. That makes sense, doesn’t it? Of course it does! Now they’re talking about *youth dope* and *adult dope*. They say the *youth dope* is marijuana; the *adult dope* is beer, wine, cocktails. What difference does it make? Frankly, it’s hard for me to tell a lot of difference. Set an example. They don’t need buddies. They have them. They don’t need advice. They’ll hear most of that. And they don’t need even leaders. They’ll develop their own. But what they desperately need is an example.

F. Pray for Them

And then, I would say, pray for them. Pray fervently. Pray for them. But listen. What I'm trying to say is this: that the requirement of faith is to do the work of God. It was by faith that Moses was hid. They didn't just say, "Well now, we're just going to trust our children to God." They did something about it. And may God help you to leave this Mother's Day service this morning with a holy resolve that you are going to know the Word of God until you have enough faith to believe God and then you're going to put your faith to work. This is the requirement of faith.

III. The Rest of Faith

Now the third thing I want you to notice is the rest of faith. Look again in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 23. Here we read an amazing statement. Listen: "*By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child;*"—now, watch it—"*and they were not afraid of the king's commandment*" (Hebrews 11:23). The rest of faith: they trusted the will of God. They were not afraid of the king's commandment. Can you imagine this? How would you have felt had you been a slave in Egypt and the king had given a decree that every baby boy would have been slain? You say, "I'd be climbing the walls." I guess all of us would, except for one thing: they had the promise of God. They believed God. They put God to the test, and they said, "Lord, we know your word. We have done all we can do; and now, Lord, we're resting in you. We're not going to be afraid." Isn't that great?

You know, parents, listen. There's so much to be afraid of. Have you ever thought what this world is going to be like when your child will be twenty-one? I mean, just think about it. Why it's enough—as the kids say—to blow your mind. If our world continues the change, and the immorality, and the sin, and the war, and the unbelief, and the infidelity, and all of these things, you'll say, "My God, what kind of a world have I brought a child into?" I know only one thing that can give you peace of mind in a world like that: it's faith. That is all: the rest of faith.

Times may be dark, but I promise you, times are not as dark as they were for Jochebed. I mean, she already had the decree. This little baby is under the sentence of death. But she trusted God. She did all she could do, and she sat back with a smile on her face and said, "I am not afraid. I am not afraid." This is the rest of faith. This is the peace that only Jesus can give. And I tell you there are parents in this place this morning who desperately need that peace. You're frantic about your children. And if you're not frantic, you ought to be, if you're not trusting the Lord. Somebody said there are only three classes of people in America: those who are afraid; those who don't know enough to be afraid; and those who trust the Lord.

IV. The Reward of Faith

Now, let me go on and speak lastly about the reward of faith, because it's not over yet. She's resting in the Lord. She's done all she can do. And so, notice the reward of faith. Now, notice in verse 24; notice what it says: *"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt"* (Hebrews 11:24–26). Isn't that a fantastic thing? When this mother trusted God, when this mother did all that she could do, and sat back and placed it in God's hands, God begins to move heaven and earth to work things out for her.

Notice what happens. I love the story. She makes this little boat of bulrushes, and she puts it there in the river. And then God sees to it that at just the proper time the princess, Pharaoh's daughter, comes along, and she decides, of all things, she's going to bathe in the river Nile. Can you imagine the Pharaoh's daughter bathing in the river Nile? Why, she had tubs and baths overlaid with ivory and gold. She had perfumed waters. Oh, the riches, the lavish riches of the Pharaoh! Well, what caused her to go down there to the ol' river Nile? God did. God starts to work. God put it in her heart. God put it in her mind.

I believe it happened like this. I believe she remembered the old swimming hole that she used to play in as a little girl, and a feeling of nostalgia took her, and she said, "I just want to go down in." She called her entourage, her servants, and they went down there. And then, of course, you know, up comes floating little Moses, and she says, "What's that? It's cunningly made. Get it! Bring it here! Open it!" And they opened it. And you know who was inside. But watch—watch. An angel leaned way down from heaven just at the right moment and pinched that baby. The Bible says, "And the babe wept" (Exodus 2:6). You think that was by an accident? No siree, friend. That's one of the sweetest verses in all the Bible. The babe wept. And that princess's heart just broke. The Bible says, *"She had compassion"* (Exodus 2:6). The cry of a little baby broke the heart; no matter who she was, she had a woman's heart. You see, faith honors God. And God honors faith.

And so she says, "I believe I'll keep this little baby." And about that time Miriam, Moses' sister, steps out from behind a tree and says, "Pardon me, may I suggest somebody to take care of it for you?" And she says, "All right." She says, "I suggest Mrs. So-and-so." And you know who that was, don't you? Moses' own mother. And she says, "That will be very fine." Can you imagine? She says, "All right, you take this child and raise it for me; and I'll pay you." Now, ladies, I suggest, that's having your cake and eating it too. She says, "You take this child and raise it for me; and I'll pay you your wages." Praise God for that! How marvelous! God started to work. She had little Moses

on her knee. And she knew she wouldn't have him long. And she put into his heart those sweet songs. She taught him about God. And she put something in Moses' heart that the pagan University of Egypt could not take out, because she had him first, and she taught him something.

And when he was come to age, when he saw all of the riches of Egypt—and I tell you, there are riches in Egypt. Some of us have been to the Cairo museum, seen a portion of the wealth that was taken out of King Tut's tomb. You can't even believe it. It's staggering. Moses could have had all of this at his fingertips—but he was there, and he looked at the treasures of Egypt. And the Bible says that he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, for he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all of the riches of Egypt.

You see, first of all, he looked at this; and then he took the telescope of faith that his mother had given him, and he looked down through the corridors of time; and there he saw Jesus born of a virgin; there he saw Jesus dying on a cross; there he saw Jesus ascended; there he saw Jesus coming again in power and glory; there he saw the saints of all of the ages reigning with Jesus; and Moses said, "That's for me! That's for me!" You tell me how that happened—because when he was a little boy, he had a mama and a daddy who said, "We are going to trust God with our children."

Conclusion

Friend, the root of faith: Read the Word of God. The requirement of faith: Do the work of God. The rest of faith is to rest in the will of God. And then, the reward of faith is to see the wonders of God, because God shows Himself mighty on behalf of those who trust Him.

Faith for the Family

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 1, 1997 Sermon Time: 00AM
Main Scripture Text: Exodus 2:1–10

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Root of Faith: Hear the Word of God
 - II. The Requirement of Faith: Do the Work of God
 - A. Start Early
 - B. Build Values into Your Child
 1. Your Child Needs a Code to Live By
 2. Your Child Needs a Creed to Believe In
 3. Your Child Needs a Cause to Serve
 - C. Show Love
 - III. The Rest of Faith: Trust the Will of God
 - IV. The Reward of Faith: See the Wonders of God
- Conclusion

Introduction

Today, we're speaking on this subject: "Faith for the Family. And, because it's Baby Day, we're leaving our study of 1 Corinthians, and we begin our reading in Exodus chapter 2, verse 1: *"And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a..."*—and we have here "a beautiful child" in the translation, the version, that I am reading, which is the New Scofield edition of the King James Version; but yet some have translated, and I think more aptly, "a proper child"— *"...she hid him three months. And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river's brink. And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children. Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy*

wages. And the women took the child, and nursed it. And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water." (Exodus 2:1–10)

Now, notice the commentary on that, would you, please, in Hebrews chapter 11 in the New Testament. This is God's roll call of the faithful, those people who were heroes of the faith. And did you know that among the heroes of the faith a mother and a father are listed? A mother and father are listed, not because they were evangelist and wife, or pastor and wife; not because they gave much money to the work of the Lord; not because they were miracle-workers; not because they were singers; not because they organized a mission church; or not because they were burned at the stake; but a mother and a father are recognized as heroes of the faith simply because they were a good mother and a father.

We begin reading in Hebrews 11, verse 23. Notice how God singled these out to be heroes of the faith: *"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."* (Hebrews 11:23–25) Somebody has said that, "Home is the blossom of which heaven is the fruit." And I think that we're going to see that so in this wonderful story.

Now you know the story of how wicked, malevolent Pharaoh had bequeathed that all of the little boy babies would be put to death, and they were being slain. Precious little infants were being murdered, being slain, but Jochebed, who was Moses' mother, saw that there was something very special about little Moses, something very unique. More than that, he was simply a beautiful child, he was a proper child—that is, a child for a special reason. And she felt led of the Lord, and conceived in her heart a special plan. She made a little boat, a little ark. She wove it from bulrushes, and made it waterproof, and set it there in the side of the river Nile by the bank right there among the bulrushes, and the croaking frogs and the swimming turtles. And at a certain time the princess of all Egypt, Pharaoh's own daughter, came by, and she decided on that hot day that she would turn in and bathe at the river Nile. And they spotted that little ark floating there among the bulrushes. One of the servants brought it. They opened it up and looked, and inside was this precious, sweet baby. And just at the right moment the baby wept, and her heart was moved with compassion.

There you remember the story of how Moses' sister, who was standing nearby, said, "Oh, princess, if you would like, I'll get someone who can take care of this baby for you." And she said, "That will be a good idea." And do you know who took care of the baby? Why, it was Moses' own mother. And, to top it off, she got paid for doing it. Now, that's

the background of the story. I want you to notice some wonderful truths with me today as we're speaking on "The Family of Faith."

I. The Root of Faith: Hear the Word of God

First of all, I want you to notice the root of faith. The root of faith is to hear the Word of God. Now, there's no doubt about it. Amram and Jochebed, Moses' parents, had faith. But where did they get that faith? Where does anybody get faith? We receive our faith from hearing the Word of God. Faith is nothing but a proper response to the Word of God. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 10, verse 17, that *"faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17) There is no other way to have faith than to get it from the Word of God. I believe that Jochebed and Amram, the parents, had been studying the prophets.

Let me show you an interesting prophecy. Turn to Genesis chapter 15, verse 13. Here is a prophecy that the Lord said to Abram, who later became Abraham: *"And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety..."*—now this is something there's no ifs, ands, or buts about it—*"Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a [sojourner] in a land that is not theirs,"*—now God prophesied that the children of Israel, the seeds, the descendants of Abraham, would go down into Egypt. God said, "You can know this for certain." And notice—*"and shall serve them;"*—and they did: they became slaves—*"and they shall afflict them four hundred years;"*—they did—*"and also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge:"*—and God did—*"and afterward shall they come out with great substance."* (Genesis 15:13–14)

Now I'm certain—or reasonably certain, anyway—that Jochebed and Amram knew this promise. I'm certain that all of the Jews, as this was handed down from word of mouth and from their parchments, knew that God said they were coming out. And they knew that they were going to be there for four hundred years. And now four hundred years was just about up. They also knew that, in order for them to come out, there must be a deliverer. There must be someone. And it seemed that, when this little baby was born, there was something strange about it. Here these people have had the Word of God, and now God took the *logos* and made it the *rhema*—that is, that God took this written word and made it the living word. It seemed to leap up into their hearts, and they said, "This is a proper child. This is a special child." I believe that the Holy Spirit communicated to them that God had a plan for little Moses.

Now the point of the whole matter I'm making is this: that faith always comes from hearing the Word of God. And, ladies and gentlemen, you can never be the parent that you ought to be without the faith in God that is so necessary, that is so incumbent, for raising those children for Jesus Christ. The greatest thing that your child needs is a mama, a daddy, of faith: someone who knows the Word of God. And how do you get

faith? You can't raise your children today without faith. And how are you going to get it? Can you make yourself believe? Can you just clench your fist, and grit your teeth, and say, "I'm going to be a parent like Jochebed was, like Amram was; I'm going to be a mother of faith; I'm going to be a father faith"? You can't do it. There's nobody in this building who can make himself believe.

Dwight L. Moody was one of the greatest evangelists who ever lived. He was the Billy Graham of his day. I was reading some of his biography this past week, and Dwight L. Moody said, "I used to pray thousands of times"—thousands of times—"O God, increase my faith; O God, increase my faith; O God, give me faith; Give me faith; Give me faith; Give me faith.' But," he said, "my faith was still so weak. I didn't seem to have the faith that I thought I needed, that I ought to have. Then," he said, "one day I was reading the Bible, and I saw in Romans chapter 10, verse 17, that *'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.'* Then God revealed to me that, if I wanted faith, I'd better get into this book." He said, "I began to study the Bible. I began to read the Bible. I began to memorize the Bible. I began to devour the Bible. I began to live in the Bible, to saturate my soul in the Bible. And," he said, "faith just exploded in my heart." "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

You may pray for faith; you may talk about faith; you may clench your fist and want faith, but you will never have faith until you get into the Word of God, the one book that God has ordained to give you faith. Faith cometh by hearing the Word of God. The root of faith is to hear the Word of God. Are you a Bible student? You will never be the mom and the dad that you ought to be until you study the one book that God has given that is both at the same time a manual on child rearing and a source of the faith that you need to do what God tells you to do in this book.

II. The Requirement of Faith: Do the Work of God

Now the first point, therefore, in this simple message is the root of faith: to hear the Word of God. The second thing that I want you to notice: not only the root of faith, which is hearing the Word of God; but I want you to notice the requirement of faith, which is to do the work of God. Not only must we hear the Word of God; once we've heard it, we must do the work of God. Now what some parents call faith is not faith at all. They simply say, "Now, Lord Jesus, I am committing my children to you. I'm dedicating this baby to you. Now, Lord, you just see to it that this child will become what you wanted it to be." My dear friend, if that's all you do, I will promise you that that child will not become what God wants it to be, unless God, in His sheer providence, just simply overrules. But it will not be because of your faith, because you didn't have faith.

Let me tell you something, friend. When a person has true genuine faith, he does something about it. Look here in Hebrews chapter 11 again at the passage of Scripture,

and I want to make it abundantly clear. Look, please, in Hebrews chapter 11, and notice verse 23: *“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months.”* (Hebrews 11:23) They did something about their faith. They hid Moses by faith. They made an ark of bulrushes by faith. They did all they did by faith. You see, faith is not fatalism. Some people would have said, “Well, whatever happens will be the will of God. We just won’t do anything. We’ll just pray, and then let whatever happens happen, and call that the will of God.”

Friend, let me tell you something. Contrary to popular opinion, the will of God is not always done. People say, “Well, if it’s God’s will, it will happen.” Do you think rape, murder, arson, pillage is God’s will? No! There are a lot of things that happen that are not the will of God. *“The Lord is...not willing that any should perish.”* (2 Peter 3:9) But many do perish, because people fail to act upon their faith. Let me tell you what faith is. Faith is not simply believing something. Faith is belief with legs on it. Faith acts. It was by faith that Moses was hidden. It was by faith that they did something about it. They just didn’t sit around and say, “Oh well, whatever happens will happen.” I want to tell you something, ladies and gentlemen. If you’re going to raise your children by faith, you had better pray as though it all depended on God, and then you’d better work as though it all depended on you.

Now, that’s not unspiritual. For James himself has told us, in James chapter 2, verses 18 to 20, “When wilt thou learn, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20) James says, “You show me your faith without your works; I will show you my faith by my works.” (James 2:18) It is time, ladies and gentlemen, that people got busy raising their children by faith for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mothers, I want to ask you a question. Is your faith a working faith? Now the root of faith is to hear the Word of God. But the requirement of faith is to do the work of God. And I wouldn’t give you two cents for your faith, if your faith does not exhibit itself in some positive action. Do you want your children to know the Lord Jesus Christ? Are you praying? Are you training that child? Are you teaching that child? Are you pleading with that child? Do you see to it that that child is in Sunday School? Do you set the proper example? I’m saying, what are you doing? The requirement of faith is to do the work of God. Faith without works is dead.

A. Start Early

Now, listen. It’s time that we got serious about this thing. You want to raise those children for Jesus Christ? Let me tell you, number one, you’d better start early enough.

One woman came to her pastor. She had a great big ol’ boy who was sixteen years old, 240 pounds or more. She said, “I can’t do anything with him, pastor. What shall I do?” The pastor said, “You’ve started sixteen years and 240 pounds too late.”

Now I don't believe that. I believe, where there's God, there's hope. And I don't believe we ought to ever give up. But the point is well taken. When should a child first be disciplined? When he's old enough to knowingly and willingly disobey you. The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 19, verse 18, "*Chasten thy son while there is hope.*" (Proverbs 19:18) Do you get the implication of that: "*while there is hope*"? Begin young enough; begin early enough. I'm saying, first of all, that faith and works will start soon. Moses' mother started when he was an infant.

B. Build Values into Your Child

Number two: not only should you start early, but you should build some values into your child. You know, we live in an age, a willy-nilly age, where nobody knows what is right, nobody knows what is wrong. I'm talking about the world. A highfalutin name for it is existentialism. The common phrase is "Do your thing: just don't let your thing interfere with somebody else's thing."

1. Your Child Needs a Code to Live By

Let me tell you something, friend. Young people, in order to be happy, need, number one, a code to live by. They need some definite, concrete values of right and wrong: "This is right, and this is wrong, because God says so." Have you taught your children that? Have you put that into them? They need some values. They need a code to live by.

2. Your Child Needs a Creed to Believe In

They need a creed to believe in. You need to give them some old-fashioned gospel truth. You need to drill this Word into their heart. But let me say about that word *drill*, just be careful. You know, the way to teach the Bible is not to say, "You sit still while I instill." What so many people call family worship is like a dose of cod liver oil. You know, "A dose a day keeps the devil away." Well, it doesn't work that way, dear friend. Oh, you had better be a living example of what you're teaching and what you're preaching, and you'd better make it warm and palatable. And that word that says, "Train up a child in the way he should go," (Proverbs 22:6) that word *train* actually means "to make something tasty." Have you done that? Have you developed an appetite for the Word of God?

3. Your Child Needs a Cause to Serve

I am saying that your child, number one, needs a code to live by; number two, a creed to believe in; and, number three, a cause to serve. Do you have a cause to serve? Or are you just trying to make all the money you can? It's getting graduation time. Do you know what some folks will stand up and say on graduation day across America? They'll say something like this: "Now, young people, there's nothing wrong with making money. Make all the money you can, just so you make it honestly." I cringe

when I hear that. No man ever has the right to make all the money he can, because if he's making all the money he can, he'll be making money when he ought to be doing something else, amen? Come on now. Amen?

Brother, let me tell you something. It's all right to make money. "It is the Lord thy God who giveth thee power to get wealth." (Deuteronomy 8:18) But it is not your ambition to make all the money that you can. It is your job to serve the Lord God and to show your kids that there's something worth living for other than just getting all you can and canning all you get.

Your children need a code to live by. They need a creed to believe in. They need a cause to serve. And I'm saying that the faith that is true faith not only hears the Word of God but it does the work of God.

C. Show Love

You'd better learn to show love too. That's the third thing: Show love. You know what teenagers are interested in more than anything else in the world? I wish you could have seen the eight o'clock service: just wall-to-wall teenagers. I'm so thankful to God that this is a church that loves teenagers. Do you know what they're interested in more than anything else? Love. If you don't believe it, you just don't know teenagers. They are interested in love more than anything else. And you cannot possibly raise boys and girls or teenagers without love. They want to know love. And you've got to demonstrate love. And, mister, the finest thing that you can do for your teenage son is to love his mother. Show what love is openly, publicly. Demonstrate your love.

And, oh, let me tell you something, mamas. That little baby of yours needs that love, and nobody can give it like Mama. There's something frightening that's happening in America today. Women, under the guise of women's rights, are saying, "We demand that the government supply childcare centers to take care of our children so we can go out and pursue a career." Now, let me tell you something. My hat is off and my heart goes out to anyone who has to work, mother or father, to put food in a baby's mouth. And I want to tell you something else, friend. Every mother ought to do all that she can possibly do to stay home with her child. It ought to be under extreme duress—and sometimes some have to do it, and I'm not criticizing them for it—but it ought to be under extreme duress and necessity that a mother would turn the rearing of her child—or even the partial rearing of her child—over to someone else. That baby needs their mother's love. And nobody else can do that.

I'm saying you start early. I'm saying you build some values. I'm saying you show love. And you spell love *t-i-m-e*. And I'm saying, ladies and gentlemen, that you use Bible discipline. The Bible says, in Proverbs 13, verse 24, "*He that spareth his rod hateth his son.*" (Proverbs 13:24) I know people say, "Now, now, Brother Rogers, that's

old-fashioned.” Well, so is the sun, and water, and a lot of other things—old-fashioned. You say, “Well, you might warp the little guy.” My dad warped me. I told you before, my father had a philosophy: never spank the child on an empty stomach. So he just turned us over and spanked us on the other side. Discipline: I’m not talking about child abuse. But you know something is going to happen. We’re going to get so hung up about child abuse that we’re going to run off the reservation on the other end, and forget what God says about biblical discipline. Now, folks, in all things there is a balance. Anybody who physically harms a child ought to be whipped himself, in my estimation. I’m not talking about abusing children. I’m not talking about beating on children. But I am talking about loving discipline that comes from a father that has set an example.

And then, let me say again that your children need, not only discipline, they need an example. They need to see in Mom and Dad the very things that we’re talking about today.

III. The Rest of Faith: Trust the Will of God

Now I wish I had time to develop this further, but I’m afraid I’ll not get the last two points in. So, let me say—listen! listen! listen!—what I’m saying is this: that a family of faith must, first of all, hear the Word of God. Secondly, they must do the work of God. But now, thirdly, I want you to notice the rest of faith—the rest of faith—which is to trust the will of God. You see, if the root of faith is to hear the Word of God, and the requirement of faith is to do the work of God, the rest of faith is to trust the will of God.

Now, you know, these are treacherous days in which we are living. I mean, they are treacherous days. I had rather raise children on the prairie where rattlesnakes were around then to raise them in the city with these pornographic magazines in the newsstands. These are treacherous times in which we live—treacherous times. But there were treacherous times back then. Those were dark days. I mean there was a decree that little babies should be slaughtered. They were living under the cruel, hard fist of Pharaoh. And yet the Bible says—and I want you to notice it; look in Hebrews 11, verse 23; look the last part, and it says—*“They were not afraid of the king’s commandment.”* (Hebrews 11:23) They were not afraid. That is the rest of faith.

Friend, when you’ve heard the Word of God, and then you have done the work of God, then you can trust the will of God, amen? You don’t have to be afraid. You don’t have to have the heebie-jeebies. You can claim the promises of God that say, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* (Proverbs 22:6) God Almighty is going to take care. And, my, how He did!

IV. The Reward of Faith: See the Wonders of God

And I must leave that point for just a moment and not develop it any more. But I want to

go on to the last point. The last point is the reward of faith—and that is to see the wonders of God. When a mom and a dad start to exercise faith, then God steps in. You're not big enough, you're not strong enough, you're not wise enough, and you are not good enough to raise your children without the help of Almighty God. But when you begin to trust the Lord, and then to rest and not be afraid, then God will move heaven and earth to take care of your children and to bring them safely home.

I want you to see the wonders of God. Notice here again in our scripture in Hebrews chapter 11. The Bible says, in verse 24, *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”* (Hebrews 11:24) Moses had a system of values that was so different than anyone else. Moses, who could have been the king of all Egypt—mean, he could have been the leader of the strongest nation on the face of the earth—turned his back on all of them, and said, “I’m going with the people of God.”

What enabled Moses to do that? Moses looked at all the riches of Egypt, and then Moses said, “Wait a minute. Let me take another look.” And he took the telescope of faith, and he looked way on down, and he saw the Judgment Seat of Christ. He saw the saints. He saw the riches of Jesus. He saw the recompense of the reward. Then he looked again at these treasures, and then he looked on down there, and said, “I’m going there. That’s the way I’m going. I’m going that way.”

Now, what did that? What caused that? The wonders of faith. Oh, my dear friend, the wonders of faith, the wonder of God. This, dear friend, is the reward of faith. You see, when Jochebed and Amram began to trust the Lord, God started to move heaven and earth to see to it that things were worked out rightly. For example, here now Moses’ mother, led of the Holy Spirit, made that little ark, and set it in the bulrushes.

Now, think what happens. A princess decides that she’s going to bathe in the dirty river Nile. Now, you figure that out. I mean, listen. I’ve been to Egypt on several occasions. I’ve seen those pyramids. I’ve seen the ruins of those temples. I have seen all the relics of ol’ King Tut. I have seen the lavish gold and multimillion-dollar provisions that they had. Now, you tell me what makes a woman who had a marble tub and a perfumed bath decide she’s going to bathe in the river Nile. I’ll tell you what. The Bible says, *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”* (Proverbs 21:1) And if this is true of the king, it’s true of the king’s daughter. And so she just remembers, perhaps, on that day, maybe it was a little sultry and hot, and she remembered the old swimming hole. She said, “Say, turn in here a moment.” And her entourage turned in.

Now, where do you think she turned in? Just at the right spot. And who do you think

turned her eyes to look to see that little ark floating in the bulrushes? And she said, “Bring that to me. That’s interesting.” And they opened it up. And there was a little baby. Do you think it is just incidentally that the Bible says, “*And, behold, the babe wept?*” (Exodus 2:6) Listen. It wasn’t a wet diaper. It wasn’t a pin. An angel reached down and gave that baby a little pinch just at the right moment. “*Behold, the babe wept.*” Oh, perfect timing! Someone would say, “Oh, that just happened.” But I want to tell you, God took a baby’s cry, and set aside the decree of mighty Pharaoh—a baby’s cry. “*God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.*” (1 Corinthians 1:27)

A baby wept. Her heart was moved with compassion. And then, just at the right time, Moses’ sister said, “Say, if you want somebody to take care of that baby, I know just the lady who’d be glad to do it.” Can you imagine a princess taking a suggestion from a slave girl? But she did. And Moses now is turned over to his own mother. Now, you think about it. Moses gets the finest care. He gets his mother’s love. He gets his mother’s instruction. He gets a four-year scholarship to college all paid in the Egyptian university, his room and board and everything taken care of. And yet these poor people, who didn’t have anything, have the joy of having their own little baby with them. Who but God could do such a wonderful thing? Isn’t it great that he got the education, and the devil paid the bill? Isn’t that wonderful just how God works?

I’m telling you, God begins to move heaven and earth and open up things for a little baby whose mom and daddy learn to trust the Lord before the baby could even trust the Lord. Mom and Dad were trusting God. And God moved, and God did something. I tell you something, ladies and gentlemen. God Almighty, through Moses’ mama, put something in the heart of that little baby that that devilish atheist university couldn’t take out. It’s getting hard to find a place to send kids to school these days, where some infidel professor will not come in and tamper with their faith and discredit these precious truths that we believe. And I tell you, dear friend, that the secret of raising children in these days is not one of isolation; it is one of insulation. You, as mom and dad, had better build something in their heart while they’re young that no two-legged devil can take out. That’s what Jochebed did. She taught. She trained.

Are you doing that, Mom? God has given you that baby, and while you have that baby, you’d better put some values in that child, because the time is coming when he’s going to face the ol’ University of Egypt. Somebody said, “It used to be that children learned at mother’s knee. Now they learn at some other joint.” Are your children learning something? Are you teaching them those sweet songs: “Jesus Loves Me”? Are you teaching those Bible verses? If you do, the reward of faith is to see the wonders of God.

Conclusion

Oh, dear friend, Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. The Bible says, in Acts 7:22, he “*was mighty in words and in deeds.*” But he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, and chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, the family of faith.

The Rod of God

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 2:11–12

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Selfless Way Is the Way Out of Bondage
 - A. The Way Forward Is the Way of Necessity
 - B. The Way Forward Is the Way of Opposition
 - C. The Way Forward Is the Way of Faith
 - D. The Way Forward Is the Way of Victory
- II. The Selfless Way Is the Way Out of Barrenness
- III. The Selfless Way Is the Way Out of Battle

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, tonight, I want to speak to you on this subject, “The Rod of God.” Would you take your Bibles, please, and open to the Book of Exodus. And, by the way, if you don’t have a Bible, look around there in the pew and you’ll find a red Bible. It’s for your use tonight and Exodus is the second book in the Bible. We’re going to be in the Book of Exodus, so you ought to be able to keep up tonight. Now I want you to stay with us as we study the Word of God.

Now in Exodus chapter 2 we read in verses 11 and 12 these words: *“And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand”* (Exodus 2:11–12). Now Moses has come to the very height of his career. He’s forty years of age, he has a degree from the Egyptian university, he is full of culture and he’s full of education, he’s full of zeal, he’s full of strength, he is a real man as the world knows men; and he decides he’s going to do something for God. He knows that God wants to deliver the Hebrews from the Egyptians, and so he presents himself to God as a prize package. He says, “Lord, I am ready to be used.” And so he sets out to be a missionary, but he ends up being a murderer.

Here was an Egyptian, and Moses comes up and sees this Egyptian mishandling a Hebrew. Moses gives him a karate chop, and down he goes. And Moses now decides that he’ll get rid of the evidence, and so he digs a shallow grave and he buries this

Egyptian. But, you know, it was not long until the winds of God had uncovered the works of the flesh, because Moses had not done too good a job in burying that Egyptian. Before long, the crime is discovered. Moses has to leave Egypt. He flees to the backside of the desert, and there he spends forty years in the backside of the desert. This time he's earning another degree: it's the "be nothing" degree, the BN. He has already become something, and now he's found out that God can't use somebody who thinks he's something. And so now he has to come to the place where he has become absolutely nothing.

And after he spends forty years in the backside of the desert learning that he is nothing, then he's ready for God to use him really, and so he has an encounter with God. And I want you to notice that encounter that he has with God. Turn to Exodus chapter 4 and read verses 1 through 4: "*And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice:*"—now, why did he say that? God had said, "Moses you're going to be my spokesman; you're going to be my commander-in-chief; you're the one that's going to lead the Hebrews out of the land of Egypt." Moses says, "They won't hear me. I never had a speech voice. I'm not a very good speaker. They're not going to listen to me." And of course that was true from the outward appearance—"*for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him,*"—verse 2—"*What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And he said,*"—that is, God said—"*Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand*" (Exodus 4:1–4).

You know, this is an amazing thing; it's really quite humorous. There's Moses—he's before the Lord, and he's having a conversation with the Lord, and he says, "Now I'm just a nobody. God, you can't use me. I don't know how to speak." Before, he had a superiority complex; and now he has an inferiority complex. And God can't use a person that has either one. He's standing there saying, "Lord, you can't use me." And the Lord says, "Moses, what's in your hand?" He says, "Well, just my ol' rod, my trusty rod." You know, he was a shepherd; and every shepherd, every nomad, had a good ol' stick that he cut down out of the woods, something that fit his hand just right. He had grooves in it. You know how sometimes you were walking through the woods on a vacation and found a rod, a stick or something, picked it up walked around the mountains with it. You probably still have it at your house. You become accustomed to it. You like it.

Well, this is the way Moses must have felt about that thing. He would corral the sheep with it. He'd killed many a snake with it. He would use it, perhaps, if some marauder would come as a weapon. It was something that supported him, something he leaned upon, something he caressed: just an ol' rod. And the Lord says, "Moses,

what's that in your hand?" "A rod." "Moses, throw it down." "Why, Lord, there's nothing wrong with it." "Moses, throw it down." "Well now, wait a minute, Lord. This is my ol' trusty rod. I like it." "Moses, throw it down!" And so Moses throws it on the ground. And you know what happened? According to the Scripture, it became a wriggling, writhing, hissing, venomous serpent, and it started after Moses; and Moses is running and dancing around. And here's this serpent there on the ground after Moses; and Moses fled from before it. He was frightened to death. He wasn't prepared for what came next. The Lord says, "Moses, pick it up." "Huh?" "Moses, pick it up." "Now, Lord, did I hear you right?" "Yes, Moses, pick it up by the tail." "Now, wait a minute, Lord. You've gone too far now. If I were to pick it up, I certainly wouldn't pick it up by the tail. That would leave *the business end* free." But the Lord says, "Pick it up. And pick it up by the tail." And so Moses now, in obedience to the Lord, reaches down and picks it up. And it became a rod again in the hand of Moses. But this time it's no longer called *Moses' rod*. This time it's called *the rod of God*.

Now, what was behind all of that? What is the lesson? Do you think God was just performing magic? Do you think God was just giving us a little humorous incident there in the Bible? Or do you think there was a great, rich, wonderful, spiritual lesson? I say there's always a lesson in anything like this. In every miracle there's a message. In every miracle there's a message—and we'd better find it. God doesn't just perform tricks in the Bible just to amuse us or even to amaze us.

Now, what was God showing us, and what is God showing these teenagers? My, I'm glad you're down front so I can preach to you tonight. You're such a great group. Really, I'm glad you're here. Some of you adults are in the youth group tonight. You can't read very well. It says, "Reserved for young people." You look on the ends of those things before you go in there. We've got the greatest group of young people, and they want to sit in the front. And I tell you, that's a miracle too, isn't it? That's a modern-day miracle. They want to sit in the front, and they say, "You reserve these front pews for us." And, kids, we're going to do better. Sunday after next, next Sunday night, we're going to be over yonder; but Sunday after next we're going to have plenty of room for you, we hope. We're going to get some ushers. Steve's going to have some ushers there to make certain that nobody invades the youth group. And, oh, where was I?

Let me say something here. There's a message here, and these young people so need this message. They need to understand this: that God looks at you and God sees all of the talents you have. God looks at these young people tonight who sang, and those who played on the cymbals, and those who played on the piano; and God looks at all of these people with so much potential, and so much education, and so much; and God looks at them, and God says, "What's that you've got in your hand?" You say, "Why, Lord, it's a high school diploma. Lord, it's a college diploma. Lord, it's the talent to

sing. I can play the piano. I'm a great athlete." God says, "Throw it on the ground! Throw it on the ground!" "Wait a minute, Lord. You need this, Lord. And this is a pretty good thing. And I need it, Lord. It's supported me for a long time." God says, "Throw it down! There's a snake in it!"

You know, we need to learn that lesson, don't we? We need to learn that, no matter what talent we have, until we've thrown it on the ground before the Lord, there's a serpent in it, and it will get you into bad trouble. We have so much flesh on parade in our churches today: flesh in the pulpit, flesh in the choir loft, flesh at the piano, flesh at the organ, flesh taking up the offering, flesh administrating a Sunday school; so many people are trying to serve God in the strength of the flesh. Moses tried it, and Moses failed. And God was teaching Moses a lesson. "Moses, I don't care what you have. You'd better cast it on the ground, because there's a snake in it; and you'd better let me take the snake out before you try and use it."

Now you can take that same talent, you can take that same ability, you can take that same gift, you can take that same education, give it to Jesus, cast it on the ground, and say, "Lord I'm nothing"; and then the Lord will enable you to pick it up and use it again. But this time, it won't be your talent; it will be His talent. This time, it won't be your voice; it will be His voice; and the Lord Jesus Christ will be doing in you, and through you, and for you, what you cannot do in and through and for yourself.

I'll tell you something else, though. God can use what you have. Isn't that great? You know, God can just take what you have in your hand, and it doesn't have to be much. With Moses, it wasn't much; it was just simply an ol' rod. And yet God performed some of the mightiest miracles the world has ever known with that rod. It put Moses in the news. And I tell you, you can be in the news for God, if you'll just take what you have. You study the history of the Bible, and God has taken ordinary people and used what they had. God used David, a little boy, and a sling, to kill ol' Goliath, the giant. Do you remember the story: how Goliath was out there making fun of the people of God, and God called little David, a teenage boy? Somebody said, "Oh, what are we going to do?" David said, "Never mind. I'll take care of him." And David got five smooth stones out of the brook. Now, don't think that was a lack of faith. That wasn't a lack of faith, when he got five stones. It only took one to kill Goliath. But the Bible teaches he had four brothers. It was more faith than you realize, brother. He got five smooth stones and went out there against Goliath. And Billy Sundy said, "He wound up and hit him on the coco, and he went down for the count of ten." Brother, God used little David and what he had in his hand. It wasn't much, but God used it.

I tell you, I read in the Bible where God took a little boy's five loaves and two fish and fed five thousand. God said to that little boy, a little ol' boy—junior boy, I imagine—freckled face with dirty feet, "What's that in your hand?" He said, "Just a little sack

lunch.” Jesus said, “Give it to me.” And God took it and fed the multitudes. I read in the Bible where the Lord looked at a widow. She had two mites, just a little, oh, just an insignificant amount of money, less than a penny, in her hand. And, “What’s that in your hand?” “Just a widow’s mite.” “Give it to me.” And I tell you, you may not think it was much, but it was what was in her hand. And she cast it down before the Lord. And I believe with all of my heart that what that little widow did that day, that the Bible records, has inspired millions of dollars to come into the work of God. I believe there are millionaires the world over and people with money the world over who have given and given and given because a widow cast in the widow’s mite—all that she had. You see, God took what she had. It wasn’t much. But God took it, and God used it.

There was Mary who had an alabaster box of ointment—Mary, a fallen woman, a harlot who had been saved—and she took this alabaster box of ointment and she broke it at Jesus feet. It wasn’t much, but Jesus said, “She has done what she could.” And the sweet perfume of that deed has filled the world for nineteen centuries, because the Lord used what she had in her hand. I tell you, God can use you.

Let me tell every mother’s child in this place tonight, God can use you. God can use you now. God can use you with what you have. If you’ll take what you have, whatever it is that God has given you—if it’s a business, if it’s a talent, if it’s a strength, whatever it is—if you let God take the snake out of it, God can use it. Are you willing to say, “Here it is, Lord; I know that if I use it in my own strength, I’m going to mess up just like Moses did; but, oh, God, if I dedicate it, I mean, Lord, if I am broken at your feet, I know, Lord, that you can take it and use it”?

Oh, friend, God used Moses—and God can use you. I want you to see how God used this rod that represents a selfless life, a broken life. I want you to see how God used it to give Moses victory over bondage, and victory over barrenness, and victory in battle. I want you to see it.

I. The Selfless Way Is the Way Out of Bondage

First of all, God gave Moses victory over bondage—because, where were they, they were in bondage in the land of Egypt. They were down there in Pharaoh’s land. And God said to Pharaoh, “Let my people go.” And you remember Pharaoh said, “No, they’re not going anywhere. Our gods are greater than Jehovah God.” And, you know, the Egyptians, they had gods for everything. They had a sun god. They had a water god. They had an animal god. They had an insect god. They had a fly god. They had gods for everything. And you remember that each one of the plagues was an insult to one of those gods.

Now, don’t just laugh at those gods that they had. These were demon gods that the Egyptians worshiped: not just simply idols, and that’s all; like a dumb stick, a dumb

stone, or something. Of course there was not power in the stick or the stone. But there is power in demons. And we are living in a decade of demonism today. Let me tell you something. When Moses cast his rod upon the ground, it became a serpent. If you study the Bible, Pharaoh's magicians came and performed the same miracle. Do you remember that? And the Bible doesn't say they didn't do it. The Bible doesn't call it a trick. The Bible says they did it.

Did you know that Satan has power to work miracles? As a matter of fact, one of the ways that the Antichrist in the last days is going to get men to follow him is through the miracles that he's going to work. He is a miracle worker. And everything that is miraculous is not of God. And we're seeing much in the realm of astrology, Satanism, ESP; we're seeing much in devil worship today that is miraculous. Much of the occult, and much of the necromancy and fortunetelling and prophecy that's in the world today is done in the power of darkness, as those Egyptians worked their miracles in the power of darkness. But I bless God, and I thank God that there's a power that can put all these noisy gods to silence. God did it before, and God can do it now. And we need to rediscover the power of Almighty God, because we're living in a day when Satan has come down upon us having great wrath, for he knoweth that he hath but a little time (Revelation 12:12).

And so here God performs miracles. A miracle one after the other—we call them the plagues upon Egypt—until finally there was the miracle of the death of the firstborn. And Moses starts out. He's leading the Hebrews out of the land of Egypt. He must have lost his map. They come face to face with the Red Sea. "Uh oh, we weren't supposed to be here; we were taking another route." Now you talk about being in trouble: Moses was really in trouble. He had the sea in front of him and the sword behind him. He was between the rock and the hard place. No matter what he could do, here was Pharaoh with his sword gleaming in the sun, coming with his chariots, coming with his army, wild in his eye. He'd come from the deathbed of his firstborn, and he was coming to take vengeance on Moses. And there's the Red Sea out in front of Moses. Moses doesn't know what to do, so he comes to the Lord.

Look, if you will, in Exodus 14, and see what God tells him to do. Exodus 14, verse 15—read it in the Word of God. And the Bible says, *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward"* (Exodus 14:15). "Did I hear you right, Lord? Lord, have you looked out there lately? Do you see that, Lord? Did I hear you? Did you say, 'forward'? Well, that's the Red Sea, Lord." "Moses, listen. I was in control of that sea when it was but a vapor. Now, Moses, you go forward." Ladies and gentlemen, there's not but one way for you to go when you get in trouble—and that's forward, isn't that right? I mean, that's the only way that you can go. We need to go forward.

A. The Way Forward Is the Way of Necessity

Let me tell you something about the way forward. The way forward is the way of necessity. I mean, that's the only way. You can't go back. Just as Pharaoh was on their trail, the hounds of hell are on your trail. And if as a Christian you cease to grow, you're going to be in serious trouble. If this church doesn't continue to move forward, it's going to be in serious trouble. When a church stops growing, it's in trouble. Now *there's nothing wrong with a small church, but there's something desperately wrong with a church that's not growing.* There's nothing wrong with a baby Christian, but there's something desperately wrong with a Christian that does not continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *We will grow and glow; or we will dry and die. We will evangelize or we will fossilize.* We must go forward, or we'll be overtaken, because the devil is hot on the heels of every Christian and every church, and there's nowhere in the Christian life where you can sit down and say, "Well, we've got it made; we'll drink lemonade in the sun till Jesus comes." You can't do it. You can't do it. It is the way of necessity. And I tell you, my dear, sweet friend, you'd better check up in your life and see if you're growing. Are you growing in the Lord Jesus?

The Apostle Paul, at the very end of his ministry, said, "Oh, that I may know Him" (Philippians 3:10). "Paul, don't you know Jesus?" Sure, he knew Him. I guess he knew Him better than any other human that ever lived on the face of the earth. But there's so much more to know about Jesus. I tell you, you haven't even begun to touch the hem of the garment concerning Jesus Christ. In Him are hid all of the vast treasures of the Godhead bodily—in Jesus (Colossians 2:9). And I tell you, you can jump in and swim; and you'll never run out of things to study and love about Jesus any more than a minnow would run out of water swimming in the Atlantic Ocean. You'd better go on and on and on in the Lord Jesus Christ. The way forward is the way of necessity.

B. The Way Forward Is the Way of Opposition

Let me say something else about the way forward. The way forward is the way of opposition. It's never easy to go forward. There was opposition within the camp. People said, "We'll drown." There was literal, physical opposition. There was water. And that brings me to say this: If you're looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way to serve God, forget it. The door to the room of opportunity swings on the hinges of opposition. It's that way. God has planned it that way. God wants it to be that way. You fold up and quit when you have a little opposition. God put it there that you might grow. The Bible says, "Count it all joy when you fall into testing, when you fall into trials" (James 1:2). This is God's plan for you. You can tell the size of a Christian by what it takes to stop him. There are some people, they get their toenail ingrown—and they stop. They get a little headache—and they stop. Somebody doesn't speak to them—and

they stop. Something doesn't go just right for them—and they stop. I tell you, a real Christian is going forward—and all hell can't stop him. There are not enough devils in hell or out of hell to stop a Christian filled with the Spirit of God. It's the way of opposition.

C. The Way Forward Is the Way of Faith

I want to tell you something else about the way forward. It's always the way of faith. I mean, many of us would have said, "Now, Lord, you open the Red Sea—and we'll go." God says, "You go—and I'll open the Red Sea." We say, "Lord, I want to see my way clear." God says, "Forget that. I'll clear the way. You go." It's not up to us to see the way clear. It is up to us to obey. And God can take care of the Red Seas. And I tell you, that's the way God wants us to live: not by sight, but by faith. Are you willing to walk that way?

D. The Way Forward Is the Way of Victory

The way forward is the way of necessity. It is the way of opposition. It is the way of faith. But, bless God, it's the way of victory, isn't it? It's the way of victory. God says, "Moses, now's the time for that rod. Remember, it wasn't much when you were using it in your own strength; but now, Moses, hold that rod high." And Moses says, "Thank you, Lord. We're coming through." And he holds that rod out, and a forty-eight-lane highway opens up across that Red Sea. And there they go through on dry ground, because God has opened the way.

I am telling you, sweet friend, the devil would love to keep you in bondage. The devil would love to keep you in your spiritual Egypt. But I'm saying, there's a way out for you; there's a way out of bondage. And God, as we preached this morning, has given you power over all the power of the enemy. There's a way out. But that way out is for you, when you're willing to cast that rod upon the ground, when you're willing to say, "Lord, I can't, and you can," when you're willing to take death to self, when you're willing to say, "Lord, in me—that is, in my flesh—dwells no good thing," when you are willing to rely upon and rest upon the mighty power of God's Holy Spirit, then you're going to see what God can do. And there's a vast difference between what we can do and what God can do.

II. The Selfless Way Is the Way Out of Barrenness

I'm saying, dear friend, that the selfless way is the way out of bondage; and then, secondly, it's the way out of barrenness. Not only did they get through the Red Sea that way; but, when they got on the other side of the Red Sea, they were thirsty, they needed water to drink. And they were murmuring and complaining, and they said, "We don't have enough water." Would you look in Exodus chapter 17, verses 4 through 6.

The people are complaining, *“And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me...”*—what pastor hasn’t felt that way once and a while?—*“What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod...”*—here it is again—*“and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock...”*—“Did I hear you right, Lord? You want me to hit a rock with that rod. I’ve tried to hit a rabbit and snake with that thing, and almost hit a rock, and almost broke my arm. I’m not going to haul off and hit a rock with a rod.” “It’s all right, Moses. When you hit something, now it will be hit; there will be a real difference. It’s no longer your rod; it’s the rod of God. You stand off and smite the rock—*“and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel”* (Exodus 17:4–6).

And then you know the story. Out of that cleft rock, which really is a picture of the Lord Jesus smitten and afflicted for us, and out of that broken rock, flows water, which represents the water of life and the blessed Spirit of God that He would give to all who believe in Him. But I’m telling you, not only is the selfless life, not only is the broken life, the way out of bondage, but it’s the way out of barrenness. We have so many dried and shriveled and dusty souls, don’t we? Oh, you look at the average church: it’s just as cold as death and dead as old King Tut. It’s dry as leaves. And there’s no power. And it’s such a juiceless thing. Don’t you hate a dry church service? I tell you, I went in this church service one time on vacation: I’d rather spend a night in a mausoleum than go to that service again—dead, just as dead as it could be.

I heard about a little boy who came into a church service one night, and he looked up there, and on the front of the church they had a banner hanging down; it had some silver stars and some gold stars. And the little fellow asked his mom, he said, “Mama, what are those stars for?” She said, “Sweetheart, those are for the boys who died in the service.” And he said, “Was it the morning service or the evening service?”

No power, no love, no thrill, no joy, no hallelujahs, no praise Gods, no victory, no refreshment for the soul. Friend, when you depend upon the flesh, you get what the flesh can do—and that’s not much; but when you depend on God’s Holy Spirit, when you say, “Lord, I’m willing to cast that down before you,” then what used to be the rod of Moses becomes the rod of God—and it’s the way out of bondage, and the way out of barrenness.

III. The Selfless Way Is the Way Out of Battle

Now I want to say one last thing. It’s the way out of battle, because they’re going on now; they’re going on to the Promised Land. But notice, still in Exodus chapter 17, I’m

reading verses 8 through 11: *“Then came Amalek,”*—now Amalek was a king—*“and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill”*—now, watch it—*“with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand,”*—and remember what was in that hand now: the rod of God—*“that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed”* (Exodus 17:8–11).

The battle would go this way: Moses, holding up the rod of God, and Joshua, leading the armies of Israel, would prevail. But then Moses would get tired, and perhaps he'd get negligent, and he'd let down his hand with the rod; and then Amalek would come on, and Amalek would prevail. And the battle would go this way, and then the battle would go that way. Can't you see it? Hasn't your life been that way? Haven't there been times when you've lived in the power of the Spirit, and Satan is defeated? Then haven't there been times when you've just let down; when you've ceased to rely upon the principle that God taught Moses when He told him to throw that rod upon the ground; when suddenly you think you're somebody and you take over again; and Satan has his way, and Satan whips you all over creation?

What's the difference? The difference, dear friend, is whether you're standing against Satan in the strength of the flesh or in the strength of the Spirit. You see, you're no match for Satan in the strength of your flesh. But I tell you, when you stand in that principle that's illustrated by the rod of God—that you can't, but God can—then you're going to see that, not only is it the way out of bondage, and the way out of barrenness; but it's the way out of battle. Amalek said to Moses, “You're not coming through here.” And Moses said, “That's what you think, buddy. We're coming through. Our God, who's led us thus far, is going to lead us all the way.” How wonderful it is when the power of God rests upon us! And there's no weapon that is formed against you that can prosper (Isaiah 54:17). There's no enemy that can stand against you all of the days of your life when you say, “Oh, God, I can't. But you can. And I'm going to stop trying, and start trusting, and let you do what I cannot do.”

Conclusion

Oh, this is the same message that we've preached over and over again. It's time we start hearing it! It's time we start believing it! Now I want to ask you a question now. What's in your hand? What is it? Is it your money? Is it your bank account? Is it your ability to preach? Is it your ability to sing or lead an educational program? Is it your ability as a pastor? Is it your ability as a deacon? Is it your personality? Is it what got you elected as a leader in high school? What is it? Is it your brain? Is it your intellect? Is

it your musical talent? What is that in your hand? I'm asking you, are you willing to let God *de-self* it and take the snake out of it? Are you willing to say, "O God, I'm nothing; and, Lord, here all that I have I give to you; Lord, if it's going to be done, you're going to do it"? And then, are you willing to walk in that principle? If you are, this church will be an unusual church on the face of the earth. And it will make Satan tremble, I'll guarantee it.

All the Way Out of Egypt

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 14, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 8:25

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Compromise Concerning Salvation
- II. The Compromise Concerning Separation
- III. The Compromise Concerning Soul Winning
- IV. The Compromise Concerning Tithing
 1. Obedience
 2. Honesty
 3. Love
 4. Gratitude
 5. Faith

Conclusion

Introduction

I heard about a little boy who came home from Sunday School one day, and his mother was asking him, "Son, what did you study in Sunday School today?" "Oh," he said, "we studied the story of the people of Israel coming out of Egypt and being delivered from Egypt and going on towards Canaan." Well, she wanted to know what he was learning, so she said, "Well, son, tell me about it. How did it happen?" "Well," he said, "the night before the Israelites left, the Israeli army dynamited all of the homes of the Egyptians, and then they left in a convoy, and when they left in a convoy, they had fighter planes to give them protection from above. And," he said, "they had tanks leading the way, but when they got to the Red Sea, there was no way for them to cross. And so Moses got the engineers together, and they built a pontoon bridge across the Red Sea. But about that time, Pharaoh was coming, following after them, and he had all of his tanks and armored trucks, and just after the Israelis got over the pontoon bridge, all of those armored trucks and those tanks that belong to the Egyptians were on the pontoon bridge, then Moses gave the order, and they blew up the bridge. And all of the Egyptians drowned, and God's people were safe." The mother said, "Now, son, is that really the way your Sunday School teacher taught that lesson?" He said, "Well, not exactly, Mom, but if I told it to you the way she told it to me, you'd never believe it."

Now, let me tell you something, friend. This is a miraculous story. We don't need to water it down. We don't need to explain it away. We don't need to give some other version of it. You can believe it. You know, I like the words of Winston Churchill. When they asked Winston Churchill, that great statesman who has recently gone on—and, I believe, to be with the Lord—what he believed about some of these stories in the Old Testament—and I want you to listen, because what he says is very pertinent—Winston Churchill said, “We reject with scorn all those learned and labored myths that Moses was but a legendary figure. We believe that the most scientific view, the most up-to-date and rational conception, will find its fullest satisfaction in taking the Bible story literally.” And then Winston Churchill said, “We may be sure that all these things happened just as they are set out according to Holy Writ.” And I'm still quoting—he said, “In the words of a forgotten work of Mr. Gladstone, ‘we rest with assurance upon the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture.’” Now that was good, wasn't it? He said, “We don't take these things as myths, as fairytales. We believe that the most scientific, the most reasonable and rational, way is to believe these things just as they were written.”

But not only were they history, as we told you this morning; they also have a didactic and a spiritual lesson for those of us today. Egypt represents the condition of a man without Christ. Egypt represents the world of sin, of slavery, and of lust. And then Pharaoh, therefore, the dictator of Egypt, represents Satan, the cruel dictator, the devil, who has done his best to keep us in the land of darkness, and the land of slavery, and the land of gloom. And the Passover lamb that was slain the night they came out represents very clearly the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. For the Bible says, “*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.*” (1 Corinthians 5:7)

We're not reading into this story when we find spiritual truths for us tonight right here in this twentieth century. But the important factor is this—at least for our message tonight: is that, when God said, “*Let my people go,*” (Exodus 8:1) Satan did his dirty, devilish dead-level best to keep them from coming out. And I want us to study tonight the ways that Satan tried to keep God's people from coming all the way out of Egypt. I want you to see some clever compromises and some diabolical devices that Satan used to keep God's people, if he could, from coming all the way out of Egypt.

I. The Compromise Concerning Salvation

Remember Egypt, now, represents the land of sin, the land of death, the land of dominion. It represents the state of an unsaved person. Now I want you to take your Bibles, please, and look in Exodus chapter 8, verse 25. Remember God said, in Exodus chapter 8, verse 1, “*Let my people go.*” And verse 25: “*And Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land.*” (Exodus 8:25) Now the land that Pharaoh was talking about was the land of Egypt. Moses said, “Pharaoh,

we're going out. We're leaving Egypt. We're going to hold a feast unto the Lord our God. God is wanting us to be set free. God wants us to leave the land of Egypt. God wants us to forsake the land of Egypt." And Pharaoh said, "Now, wait a minute, Moses. Hold it. It's all right, if you want to worship. If you want to have religion, that's fine. But, Moses, there's no need for you to leave Egypt in order to do it. Moses, you sacrifice to God right here in the land of Egypt. Why make a break with Egypt? You can sacrifice to your God here in Egypt. You can worship your God here in Egypt—in the land of darkness, in the land of slavery, in the land of compromise."

You see, Satan is still suggesting that thing to some of you who are not saved. You hear the preacher preach that you need to come out of Egypt, that you need to be born again, that you need to come out under the blood of the Passover lamb, and the devil says to you, "Now, hold it. You can be religious, but don't be a fanatic about it. After all, if you want to worship God, you just sort of tack religion to the life that you're already living." And you'd be amazed how many people are trying to worship God without coming out of Egypt.

We're good in this modern day at using semantics—that is, playing with words—and we take words and change the meaning just a little bit so we can be comfortable with them. For example, rather than speaking of a basement apartment, we'd rather call it a garden-level apartment; or if we have a second-hand junker, we call it a pre-owned car; or if a person is just plain fat, we like to say they have a figure problem; or if a person is a criminal, rather than calling him a criminal, we'd rather call him antisocial; or a drunkard is a problem drinker. As a matter of fact, I was interested to note when they were having the riots in Chicago that someone called the police dogs "crowd engineers." That's interesting, isn't it? A city dump becomes "a park under construction," and someone who is poor is merely "at a breakthrough level in income."

Now that's interesting what we can do with words. They are in the same condition, but we kind of dress it up. Now the devil would like for us to do exactly, precisely that same thing with the land of Egypt. And we don't need to really make a clean break with Egypt. We just change our terminology a little bit. Rather than wickedness, we can just call it weakness, and settle down. And we can confuse education with regeneration. And we can stay in Egypt and just get educated, and maybe we think that's all right, and we'll forget about Calvary, and we'll just speak of culture. You'd be amazed how many people have religion, as such, but they've never come out of Egypt; they are just as lost as they can be. They're still under the dominion of Pharaoh, the cruel taskmaster.

Did you know that the people in America don't need religion? They need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ. There were plenty of religions in Egypt. Now, if they wanted to be religious, Pharaoh was quite right. He said, "You can just stay right here in Egypt and be as religious as you want. Just tack religion on to your way of life. But coming out of

Egypt, in biblical typology, symbolized being set free, being liberated, forsaking the old way, and taking a brand-new way.

Now some of you didn't understand what I meant when I said that people don't need religion, because you think of Christianity as a religion. But, in the truest sense of the word, Christianity is not a religion; it is a vital relationship with a person—and His name is Jesus Christ.

Let me see if I can describe the religion of which Egypt had plenty. Imagine man on one side of the chasm, and God on the other side of the chasm—a deep chasm. Now, what has caused this chasm? What has caused this separation between man and God? Well, sin has done it. And there's a deep chasm that has been eroded by centuries of sin. Over here is man, and over here is God. And man, by instinct, has a longing to know God; he wants to have fellowship with God. And so man tries to build a bridge from his side to God's side. And there are many of these bridges that are built. As a matter of fact, some of them are very small, maybe a one-man do-it-yourself type of religion; some of them are very intricate; and some of them were very large; and some of them are very massive, and they are built of all kinds of material. But they all have one thing in common: they are all built of corruptible materials. And, sooner or later, all of these bridges collapse under their own weight. And those who try to cross by these bridges fall into the pit.

Now these bridges, these man-made bridges, we call religion. And God, from this side, watches man's futile effort, and God does it with a broken heart. And so God says, "I will do something." And so on this side of the chasm God puts down the foundation of His deity, and on this side of the chasm God puts down the foundation of His humanity—that is, the Lord Jesus Christ, who was the God-man—both God and man at the same time. Jesus Christ left heaven, He came to earth, and He died in agony and blood. He bowed his head, and He said, "It is finished." And the demons in hell howled in glee, and they said, "He is finished." But they weren't listening. Jesus didn't say, "I am finished." Jesus said, "It is finished." What was finished? The way to God was finished. With the rough-hewn timbers of a cross Jesus Christ had bridged that chasm between God and man, and Jesus Christ Himself had made a way.

And that's the reason we sing this song:

*I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There's no other way but this;
I shall ne'er get sight of the gates of light,
If the way of the cross I miss.*

—JESSIE B. POUNDS

Religion cannot do it. Only Jesus Christ and His blood atonement and a personal relationship to Jesus Christ can do it.

There were plenty of religions in Egypt, and there are a lot of people today who are religious, but they are very, very, lost—they are still in Egypt. It was a religious crowd that crucified the Lord Jesus. Some person says, “Oh well, one religion is just as good as another.” I always agree with them, and say, “You’re very right: they’re all no good.” One is just as bad as another, or just as good as another, no matter how you want to place it. But there’s only one Jesus Christ, only one way to heaven, only one Passover lamb. I’ve said it before, I’ll say it again: Jesus Christ is not the best way to heaven; He is the only way to heaven. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12)

And so Pharaoh says, in effect, to Moses, “Now, Moses, you don’t have to worry about coming out. You don’t have to worry about making a break with Egypt. You just tack religion on to your regular round of life.” Do you know the city of Memphis is full of folks like that? I mean, they’re religious; they go to church every Christmas, every Easter, and every now and then they do God a wild favor and come on Sunday morning, and they may put a little of their money in. And if you ask them, “Are you religious?” “Oh, I’m a religious man.” But they have never ever come out of Egypt. They have never ever been born again. They are still under the iron fist of Pharaoh.

II. The Compromise Concerning Separation

Now that didn’t work with Moses. Moses said, “We’re not going to do it here in the land. God said, *‘Let my people go.’* God said we’re to come out, and we’re coming out.” And so, if Moses would not abide the compromise concerning salvation, Pharaoh was ready to offer another compromise—and this is the compromise concerning separation. I want you to notice now in chapter 8, verse 28: *“And Pharaoh said, I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness...”*—now, you see, Pharaoh didn’t want them to go to Canaan; he doesn’t want you to go to Canaan—*“in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away.”* (Exodus 8:28)

Now, if the devil can’t keep you from being saved, do you know the next thing he’ll try and do? He’ll say, “Now, if you must be born again, if you must be saved, if you must come out of Egypt, well, go ahead; but don’t go very far. You just go as far as the wilderness, and then you stop right there in the wilderness. Whatever you do, don’t be an extremist. Whatever you do, don’t get fanatical. And, above all things, don’t become a Baptist. Listen. You get a religion, and join a church that will live right on the very borderline of sin and of the world.” You see, Satan says, “If you must join a church, let me suggest some. I have some fine churches,” Satan says, “that I would like for you to join. Why, you can be a member of that church, and nobody’s going to preach against your social drinking, nobody’s going to preach against your gambling, nobody’s going to preach against your worldly ways; and you can go—you just get out of Egypt, but don’t

go very far. Don't become what the world calls a fool and a freak and a fanatic."

And so that's what the devil is trying to do to so many here in the city of Memphis. I believe that, not only do we have some people who are still in Egypt trying to worship the Lord, and of course they haven't been saved at all, but I believe that a great, great host of people have truly been saved, truly been born again, but ol' slew foot, the devil, has gotten them to compromise. And they've gone, but they've not gone very far. I wonder, can somebody tell you're a Christian by observing your life? I mean, at work, can somebody tell? Is there a difference? Or, are you what we call a worldly Christian?

Billy Sunday, when he heard that term *worldly Christian*, said, "That's a contradiction in terms. That's like talking about a heavenly devil." Yet we have a lot of worldly Christians. The Bible says we are to "*come out from among them, and be...separate, saith the Lord.*" (2 Corinthians 6:17) We don't hear much about separation anymore. Christians today, they want to talk like the world, and walk like the world, and dress like the world, and go to the same places of amusement that the world goes to. But the Bible says, "*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.*" (2 Corinthians 6:17) A Christian ought to be different. A Christian ought to stand out like a gardenia in a desert. He ought to stand out. He ought to be different. The Bible says, in Exodus chapter 11, verse 7, "*The LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.*" (Exodus 11:7)

Somebody asked this question a long time ago, and we've heard it very often, but it's still a good question, if you listen to it. If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you? Is there a difference in your life? Can you tell, by observing my life—if you were to follow me around for a week without my saying a word—would you be able to tell that Adrian Rogers is a Christian? So many of us have come out of Egypt—we are truly saved; we're born again; when we die, we'll go to heaven—but we have not gone very far. We're going to die in the wilderness, and those who watch us will not know whether we're an Egyptian who strayed over the line or someone who has truly been born again.

III. The Compromise Concerning Soul Winning

Now, there's a third compromise. If the devil can't keep you from coming out of Egypt, and if he can't keep you from going all the way to Canaan, he's going to try a third thing. And I want you to notice now in Exodus chapter 10, beginning in verse 8. Remember the devil never gives up anything or anybody without a fight. And so, notice now in Exodus chapter 10, verse 8: "*And Moses and Aaron were brought again unto Pharaoh: and he said unto them, Go, serve the LORD your God:*"—finally, he's given up on trying to keep them from going, because Moses just wouldn't compromise; he said, "We're going, going all the way"; and so finally Pharaoh says—"*Go, serve the LORD your God:*

but who are they that shall go? And Moses said, We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD.” I like that, don’t you? Moses said, “We’re all going.” But notice what Pharaoh said, in verse 10: “*And he said unto them, Let the LORD be so with you,*”—doesn’t he sounds so pious?—“*as I will let you go, and your little ones: look to it; for evil is before you.*” Pharaoh says, “Now, don’t take your little of children out there in that mean, awful wilderness out of the nice lovely confines of Egypt.” And so he says, in verse 11: “*Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire.*” (Exodus 10:8–11)

Now, in effect, Pharaoh said, “Well, if you go, don’t take your wives and your children. Don’t take your families with you. You men, it’s all right if you want to go and be religious, but leave your children, leave your wives, leave your loved ones right here in the land of Egypt.” Here’s the compromise, not concerning salvation, and not concerning separation, but it’s the compromise concerning soul winning. The devil says, “Now everybody in the family doesn’t have to go.” You see, the devil hates family religion.

I want to ask you a question. Are you going to be content to go to heaven when some members of your household are still in Egypt—they’re still lost; they’re going to die? Do you know God believes in family religion? And I believe that, before we are concerned about winning our neighbors to Jesus, and before we’re concerned about foreign missions, I believe we’d better get concerned about winning our children to the Lord Jesus Christ, and winning our parents to the Lord Jesus Christ, and our husbands and our wives to the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches a family religion.

Now there’s a verse of Scripture that we quote, and we often stop short. It’s Acts 16:31. The Philippian jailer asked this question: “*What must I do to be saved?*” And Paul gave the answer, “*And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*” (Acts 16:30–31) That is, “It’s not enough for you, Mr. Jailer, to be saved. We want your household to be saved too. When God got ready to call Noah into the ark—I want you to listen to the Word of God in Genesis chapter 7, verse 1: “*And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark.*” (Genesis 7:1) That is, “Noah, when you come into the ark of safety, I don’t want you to leave your children and your family outside.”

I like what Joshua said. We’re preaching through the book of Joshua on Sunday mornings now. Joshua said, in Joshua chapter 24, verse 15, “*Choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*” (Joshua 24:15) Now the devil doesn’t like that. He doesn’t like household salvation. He doesn’t like for an entire family to take a stand for the Lord Jesus Christ. But, ladies and gentlemen, it’s time we got serious about the lost members of our family. In Acts, again,

chapter 11, verses 13 and 14, that angel told Cornelius to send for Peter, *“who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and thy house shall be saved”*—“your household shall be saved.” (Acts 11:13–14)

William Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army. He was a great man. Somebody said, “Behind every great man is a great woman and a surprised mother-in-law.” But Catherine Booth prayed, and I want you to hear what she prayed. She said, “O God, I will not stand before thee without all my children.” Now that’s pretty good. “I will not stand before thee without all my children.” Is it any wonder that every one of them was saved and became a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Are you a soul winner? Are you content to come out of Egypt and come out empty-handed? Moses said, “Look, Pharaoh, we’re coming out. And not only are we coming out; we’re going all the way. And not only are we going all the way; all of us are going.”

IV. The Compromise Concerning Tithing

Now Satan still was not content. So he inspired ol’ Pharaoh to offer one last compromise. And I want you to notice here in Exodus chapter 10, beginning in verse 24: *“And Pharaoh called unto Moses, and said, Go ye, serve the LORD;”*—“All right, if you’re going, go. If you’re going all the way, go all the way. If all of you are going, then, let all of you go. But wait a minute,” he says—*“only let your flocks and your herds be stayed: let your little ones also go with you.”* (Exodus 10:24) “Your children can go, but don’t take your flocks. Don’t take your beef cattle. Don’t take your sheep. Don’t take your oxen. Don’t take these things. You leave them here in the land of Egypt.” And there is the devil’s last compromise that he offered to Moses: “Leave your business in Egypt. Leave your finances in Egypt. Leave your resources in the land of Egypt. You go and stand before God, but stand before Him empty-handed. Don’t take your money, when you go serve the Lord. When you get baptized, be sure to take your pocketbook out of your pants, so it won’t get soaked.” That’s what he’s saying.

Now I think we need some baptized pocketbooks as well. I think we need some baptized wallets as well. You see, Pharaoh knows that he can cripple the work of the Lord if he can get people to leave their substance and to leave their material goods in the land of Egypt. There are a lot of you businessmen here. You’re saved—you love the Lord, you come to church on Sunday and praise the Lord, and you even tithe—but you never really have given your business to the Lord. I wonder if some of you doctors have given your profession to the Lord—I said, given it to the Lord. I wonder if some of you people who work for a salary—I wonder—have you said, “Lord, I give this position to you completely, and everything I make from it”?

You know, it’s not just that the tenth is the Lord’s: it all belongs to the Lord. Not just that tenth that belongs to the Lord, but that nine-tenths that’s left: that belongs to the

Lord also, and we need to take it out of Egypt. Now that doesn't mean that we can't spend any of it for material necessity. That's not what I'm talking about. But our substance, all of it, needs to be dedicated to the Lord. And you know the mark, the sign, that we've dedicated our substance to the Lord—do you know what it is? It's the tithe.

Now I don't preach much about tithing. As a matter of fact, God is convicting me I don't preach enough about it. As a matter of fact, I hardly say anything about it. But when the Bible speaks, we need to speak. And, ladies and gentlemen, the tithe is the Lord's. And when you come out of Egypt, God wants you to bring your substance out of Egypt also. And that's the devil's last compromise. If you go, if you go all the way, and if all of you go, he still wants you to leave your substance in the land of Egypt.

Now I want to give you in the closing minutes of this message five unanswerable reasons that every Christian ought to tithe. It will be very short, but I want you to listen. If you have any questions, five unanswerable reasons that every Christian ought to tithe:

1. Obedience

Number one is obedience. God said to. Now we could just stop right there. The Bible says, in Malachi chapter 3, verse 10, *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."* (Malachi 3:10) You say, "That's Old Testament." Well, Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 23, verse 23, concerning the tithe, *"These [things] ought ye to have done."* (Matthew 23:23) The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 16:2, *"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store..."*—and that word "in store" is the same word that is translated "storehouse" in Malachi 3:10—*"let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him"*—that is, proportionately. God said that we ought to do it. You say, "Brother Rogers, that was during the law." But, dear friend, Abraham tithed before the law. Moses commanded tithing during the law. Jesus commanded tithing after the law. I believe that tithing is a part of a moral law of God: that it's just as wrong not to tithe as it would be to steal. Obedience is one reason that we ought to do it.

2. Honesty

But let me give you the second reason: not only obedience, but honesty. You see, dear friend, the tithe is not yours. When you take the tithe, you're stealing from God. You don't give the tithe; you pay the tithe. The Bible says the tithe is *"holy unto the LORD."* (Leviticus 27:30, 32) You say, "Well, how did God get it?" Well, it was His, to begin with, you see. The Scripture says that, *"The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof."* (Psalm 24:1) Psalm 50, verse 10, says that "the beasts of the forest are mine; the cattle upon a thousand hills are mine." (Psalm 50:10) It all belongs to God. And we're just returning to God a portion of that which already belongs to Him. And the man that does not tithe—and I hope this doesn't make you too angry, but if it does make you

really angry, you come up and apologize to me, and I'll forgive you—the man who doesn't tithe is a thief. He's stealing from God. He is a God-robber.

3. Love

Now, listen. Obedience is one reason to do it. Honesty is another reason to do it. Is there a higher reason? Love is another reason we ought to tithe—love. You see, Jesus said, in the Gospel of John chapter 14, verse 15, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* (John 14:15) Do you know there's nothing that will loosen the purse strings like a good old-fashioned case of love? I don't mind giving to my children. I don't mind giving to my wife. I tell you, when I fell in love with Joyce, I wanted to give and give, and I never thought that any gift was too expensive. I never begrudged anything. I didn't have much to give her, but, I tell you, I wanted to give. And I still want to give. And I get a great delight out of giving to those I love. And you show me a person who doesn't want to tithe, and I'll tell you what his problem is: he doesn't really love the Lord. His problem is he loves the almighty dollar more than he loves Almighty God. Love—love—is a reason.

4. Gratitude

But there's another reason. And not only should we tithe because of obedience, and because of honesty, and because of love; but, ladies and gentlemen, we ought to tithe because of gratitude. You know, the Bible asked a question in Psalm 116, verse 12—and it's this: *"What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?"* (Psalm 116:12) You know, God has been good to us, hasn't He? I mean, listen. He has saved us. He's redeemed us. He's kept us from hell. He's given us the Holy Spirit. He's given us this church. He's given us our brothers and sisters in Christ. He gives us our life. Listen, friend. God doesn't have to take your life; all He has to do is stop giving it. Don't you understand that it is God who gives you life? God gives you breath. God gives you sustenance. God gives you all these things. Are you going to be like a sponge that just soaks it up and never gives out unless you're squeezed? *"What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?"* Gratitude says that we ought to do it.

5. Faith

But I suppose the highest of these five reasons is faith. Listen. God says, "You put me to the test. Bring all of the tithe into the storehouse and prove me. Put me to the test, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." And I guarantee you, upon the authority of the Word of God—everything else being equal, you're walking with the Lord—*if you tithe, you will do more with nine-tenths and God as a partner than you will do with ten-tenths by yourself*. The Bible says, without equivocation, *"Give, and it shall be given unto you."* (Luke 6:38) The Bible says—and we must believe it or not believe it; and

we'd better make up our mind whether we do or whether we don't—*“Honour the LORD...with the firstfruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst forth with new wine.”* (Proverbs 3:9–10)

The Bible says, in Matthew chapter 6, verse 33, *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”* (Matthew 6:33) What God is saying is this: “You honor me with your stewardship, you honor me with your money, and I will take care of you financially.” I'm not saying that you're going to be wealthy. I said before, most of us have about all God can trust us with. I want to tell you this: you will certainly do more with nine-tenths and God as a partner than you'd ever do with ten-tenths by yourself.

Conclusion

Oh, listen. God's name will be glorified, the church will be built, your heart will be blessed, if you'll only learn to say, “I'm coming out of Egypt. And I'm going all the way out of Egypt. I'm taking my loved ones with me. And I'm taking my substance. And I'm not going to be satisfied till I'm in Canaan. Milk and honey, corn and wine, grapes and pomegranates, I'm going to Canaan's land.” Are you ready to go? You want to come go with the pastor? Let's go together. Let's come out. Let's go together. Let's all of us go, and let's take all we've got and go all the way.

Listen to what ol' Moses said to Pharaoh when Pharaoh said, “Leave your substance in the land.” Moses said, in verse 26 of Exodus chapter 10, *“Our cattle shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind.”* (Exodus 10:26) Don't you like that? Not a hoof, not a hide, not a hair, not a horn—not a hoof! We're going, we're all going, we're going all the way, and, devil, you can't stop us. There are not enough devils in hell or out of hell to stop you, dear friend, when you have that kind of an attitude. And may God give it to us, every one.

Genuine Confession

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 7, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 9:27

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Horrified Confession
- II. The Hypocritical Confession
- III. The Half-Hearted Confession
- IV. The Hedged-In Confession
- V. The Haunted Confession
- VI. The Healing Confession

Conclusion

Introduction

Friend, there is only one thing that can take the peace out of your heart. Not two, not three, not four, just one. Sin, that's all. If you don't have peace tonight, it's because of sin. Sin robs you from peace. Now, let me say, furthermore, there's only one kind of sin that can cause you not to have peace. It's your sin: not what your husband did, not what your wife did, not what your teacher did, not what your mother, your father did, not what your pastor did, and not what your boss did to you. Someone can slap you in the face, and you'll still have perfect peace, if you're right with God. But when you get an attitude toward their slapping you in the face that's wrong, at that moment, you'll lose your peace. Only one thing can take away peace: sin. Only one kind of sin: yours. Only one thing that will restore peace: confession. Oh, but not every confession. Some confession does not bring peace, and some confessions don't bring pardon.

Now, what kind of confessions don't bring peace? We're going to do a Bible study through the Bible tonight, and I want you to notice where different Bible characters will use precisely the same words, and yet they'll not have their sins forgiven. The words that these Bible characters will use are these: "I have sinned." They will confess their sin, but they won't find peace.

I. The Horrified Confession

Let's look and see. Turn to Exodus chapter 9, verse 27. And, first of all, we find these words on the lips of Pharaoh in Exodus chapter 9, verse 27: "*And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them,*"—underscore it now—"*I have sinned.*" (Exodus 9:27) Well, that sounds like a mighty orthodox confession. And the Bible says,

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9) But there’s something wrong about this confession. There was something wrong about Pharaoh’s confession. The confession of Pharaoh we will call the horrified confession. And you can judge the value of his confession when you see the circumstances that surrounded his confession.

So back up to verse 22: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch forth thine hand toward heaven, that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, upon man, and upon beast, and upon every herb of the field, throughout the land of Egypt. And Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. And the hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt all that was in the field, both man and beast; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field. Only in the land of Goshen, where the children of Israel were, was there no hail. And Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned.”* (Exodus 9:22–27)

When the hail fell from heaven, when the lightning flashed, when the thunder roared, when the fire ran along the ground, when Pharaoh was horrified, when he was frightened out of his wits, when he trembled, when his heart palpitated, he said, “I have sinned.” But I want you to notice something. The repentance that was born in the storm died in the calm. I want you to notice, if you will, another verse. Look in chapter 9, verse 34. And here’s the key. Here’s why Pharaoh found no peace with God. Here’s why Pharaoh found no pardon with God. Notice in verse 34: *“And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.”* (Exodus 9:34)

Do you know anybody like that? I know lots of them. And I’m preaching to some of them: people who, when they get in a bad circumstance, when they get into a tight, when they have a problem, when the wife is about to leave and walk out, or when the doctor’s given a bad prognosis, or when they’re about to see the doctor, when there’s about to be a cancer smear, or when the child lies sick in the hospital, or when the job is about to collapse, or when life is closing in, and when, so to speak, there’s thunder and hail and lightning and fire and calamity, they come to God, face white, lips trembling—“God, I’ve sinned. God, have mercy”—and they make holy vows to God, sacred promises. The crisis passes, the storm clouds blow away, the thunder quiets, the lightning sheaths its fearful sword, and they’re right back in the same business—and sometimes worse.

Some of you men who were overseas made holy, sacred promises to God in a foxhole. “O God, O God, if you’ll just get me back home safe; O God, if you’ll just deliver

me, here's what I'll do, God. Here's what I'll do." I wonder if it wouldn't do us all good to think back on those times when we made some holy sacred vows to God and we've broken those vows.

May I tell you what a broken vow will do to you? Here's the danger of a broken vow. It will harden your heart. Promises unkept harden your heart. Notice in verse 34: "*And when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants.*" (Exodus 9:34) You may have forgotten those holy vows that you made to God, but God has not forgotten them. There's the horrified confession. But it didn't bring peace, and it didn't bring pardon.

II. The Hypocritical Confession

Now I want you notice these same words on the lips of another Bible character. Turn to Numbers 22, verse 34. I call this confession the hypocritical confession. Numbers 22, verse 34, we find these words on the lips of a strange character whose name is Balaam. Notice verse 34: "*And Balaam said unto the angel of the LORD,*"—underscore the words—"*I have sinned...*"—sounds good, sounds orthodox, sounds all right, sounds like it ought to bring peace, sounds like it ought to bring pardon, but it won't do it—"*I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will [return] again.*" (Numbers 22:34)

What's the background of all of this? Without trying to tell the entire story, because time would not permit it, let me just give you the meat of the coconut, as we would say in Florida. Balaam was a prophet, of sorts. He was a strange man. He uttered some of the most eloquent prophecies in all of the Bible, and yet he offered some of the most diabolical and treacherous advice that ever fell from the lips of a man. He had, in a sense, the lips of an angel and the heart of the devil. Balaam was a prophet of God, who knew some things about God. But there was a king whose name was Balak. He was the king of Moab. And the king of Moab was fearful of the children of Israel. And so he tried to bribe Balaam to put a curse upon the children of Israel, thinking that, since he was a prophet and a man of God, he could pronounce a solemn, holy curse upon the Israelites and they would not prevail.

Balaam was too smart for that, because he knew that God had said, "Those that curse Israel, I'll curse." (Genesis 12:3) He said, "I can't do that. I can't put a curse upon them." But then he thought of the reward that he was going to get. And his palms got itching for that money, and greed took over. He said, "I'll tell you what I will do, however. I'll tell you how you can get God to curse them. You just get them to sin." And then he said, "You get some of the women of Moab to take up with some of the men of Israel, and so forth. And I know the lustful hearts of these men. I know what they'll do. They'll mix and intermingle, and they'll commit fornication. They'll commit adultery. Then I won't

have to curse them. God will curse them.”

Can you imagine such a thing coming out of the heart of a man who knew the ways of God so much that he himself refused to curse the people of God? I’m saying, here was a man with a mixed heart. Here was a man who was an A-number-one garden-variety hypocrite. Here was a man who wanted to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds at the same time. He wanted to play both sides of the fence. And God had forbidden him to follow after the king of Moab for gain. And, finally, when God almost kills him—and you remember the story: the angel had stood there with a drawn sword ready to take Balaam’s life if he’d have come a step further, and the poor donkey had fallen out beneath him. You remember the story of Balaam’s donkey that talked and rebuked him. That all took place here—and then Balaam has the audacity and the nerve and the gall to say, “Oh well, I’ve sinned; if it displease thee, I’ll go the other way”—“if it displease thee.” That hypocrite! It was a hypocritical confession. It was a confession from a man who really did not mean business. (Numbers 22)

Now, my dear friend, let me tell you something. Admitting your sin and confessing your sin are really two different things. Some of you will come to church on Sunday and confess your sins, and go out on Monday and live like the devil. And you’ll be just like Balaam. You’ll not find any peace, because there’s been no genuine repentance in your heart; there’s been no change of life. Someone described the average Sunday churchgoer this way: “They are praising God on Sunday. But they’ll be all right on Monday. It’s just a little habit they’ve acquired.” The hypocritical confession: it doesn’t bring peace, doesn’t bring pardon. And, mister, I want to tell you I don’t care how much you confess your sins: unless there’s a change of heart about that sin, unless you’re willing to repudiate that sin, unless you’re willing to take sides against that sin, you’ll never find peace, and you’ll never find pardon.

III. The Half-Hearted Confession

The third confession I want you to notice. Look, if you will, in 1 Samuel chapter 15. These words are on the lips of a man named Saul who was the king of Israel. First Samuel chapter 15, verse 24: “*And Saul said unto Samuel,*”—underscore these words now—“*I have sinned...*”—there it is: sounds orthodox, sounds good, sounds like it ought to bring peace, sounds like it ought to bring pardon—“*And Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice.*” (1 Samuel 15:24)

Now, what was wrong with this confession? I call this confession a half-hearted confession. Here was a confession, not necessarily from a man who was a hypocrite like Balaam, but from a man who never really felt guilty. It was a confession that was accompanied with an alibi. It was a confession that had, along with it, an excuse.

There's one thing that God will never accept for sin—and that's an alibi. There's one thing that God will never accept for sin—and that is an excuse. You see, he had a wonderful little excuse. God had told Saul to do a certain thing. Saul, as God's commander-in-chief, was commanded to destroy the Amalekites, who were demonic demon-worshippers, and who were a cancer to the human race, and who were the sworn enemies of God. And God said the Amalekites were to be destroyed, all of them, and God also said to destroy all of their cattle—the sheep, the oxen, and all of their cattle.

Samuel came to Saul, and he said, "Saul, did you do what I told you to do?" Saul said, "Yes, I've done just what the Lord told me to do. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Samuel said, "What's this I hear? The bleating of the sheep, the lowing of the oxen—what's this?" "Oh, those. Well, oh, Sammy, I'll tell you. I saved those out. They were the very best. And it seemed such a shame to put them to death. I'll tell you what I'm going to do with them. I'm going to sacrifice them to the Lord. You see, I am going to make an offering to God out of these." Now God said, "Put them to death." But Saul had a better idea.

Now, if you had said to Saul, "Saul, you're being disobedient," Saul would have said, "No, not really. This is such a shame to put all these oxen and all these sheep to death. And, besides that," he said, "the people were pressuring me. I feared the people. I mean, after all, I'm just a king, and there are all these people out here." And, as you read this whole story, you get the idea that Samuel didn't accept this confession. As a matter of fact, God said to Samuel, "You tell Saul that he's rejected from being king. I'm not having anything to do with this phony confession." It was a confession with an alibi. (1 Samuel 15)

And that's the oldest indoor sport known to man: alibiing our sins. It started in the Garden of Eden. God said to Adam, "Adam, did you sin?" Do you know what Adam did? He alibied. He said, "Well, the woman you gave me, she caused me to eat." Now Adam was saying, in effect, "Whoever's fault it was, it wasn't mine. It was yours, or hers. You gave her to me, and she made me do it."

You'll find the same thing when God spoke to Eve: "Eve, did you do thus-and-such?" "The devil made me do it." That's what she said: "*The serpent beguiled me*" (Genesis 3:13)—a confession with an alibi.

You'll find the same thing with Aaron, who was Moses' brother, as the Israelites were there encamped in the wilderness, and Moses went up on Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments, and down in the valley Aaron had made a golden calf fashioned after the gods of Egypt, and the children of Israel were lewdly, lasciviously dancing nakedly around a golden calf, worshiping the golden calf. And when Moses came down from the mountain, and he said, "Aaron, what on earth is going on?" Aaron said, "You know, it's the strangest thing. I put a lot of gold in the fire, and out came this calf." That's

really what he said. You read it: “I put in the gold, and out came the calf.” (Exodus 32:24) That hypocrite! That alibi! “Oh,” he said, “the people’s hearts, they were just set on it.” I’ll tell you, Moses didn’t buy it. And God didn’t buy it. And God brought judgment.

You talk to people today about sin: they’ll call sin anything but sin. “Take your keys out of your car. Don’t help a good boy go wrong.” My soul! Let me tell you something, my friend. You take the keys out of your car so a bad kid won’t swipe it. The way they make you think is that you’re the criminal if you leave your keys in the car. “Look what you did to that kid! You ought to be arrested!” You see, we don’t want to call sin sin today; we want to call it anything but sin: a glandular malfunction, a stumble upward, a mistake, a chemical imbalance, psychological maladjustment.

You know here’s a kid who thinks that, because his mother wouldn’t let him push his mush off the high chair when he was a little kid, now he’s got a blank check to rob banks—because he was frustrated. Listen. That’s being taught all over—that there is no such thing as real genuine moral responsibility and culpability—but it won’t wash. And any time you come before God with an alibi—an excuse for wrongdoing—you’ll not find peace, you’ll not find pardon. A half-hearted confession.

IV. The Hedged-In Confession

All right, I want you to notice another confession. Turn to Joshua this time—the book of Joshua chapter 7, verse 20. These are the words that fall from the lips of a man named Achan. And I want you to notice what he says: “*And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed*”—now, underscore these three words—“*I have sinned against the LORD God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done.*” (Joshua 7:20) Sounds orthodox; sounds good; certainly sounds like Achan ought to have forgiveness; sounds like he ought to have peace; sounds like he ought to have pardon—but he doesn’t. His confession gets no higher than the ceiling. The ears of God are stopped up against this confession. Why? Because this confession is what I call a hedged-in confession.

Who was this fellow Achan? Achan was one of the Israelite soldiers who had gone into the city of Jericho after Jericho had fallen, and had taken some of the booty and some of the treasure from the fallen city of Jericho, and had taken it home and hidden it in his tent. He actually dug a hole in his tent, the floor of his tent, buried the treasure—a wedge of gold, shekels of silver, a Babylonian garment—and then he covered the hole, hid the deed. And because of what he had done, and because there was sin in the camp, Israel was tragically, ignominiously defeated when they went against another little city: the city of Ai. And Joshua knew that there was something wrong. And Joshua stretched himself out before the Lord in prayer, and said, “God, what happened? Lord, why are we failing? Lord, why can’t we go forward?” And God said to Joshua, “Why are you lying there upon your face? Get up. Israel has sinned.”

Joshua knew there was sin in the camp, and he knew that sin had to be ferreted out, and he knew that sin had to be judged, and so finally lots were cast. And the omniscient God enabled his commander-in-chief to put the finger right on the sore spot. And Achan, not willingly, but unwillingly, had the finger put on him. And he's faced with the man of God, who is representing the judgment of God. And Joshua says, "Confess it; tell it." And Achan confesses. But do you think that Achan is forgiven? Do you think he is pardoned? No. You see, there was nothing else he could do. The Bible says he was stoned, and a heap of stones was left upon him as a solemn reminder of how God hates sin.

You say, "Well, surely God would have had mercy on him." Yes, God would have had mercy on him, had he confessed at the right time. Suppose Achan, who had done this terrible heinous thing, had lain down in his tent. And suppose that he couldn't sleep. Suppose his conscience is thundering in his heart, reverberating through his soul. Suppose his lips quiver, his hands tremble. He says, "My God! What have I done? What a fool I am! Do I think that I can sin against the thrice-holy, omniscient God of Israel and get away with it?" Suppose he wakes up, unrolls his bedroll, claws into the dirt, and takes these things that he stole and goes over to Joshua's tent, and says, "Joshua, wake up! Oh, Joshua, what a fool I have been! Joshua, I have sinned. Here, Joshua, I give it back. Joshua, get the high priest. Let's go to the tabernacle. Let's offer a lamb, a blood atonement. I'm so sorry! I want God to forgive me." Do you think he would have been forgiven? Of course he would have! *"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy."* (Proverbs 28:13)

Oh, listen! Had he come at the right time, in the right motive, God would have fully, completely, freely forgiven. Why was not this man forgiven? Because he waited until he was hedged in and hemmed up, and then he confessed. Did you know that every sinner will confess his sin at some point? It's only a matter of time. Did you know that? It's only a matter of time. Do you know what God has said in His Word? *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."* (Romans 14:11) So then, every one of us shall give an account of himself unto God—every one of us. And God swears by Himself. He can swear by no higher. *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."* But do you think those people who bow in that last day will be forgiven? They will not. They'll confess and then be cast into hell. Every demon will confess that Jesus is Lord.

There are some of you here tonight—you're not saved. I don't even know why some folks are here. Some folks come to church, and when I preach, they make smart remarks. Some kids come to church, swap stories, write notes. Some people come and they just kind of argue back and forth mentally when the preacher's preaching, and they make wisecracks about religion, and they curse the name of Jesus. I want to see if,

when you come to that day, you make a wisecrack before Jesus Christ. You joked about it behind His back. I wonder if you're going to joke about it to His face. You cursed Him behind His back. I wonder, when you stand face to face with Him, if you're going to curse Him. No, you won't. You won't curse Him then. *"As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God."* You'll be hedged up then. You'll be hemmed in then. Honest is honest, and it's too late. *"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works."* (Revelation 20:12–13)

It's what the Negro spiritual talks about when it says, "I went to the rock to hide my face, and the rock cried out, 'No hiding place!'" Hedged up, condemned—"I've sinned"; and you'll bow, and you'll confess it; but you'll not find pardon, and you'll not find peace, because you waited too late. You waited until the stroke of judgment fell. Some of you think, "Well, I'll wait till Jesus comes, and then I'll get right." Too late. You say, "I'll wait till I die. Then I'll get right." Too late. "I'll plead for mercy at the bar of God." Too late. If you want mercy, you may have it. If you want forgiveness, you may have it. If you want grace, you may have it. But, "Now is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2) *"To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."* (Hebrews 3:15)

V. The Haunted Confession

All right, I want you to notice another confession. Look in Matthew chapter 27, verse 4. These words we find on the lips of Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver. And I want you to notice in verse 4—we'll start in verse 3 to get the meaning: *"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented"—"repented"—do you think he was forgiven? Let's go on and read—"and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned"—the same three words: underscore them—"I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself."* (Matthew 27:3–5)

Do you think that Judas' confession brought peace? Do you think it brought pardon? No. This is what I call the haunted confession. Here Judas is haunted by the ghost of guilt. He repents, but it is not repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the confession of remorse. It is the confession of despair. It is the confession of a damned soul who has committed the unpardonable sin and crossed God's

deadline. Judas died and went to hell. Some people think that Judas was saved, and lost his salvation. No, he never had his salvation. The Bible says He *“knew from the beginning who they were that believed not.”* (John 6:64) Jesus said, *“Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”* (John 6:70)

Judas sinned with his eyes wide open. He sinned against light. He lived in the very presence of the Son of God. The Holy Spirit of God had convicted Judas of his sin. But Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. And Jesus said of Judas, *“It had been good for that man if he had not been born.”* (Matthew 26:24) The Bible says he died and he went to *“his own place.”* (Acts 1:25) This Bible calls him *“the son of perdition.”* (John 17:12) The only other time a person has been ever called by that terminology in the Bible, to my knowledge, is the Antichrist, in 2 Thessalonians the second chapter: *“the son of perdition.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:3) Judas sinned. But his confession was a haunted confession. He was haunted by the ghost of guilt. He was crushed by remorse. But he never did repent towards God and put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. The Healing Confession

One last confession. And I want to call this one the healing confession, or the heartfelt confession, or the happy confession. Call it what you want. But I want you to see what kind of a confession God hears. Look in Luke chapter 15, verse 18. And one more time you're going to read these words, but this time I want you to see how God expects us to say them and what He wants us to mean. In Luke chapter 15, verse 18, you read the words of a prodigal son who had forsaken his father's house and gone into a far country, and wasted his substance with unrighteous living. And notice, as we begin to read here in verse 18, the prodigal son said to himself, *“I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned...”*—same three words: underscore them. But what a difference they made!—*“I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,”*—oh, get the difference! See where the direction of this confession is, and notice the humility of this confession—*“and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”* (Luke 15:18–23)

What made this confession a real confession? What caused it to bring peace and pardon? May I tell you that it was marked by genuine sorrow. May I tell you that it was

delineated by his turning from his sin. The Bible says he left the hog pen. He was not only broken over his sin; he was broken from his sin. He forsook his sin. *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”* (Proverbs 28:13) Genuine sorrow, genuine repentance, and coming to the true source of forgiveness: “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.” (Luke 15:18) And I tell you, when you come to God that way, I will guarantee you, on the authority of this book, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9)

Conclusion

There’s only one thing that can take away your peace—and it’s sin; and only one kind of sin: it’s your sin. There’s only one thing that can take away your sin—and it’s confession; but only one kind of confession: genuine confession.

Families Under the Blood

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 12

Outline

Introduction

I. The Blood Will Make You Safe

II. The Word Will Make You Sure

Conclusion

Introduction

Now open your Bibles tonight to Exodus the twelfth chapter. Somebody says, “Brother Rogers, why do you preach from the Old Testament?” I’ll tell you why I preach from the Old Testament: because I like to preach about Jesus. And the Old Testament as well as the New Testament is full of Jesus. You know, Jesus said, in John 5, verse 46, “Moses wrote of me” (John 5:46). Did you now that? Moses wrote of Jesus. And we say this again and again: When you understand the Bible, you’re going to understand that the entire Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you read anything in the Bible, and somewhere there in type, or shadow, figure, form, or prophecy you don’t read something about Jesus, you go back and read it again, because you misread it. Too many people go to the Bible to try to read something into the Bible, to put their ideas into it. Or they go to the Bible to get some point to back up their argument, some ramification for some pet hobby that they have. Friend, when you go to the Bible, say, “Lord Jesus, speak to my heart. Holy Spirit, reveal the things of Christ to me.” And you’ll find out that you’ll get a great spiritual blessing when you read the Bible this way.

Now the twelfth chapter of the Book of Exodus speaks of the Passover, and we’re reading here in Exodus 12, verse 1: *“And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house”* (Exodus 12:1–3).

Now this story we call the Passover story is the story surrounding a lamb. And that lamb, that Passover lamb, is the Old Testament picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 7, that Christ is our Passover lamb. Now

when I put this interpretation here, I am only putting the interpretation here that God Himself, through the inspired Apostle Paul has put here. Christ our Passover sacrificed for us. There was a Passover lamb. We get the idea or the name the Passover lamb from this story. You see the Israelites were in bondage in the land of Egypt—Egypt representing the world of sin. Pharaoh, the Egyptian dictator, the Egyptian monarch on the throne, pictures Satan, a cruel taskmaster. And so the Israelites in the land of Egypt picture the unsaved man in the house of bondage under the cruel dictatorship of Satan himself.

Now God decided He was going to deliver His people from the land of Egypt to the Promised Land. And, in order for them to be delivered, God worked a miracle. God said, “I want every house, every family, to take a lamb—a perfect lamb, a lamb without spot, a lamb without blemish.” God told all the Hebrews this—all the Israelites. He said, “You sacrifice that lamb; you slay the lamb. Then take the blood of the lamb”—as we will read in just a moment—“and put the blood of that lamb on the doorposts, the side posts, and the lintel of your house.” Then God said, “My death angel is going to come this night to the land of Egypt, and he’s going to hover over the land of Egypt, and he’s going to visit every house where there’s no blood upon the doorposts. And the death angel will slay the firstborn male in every home; the firstborn son in every home will be put to death.” But God said, “If I see the blood, I will pass over you. When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” And this is the reason we call this lamb the Passover lamb.

Now there are two basic points in the message tonight, and I want you to get them. Point number one: The blood will make you safe. Point number two: the Word will make you sure. The blood will make you safe. And the Word will make you sure.

I. The Blood Will Make You Safe

I want you to notice what God said, then, in verse 3: *“They shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And*

thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exodus 12:3–13)—“when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” “The blood will make you safe.”

The Bible says, in Hebrews 9:22, *“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”* The Bible says, in 1 John 1:7, *“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”* There are those today who don't like for you to preach about the blood of Jesus, because it ruins their sensibilities; it's not refined enough. They say, “It's too gory.” Some denominations have gone through the hymnals and have taken out the songs that deal with the blood. It's repulsive to them that we would sing,

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

—WILLIAM COWPER

Very few congregations anymore sing, Brother Jim,

*There is power, power, wonder working power
In the precious blood of the Lamb.*

—LEWIS E. JONES

Billy Graham said, when he first started preaching, a Cornell University professor came to him and said, “Young man, you could have a good future, because God has given you certain gifts and abilities; but if you want to be accepted in this day and in this age, you're going to have to leave out that blood stuff.” And Billy Graham said, “I'm sorry, sir, but, *‘I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation’* (Romans 1:16), and *‘The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God’* (1 Corinthians 1:18).”

Dwight Moody had the same experience. Dwight L. Moody, one of the greatest evangelists who ever lived, told how a woman wrote him, asking him to stop preaching on the blood. He said, “When I read that letter, I began to preach on the blood of Jesus Christ more than ever.”

Satan hates the blood, because it is the precious blood of Jesus that is the power of God unto salvation. God has no power to save anybody apart from the shed blood of Jesus. This is the reason Paul said, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation.”* That means that God has no power to save anybody apart from the cross. God is impotent and powerless to save without the cross.

You can see this history of the blood all the way through the Bible. In the very Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned against Almighty God and then they

sewed together fig leaves to hide themselves because they saw they were naked, they were ashamed, and they made aprons of fig leaves and hid themselves in the garden. And God came walking in the midst of the garden, and Adam and Eve hid themselves from the presence of Almighty God. And God cried out, “Adam, Adam, where art thou, Adam?” And Adam said, “I was afraid, and I hid myself.” Then the Bible says that God made for them garments, coats of skin, and clothed them (Genesis 3:7–10, 21). Now, where did God get this animal skin from? An animal had to be slain. There in the Garden of Eden these animals who knew no taint of sin, these animals who themselves had not rebelled against God—an innocent lamb was slain. And Adam and Eve received a covering for their shame and their sin, typifying the Lamb of God.

We come down and we see that Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel. They came to make a sacrifice to the Lord. And Cain brought to the Lord vegetables, the fruit of the ground, the work of his own hands; and he offered beautiful vegetables to the Lord as an offering. And it might have looked much more lovely and much more acceptable in the sight of man than what Abel offered; but the Bible says that Abel took a lamb, the firstling of a flock, a beautiful little creature without spot or blemish, and he sacrificed a blood sacrifice to the Lord. And the Bible says that God had respect toward Abel’s sacrifice, but He had no respect for Cain’s sacrifice, because “*without shedding of blood is no remission*” of sins (Genesis 4:3–4; Hebrews 9:22).

And on thousands and thousands of smoking Jewish altars on through the time, when God gave the Levitical law, an offering has been offered—a lamb, a goat, an ox, a bullock, offered time and time and time and time and time again: the shedding of blood. And all of these Old Testament types and all of these Old Testament figures were pointing towards the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Lamb, just as the Passover lamb was. Every time a lamb was sacrificed, God was getting His people ready to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, helping them to understand why Jesus came.

The Bible says, in the Book of Hebrews, it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin (Hebrews 10:4). These Old Testament sacrifices didn’t take away sin. They just simply helped people to understand that God would do it. The people in the Old Testament were not saved by the blood of bulls and goats and lambs. How were they saved? They were saved by looking forward to Jesus just as we’re saved by looking back. But it is that blood of Jesus Christ, and that blood alone, that cleanses from sin—not the blood of these Old Testament sacrifices. These were only the reminder that God had promised to pay. But these people were justified by faith, and a God who would one day atone for sin with the precious blood of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pavlov was a Russian psychologist who did experiments on what we call *conditioned responses*. Some of his experiments were this: He would take dogs and

ring a bell and then feed them. Then he'd ring a bell the next day, and then he'd feed them; and ring a bell and feed them. And after a while, Pavlov could just ring a bell, and the ol' dogs would start to drool. Their saliva would just drop from their mouths, because they associated the ringing of the bell with food. That's what you call a *conditioned response*. And I read even where a dog's head was severed from its body, and when the bell rang, that severed head still drooled. This is a conditioned response.

Now this is what God was doing as He was building into His people a conditioned response. Every time a lamb was slain, every time an animal was slain on a Jewish altar, God was building something into His people, until one day John the Baptist stepped out and looked at the Lord Jesus Christ and said, "*Behold the Lamb of God*" (John 1:29, 36). They knew what he was talking about. Here is God's lamb. You've been offering lambs; but here's God's lamb. Here is the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, the Lamb of God.

Now I want you to notice this lamb. It had to be a perfect lamb. Go back to Exodus 12, verse 5: "*Your lamb shall be without blemish*" (Exodus 12:5). Who does that remind you of? Oh, the Lord Jesus Christ! Perfect is the Lord Jesus Christ! They were supposed to keep it up fourteen days, until the fourteenth day of the same month. Why? Plenty of time to observe the lamb. You can look him over every day to make sure he doesn't have any spot or any blemish. Jesus Christ didn't come into this world one day and then die the next. Jesus Christ, in the plan of God, came here and lived for thirty-three years under careful scrutiny. And Jesus Christ could say to those, "Which of you convinces me of sin?" (John 8:46). Who can lay any sin to the Lord Jesus Christ? Matchless, blameless, was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, mister, you may say that you're not a Christian because of the way some Christians live, and you may find fault with the church, and you may criticize this preacher, and you may criticize many things; but I defy you to find any fault in the blessed Son of God. I'm not asking you to accept churchianity. I want you to receive Jesus Christ the Son of God. I'm not asking you to receive me. I'm not asking you to believe in these deacons. I'm not asking you to believe in Sunday School teachers. They are nothing but sinners saved by grace. And a church is nothing but a society of sinners who have finally realized that they are, and who have banded themselves together to work together to help themselves to be better people through the grace of Almighty God. That's all a church is, is a society of sinners. But I want to ask you a question: What fault find you in Jesus Christ? Oh, Jesus, isn't He wonderful, a lamb without spot and without blemish?

Not only was the lamb a perfect lamb, but he was a slain lamb. We're not saved by the life of the Lord Jesus Christ; we're saved by His death—by His death. And I want you to notice, in verse 6, that the lamb was to be slain: "*And ye shall keep it up until the*

fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening” (Exodus 12:6)—“*the whole assembly.*” Why? Because all of us were guilty of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. My sins were splinters in that cross. My sins were the nails that held Him to the cross; my sins, the spit that defiled His face; my sins, the thorns that lacerated His brow; my sins, the whip that beat into His back; my sins, the nails that held Him there; and my hard heart was the hammer that drove those nails—mine and yours. And we were there when they crucified our Lord. You were there, and I was there. Christ died for our sins. “*He was wounded...for our iniquities.*” “*The chastisement of our peace was upon him*” (Isaiah 53:5). The Lord Jesus Christ became our substitute, and symbolically, and in figure, and in spiritual reality, we were there when the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified.

This lamb was a perfect lamb. This lamb was a slain lamb. But it’s still not enough that Jesus Christ was perfect; not enough that Jesus Christ died on the cross. There’s still something else before sin is to be remitted, before God passes over: this lamb had to be personally appropriated. Notice verse 7—the blood had to be personally applied: “*And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses*” (Exodus 12:7)—take the blood and apply it.

Now many of you know that the Lord Jesus Christ was perfect, and many of you know that the Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross, but you’re not saved, and if you were to die tonight, you would go straight to hell and burn forever. Why? Because you have not applied the blood. God says, “When I see the blood applied, then I’m going to pass over.” Notice the progression here in chapter 12. Notice in verse 3: “*a lamb*” (Exodus 12:3). Notice in verse 4, the last part of that verse: “*the lamb*” (Exodus 12:4). Notice in verse 5: “*Your lamb*” (Exodus 12:5). Do you see the progression?

There are a lot of people who talk about Jesus Christ as *a savior*. Oh, yes, He’s a savior. My friend, listen. If that’s all you know of Him, is *a savior*, you don’t know enough—you don’t know enough. Jesus Christ is not one of the ways to heaven. He’s not the best way to heaven. Dear friend, He’s the only way to heaven. There is no other way. And some think of Him as a lamb, a savior, but then even more specifically they speak of Him as *the Savior*; and that’s better: not just *a* but *the*. The Savior, the Lamb of God, the only One: but that’s still not enough. There’s still a further step. Not *a savior*; not *a lamb*; not *the lamb*; but *your lamb*. Is He yours? Is He? Can you say, “I am His, and He is mine forever and forever.” Can you say with the Psalmist, in Psalm 23, “*The LORD is my shepherd*” (Psalm 23:1), personally? Has the blood been applied personally to your heart? Has there been a time when you saw that He was *a savior*, that He was *the Savior*, and then that He is *my Savior*?

It’s not enough that He’s perfect. It’s not enough that He was slain. Has the blood been applied by faith? God says, “*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*” (Exodus

12:13). “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

Now I want to say another thing: that the blood of Jesus Christ was sufficient by itself. God didn’t say, “when I see the blood plus something,” or, “when I see something other than the blood,” but, “*When I see the blood, I will pass over you.*” Verse 13, “*And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you*” (Exodus 12:13). Now had the Egyptians applied blood to their doorposts, God would have passed over them. The only difference between Israel and the Egyptians was the blood. There may have been some Egyptians who lived a more moral life than some of the Jews, but God said, “When I see the blood, I’ll pass over you.” The only difference between a saved man and a lost man here in this congregation tonight, the main difference is that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has been applied.

Now they could have put anything else there, and it wouldn’t have worked. Had they overlaid the side posts with diamonds, and overlaid them with silver and gold and rubies that would flash like fire, and had they written all sorts of poetry and sentimental thoughts and tacked them to the door, and had they prayed and agonized all night, and had they lived a perfect life, they still would have felt the judgment of Almighty God, because there’s one thing and one thing alone, the blood of Jesus Christ, that cleanses from sin. This is the reason I want the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island to be forever known as the church that preaches the book, the blood, and the blessed hope. That’s it: the book, the Bible, is the Word of God; the blood, the blood of Jesus that cleanses from all sin; and the blessed hope, that I believe one day soon our dear Lord is going to come again in like manner as we have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

Now, has this blood been applied to your heart? Has there been a time when you definitely, knowingly, willingly, said, “God, I’m a sinner; I’m lost, and I cannot save myself; but, Lord, by faith I want the blood of Jesus applied to my soul, to my sin-cursed nature; I want to be forgiven”? All right now, friend, the blood will make you safe—only the blood.

II. The Word Will Make You Sure

Next point: The Word will make you sure.

Let’s go to the land of Egypt. Go back with me through the millennium, go back with me through the century: we imagine ourselves tonight in the home of a humble Jewish man. The firstborn son is there. He knows he’s the firstborn in that family. He knows what Moses has said through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that the death angel is coming. And he knows that the death angel is coming this night, and, frankly, he’s worried. And he comes to his dad, and he says, “Dad, listen, Dad. Isn’t tonight the night the death angel is coming?” “Yes, son.” “Well, Dad, you know, I’m the firstborn son.

And, Dad, if we haven't done things right, you know what's going to happen to me? I'm going to die." "That's right, son." "Well, Dad, let's go over the game. Let's make sure that we've done it right." "Well, son, we've done it right." "But, Dad, let's make sure."

"All right, son. God said take a lamb, a lamb without spot, without blemish. Now, son, we took a lamb. You remember, every day we went out and inspected that lamb. He was a perfect lamb without spot, without blemish. Now, son, we killed the lamb. You remember." "Yes, Daddy, I remember. It was a gory sight." "And then, son, you remember we applied the blood to the doorposts. Come, let's look. There's the blood, here and here and here. Now, son, we've done everything that God told us to do." "Yes, Dad, I understand that, Dad. But, Dad, how do we know it's going to work? How do we know it, Dad? I've got to know. I've got to know, Dad." "Well, son, God said it would work. God said it." "Well, if God said it, it must be so. If God said it, that's good enough for me. If God said it, I believe it; that's settles it. God said it. Thank you, Dad. Thank you." And he goes off that night and goes to sleep like a little baby.

How do I know I'm saved? Because I have funny feelings? Because I'm so good? No. How do I have the blessed assurance of my salvation? Just one way: God said it. *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life"* (1 John 5:13). God didn't give us goose bumps and feelings and strange music and angel wings tickling our backbone, but God gave us His Word, something sure. God said it. "When I see the blood, I'll pass over you." I know I'm saved tonight, not because of my feelings, not even because of my good life, not because of my emotions, but because of the eternal, immutable, irrefutable Word of God. God said it. The blood will make you safe. The Word will make you sure.

Now I want you to imagine tonight another son. He's worried too. He lives in the land of Egypt. He comes to his dad, and he says, "Dad, listen. Tonight, the death angel's coming. Dad, you know what Moses has said. You know what the Word of God has said. And, Dad, we've got to be sure. Dad, listen, there's a lot hanging on this. I want to grow up. I've got plans. I don't want to be destroyed. I've already seen God bring these other plagues. It's terrible. Dad, I want to know—I want to know." But the dad goes through the same thing: "All right, son. Here's the lamb. You know, we've got the perfect lamb. You know, we killed it just on the day God said we should; in the evening, just like God said. Look, son, here's the blood, and here's the blood, and here's the blood. And God said, 'When I see the blood, I'll pass over you.'" He says, "Yes, Dad, I know. I know that's what God said. But, Dad, I'll tell you, this is scary business. And I just, I don't know, Dad. I sure hope it works." All night long he's afraid. He doesn't sleep a wink. His heart is beating like a trip hammer. It gets to be 11:30, 11:45, 11:50, 11:55, 56, 57, 58, 59, almost midnight. He pulls the covers over his head. Midnight! He pinches himself. He's alive! He's still there! "Oh, wonderful!" he says. "It worked! It worked!"

What was the difference between those two boys? One enjoyed his salvation. The other endured it. Oh, one had the blessed, wonderful assurance that God will keep His word. Oh, there are a lot of people who have truly trusted the Lord, but they are living beneath their privileges. They don't have the grand, wonderful, glorious assurance that God will keep His word. Isn't it great to be saved and to know it? Amen? To know it! It doesn't depend on me. Oh, if it depended on me, I'd burst hell wide open! But I'm glad to know that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son makes the vilest sinner clean—His blood availed for me.

I want you to notice a third son now—this is Pharaoh's son. Pharaoh's son that night comes to his dad, and he says—in my mind; the Bible doesn't say this; I just imagine this happening; but it well could have happened—he comes to his dad, and he says, “Dad, have you heard the story that's going around? Have you heard that Moses the prophet of Jehovah God has said there's a death angel coming and the firstborn in every family is going to die? Have you heard that?” “Yeah,” he says, “I heard it.” “Well, Dad, listen. You know, I'm the firstborn in this family. Dad, don't you think it would be a good idea if we got a lamb and killed it and put the blood on the doorpost of our house?”

“Oh, son, not that gory blood business! Son, listen. We're the best folks in town. Besides that, we have our religion. No one is more religious than the Egyptians. We worship the great sun god, and the frog god, and the Nile god, and all these gods; we worship these. And don't you worry about any so-called death angel, because, son, we're going to put you under iron guard tonight, and there will be soldiers outside your bedroom door, because you're so precious to me, son. I won't let anything happen to you. And, son, we've got hundreds and hundreds of Egyptian priests. And, son, we have a royal family; you don't have to worry.” “Well, I know, Dad; but every time Moses says something, it happens.” “Oh, son, that's coincidence! Don't you listen to that man! I'll tell you, if anybody gets by, the first family of Egypt will! You go to sleep, my son, and don't you let that fanatic preacher upset you.”

And that night the son of the richest man in the land goes to his cushioned, soft, downy bed. Outside, swords glitter and gleam. Soldiers with eyes alert march up and down, and priests go through their incantations. The seconds tick away. It is midnight. There's a shriek, a gasp, a shudder, a flash; and a scream and a howl goes up over the land of Egypt. And the firstborn even in Pharaoh's household is dead. For the Bible says, “Without shedding of blood there's no remission” (Hebrews 9:22).

Conclusion

Three classes: which one are you in? Saved, and enjoying it; saved, and enduring it; or not saved at all? “When I see the blood, I'll pass over you” (Exodus 12:13).

Knowing God Intimately

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 18, 1990

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 33:12–15

Outline

Introduction

- I. To Know the Ways of God Is a Personal Relationship with God
- II. To Know the Ways of God Is a Peaceful Relationship with God
- III. To Know the Ways of God Is a Powerful Relationship with God
 - A. Preparation
 - B. Isolation
 - C. Expectation
 - D. Adoration
 - E. Intercession
 - F. Observation

Conclusion

Introduction

Everyone today will do one of two things: you'll crown Him or crucify Him. You say, "Well, I'll do neither." Oh, you can't just be neutral. Jesus said, "*He that is not with me is against me*" (Matthew 12:30). Everybody will leave the auditorium today, unless the Lord comes first; and then, I guess we'll leave it also, but we'll go this way. But as you leave, everybody will walk out of this place today either under the blood or over the blood. That is, you will receive Christ as your personal Savior, and His blood will become the atonement for your sin; or else, you will trample beneath your feet the blood of Jesus Christ. You can't be neutral. If you don't accept Him, then you reject Him. If you don't confess Him, then you deny Him. If you don't crown Him, then you crucify Him. So there is a good question today: What will you do with Jesus? I pray that, before this service comes to a conclusion, you will have said an everlasting yes to the Lord Jesus.

Take your Bibles and turn with me to Exodus chapter 33, would you please? And we're going to look at a very wonderful passage of Scripture—one that burns into my heart every time I look at it—Exodus chapter 33, and I want to begin in verse 12 in a moment. I want to talk to you today about "Knowing God Intimately"—"Knowing God Intimately."

Now, how important it is—not that you know about God, but that you know God!

Many of you may know about President Bush, but you don't know President Bush. Many of you may know about Abraham Lincoln; he's dead and gone. I'm not asking, "Do you know about the God of the Bible, or even the God who exists now?" but "Do you know Him?" For, you see, my dear friend, to know Him is to love Him, and to love Him is to trust Him, and to trust Him is to obey Him, and to obey Him is to be blessed. And we need to be blessed, and therefore we need to know God intimately. Do you know Him? I didn't ask, "Do you know about Him?" Is He a bright living reality to you?

Well, look at our scripture today, and we're talking about how to know God intimately. I begin in Exodus chapter 33 and verse 12: "*And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight.*" That is, "God, you know me." Now, notice Exodus 33, verse 13: "*Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee,*"—"O God, I want to know you like you know me"—"*that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him,*"—that is, Moses said back to the Lord—"If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Exodus 33:12–15).

Now, what is all this all about? Well, God has said to Moses, "Moses, I want you to take my people out of the land of bondage, out of the land of Egypt. I want you to take them to a land that flows with milk and honey: the land of Canaan. I want you to take yourselves to the Promised Land." And Moses says, "Well, Lord, before we go, I want to know you personally. I have a great task; and, therefore, I have a great need." And he prays, in verse 13, "O God, show me thy way." Do you see it? Underscore it. It may be already underscored, because we've studied this scripture before. Look at it: "*Shew me now thy way*" (Exodus 33:13)—just put a big star, or whatever it is you mark your Bible with, right there. "*Shew me now thy way*": that's a key verse in all of the Bible. Moses, facing a great task, says, "God, please show me thy way." Now this was a significant prayer, and God answered that prayer. Psalm 103 and verse 7 says this: "*He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel*" (Psalm 103:7). Now, notice in Psalm 103, verse 7, that God mentions His ways and His acts. He showed His ways to Moses. He showed His acts to the children of Israel.

"Well," you say, "what is the difference?" Well, you'd better learn that difference today, because it will certainly do something in your heart and life if you'll learn the difference between knowing the ways of God and the acts of God. Please pay attention. You see, so many people know simply the acts of God. They see what God does, but they don't know the ways of God. They don't know who God is. And if all you see are the acts of God, then you don't know the ways of God, and you are to be pitied. Now I

want to talk to you today about knowing: not just simply what God does, but who God is. Now not just simply knowing about God—the acts of God—but knowing God; that is, the ways of God. Now there are three things that will happen if you will know the ways of God—if God reveals Himself to you as He revealed Himself to Moses. And, oh, how I pray to God that He'll do that for you and for me today!

I. To Know the Ways of God Is a Personal Relationship with God

First of all, may I say, dear friend, that when you know the ways of God, that is a personal relationship. Now, look in verse 14 again: *“And he said, My presence shall go with thee”* (Exodus 33:14). “Now it’s not just that I am sending you, but I will go with you. My presence will go with you.” Now Moses said, “I’m going up there, Lord; but, Lord, you’d better be with me.” And God said, “Don’t you worry, Moses. My presence will be with you.”

Now this is knowing God intimately. Again, if you’ll look in verse 11, then you’ll see something about this intimacy: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”* (Exodus 33:11). Do you know God that way? So much of our praying is we’re praying at God rather than talking with God. Do you know God face to face? Do you have a conversation with the Lord, as a man speaks with his friend? You see, to know the ways of God—listen—it is an intimate, a personal relationship with God.

Do you know the problem with many people? They are infatuated with God. I see people join churches who are infatuated with God. They’ll come to a church and hear the choir sing like the choir has just sung. They will see sweet fellowship, and they’ll hear somebody testify about how God healed them. Or, they’ll see some miracle. Or, they’ll learn about some blessing. And they say, “Man, I want that. I really like what God is doing; I see what God is doing; I want to get in on what God is doing,” but they don’t know God. All they see is what God is doing. And so they are infatuated with God.

That’s the way some people fall in love, or think they’re in love and get married. They get infatuated. That’s not really love at all. And a guy sees a girl, and he likes her style. He sees her beauty. He sees her charm. He sees her wit. He sees all of these things, and he says, “I like that.” Oh, his heart begins to go *thumpity-thump*. And he proposes to her, and they get married. But he doesn’t really know that girl, yet he’s just infatuated. Many a man has fallen in love with a dimple and married the whole girl. And then later on, he discovers whom it is that he married. He didn’t even really know her. Somebody has well said, “You’d better keep your eyes wide-open before marriage and half-shut from there on.”

Dear friend, we just get infatuated. I see people get infatuated with God. They see God do something wonderful, or they get in some great, glorious services, and they say,

“Isn’t God great?” Dear friend, that’s just infatuation. You only know the works of God. You don’t know the ways of God. Now if you only know the works of God and you don’t know the ways of God, then, sooner or later, you’re going to get into difficulty.

For example, let me give you an illustration. When you go home, read John chapter 2, and in the story of John chapter 2 is the story of Jesus turning water into wine at a wedding. Remember that story? Jesus took six water jars full of water, about 120 gallons of water, and He turned it into pure sparkling wine. Now the Bible says, when He did that, He manifested His glory. I mean, they saw the glory of God. They saw a great miracle. And then that same second chapter of John says this. It says, in John 2, verses 23 and 24, “*Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did*” (John 2:23). Oh boy, they liked that! “Anybody who can turn the water into wine: I want to join up.” But continue to read that chapter, and it says, in John 2, verses 24 and 25, “*But Jesus did not commit himself unto them...for he knew what was in man*” (John 2:24–25). Jesus knew they were only miracle-mongers. Jesus knew they only followed Him because He had turned water into wine. But Jesus also knew that down in their hearts they did not know, love, or respect Him for who He was. They only saw His acts. They did not truly know His ways.

The same thing is true about Moses here. Now Moses is going to lead these people out, and he’s going to find how fickle the children of Israel are. Moses is with the children of Israel, and he’s going to lead them out of the land of bondage. So they get to the Red Sea, and the Red Sea opens up. And the people go marching through the Red Sea on dry ground. Well, dear friend, you talk about being ecstatic, you talk about being happy, and you talk about leaping and dancing and praising God: there’s the first recorded song in the Bible, Brother Jim, right there, next to chapter 15. They sang the Song of Moses and the Lamb. They said, “What a man of God we have to lead us! What a great God we have! Hallelujah for Moses and the Lamb!” But three days later, they found themselves out there in the wilderness with no water, and they began to carp and to criticize Moses. They said, “*And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?*” (Numbers 20:4). And, oh, did they scowl and scorn and carp and gripe! And in three days Moses has gone from hero to zero. Why? Because they were infatuated at the Red Sea. All they saw were the works of God. They did not know the ways of God.

I’ll give you another illustration of how you can see God’s works and not know God’s ways, and after a while you can get jaded, or you find out you were only infatuated with God. Remember the story in John chapter 9 of the man who was born blind and Jesus healed him? And the Pharisees came, and, oh, they were angry, because Jesus had opened the eyes of this man on the Sabbath. And they got this man up there, and they began to interrogate him, and they said, “*How were thine eyes opened?*” (John 9:10).

“What sayest thou of him?” (John 9:17). Today, they would have said, “What seminary did he graduate from?” *“What sayest thou of him?”* *“What did he do to thee? how opened he thine eyes?”* (John 9:26). I mean, they couldn’t deny that his eyes had been opened, and they said, “Tell us: Was he a sinner or not?” Now, here’s what the man said: *“Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see”* (John 9:25).

Well, that’s fine. That’s a good testimony, as far as it goes, because that’s all he did know. He didn’t know whether Jesus Christ was a sinner, or whether He wasn’t a sinner: all he knew was that He opened his eyes. That’s a good testimony, as far as it goes. Now, my dear friend, that would not have been a good testimony a month or two later, or three or four years later, to say, “Whether He’s a sinner or not, I do not know.” Listen. If all you see are the works of God, then that might make you a testifier. But it will never make you a teacher. You have to know the ways of God to be a teacher. See, all this man saw were the works of God: “I was blind, but now I see. Whether he’s a sinner or not, I do not know.”

I’m telling you, there are all kinds of people who know the works of God, but they don’t understand the ways of God. They see what God does, but they don’t know who God is. They don’t understand the heart of God. You’ve got to know the heart of God. So Moses prays, “O God, show me thy way” (Exodus 33:13). The Bible says that He made known His ways unto Moses, but He made known His acts unto the children of Israel.

May I tell you that knowing the ways of God is a very intimate thing. It is a very personal relationship. You see, I know Bob Sorrell in a way that some of you don’t know him. But I’m going to tell you something else. Buna knows his ways. Joyce knows my ways, and I know the ways of Joyce. I can tell you what Joyce is going to do before she ever does it. I mean, I just know her ways. For example, I was at a wedding. I performed the wedding. And I said to someone when Joyce walked up, “Watch her. She’s going to do so and so, and so and so.” I knew how she was going to touch me. I knew how she was going to put her arms on me. I just know her ways. I know when she’s going to get romantic. I just know that gal. I mean, I can just telegraph what she’s going to do. I’m just going to put this friend on notice that that’s exactly what Joyce is going to do, and that’s exactly what she did. Now, my dear friend, you have to live with a person to know their ways. Isn’t that true? You see, to know the ways of God: that is a personal relationship.

II. To Know the Ways of God Is a Peaceful Relationship with God

Now I want to say something else—watch it: Not only is it a personal relationship; it becomes a very peaceful relationship. If you don’t know the ways of God, then you’re

never going to have peace. If all you know about God is what you see God do, then, friend, you're going to be blown out of the water half the time, because what God does is not going to make sense, unless you know God's ways. Now, look, first of all, in verse 14: *"And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest"* (Exodus 33:14). "My presence will go with thee": that's a personal relationship. "And I will give you rest": that's a peaceful relationship. You see, it is God's presence and that alone that gives us peace in the storm.

Now, let me show you the New Testament commentary on this. Turn to Hebrews chapter 3 with me for just a moment. It's worth turning to, so just go ahead and turn to it. Hebrews chapter 3, and look with me, if you will, beginning about verse 7—Hebrews chapter 3, and verses 7 to 9: *"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:"*—now he's going all the way back to when Moses was leading these Hebrews through the wilderness—*"when your fathers tempted me, proved me,"*—that is, "put me to the test"—*"and saw my"*—what's that next word?—*"works forty years."* They saw the works of God—all kinds of miracles—but notice in Hebrews 3, verse 10: *"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways"* (Hebrews 3:7–10).

Do you see it? What did they see? God's works. Why did they mess up? Why was God grieved with them? Forty years they saw the works of God, but they didn't know His ways. He made known His ways to Moses, but His acts to the children of Israel. And, my dear friend, if you see God's works, and you don't know God's ways, then you're going to be confused, because God's works don't always make sense. You see, if you just see the works of God and not the ways of God, then you're going to be pushing the panic button half the time. Now about the time you think you have it all figured out about how God's going to work, He does something different.

Let me give you an illustration. Two men were put in prison by wicked King Herod: James and Peter. Now James is put in prison and he is killed by Herod; he is martyred. Peter is put in prison, and Peter is miraculously delivered. An angel comes and gets Simon Peter out of prison. Was God sovereign in both cases? Indeed, He was. The God that got Peter out of prison could have gotten James out of prison, but He didn't. Now if all you see are the works of God, then one time you're going to say, "Well, I don't want to serve a God who let James be killed." Another time, you'll say, "Boy, I want to serve the God that got Peter out of prison!"

Let me give you another illustration about this same Peter on the day of Pentecost. He stood up and he preached, and 3,000 souls were converted. Wasn't that wonderful? You say, "Well, boy, I like what God does! God uses preachers to preach, and when they preach, if they're filled with the Holy Ghost, then they're going to have a lot of

people saved. And that's the sign of a man filled with the Holy Ghost." Well, you go on through the Book of Acts, and after a while you'll find out about another preacher whose name was Stephen. He stood up and preached, in chapter 7, and in chapter 8, he didn't get 3,000 souls; he got 3,000 stones. They stoned him to death, filled with the Holy Ghost, just like Peter was.

Now, friend, if you're standing around just watching God's works, then you'll say, "If I go to prison, then am I going to be killed, or is an angel going to take me out? If I preach the gospel, then am I going to have a lot of people saved, or am I going to get stoned?" John the Baptist had been standing out there on the river of Jordan preaching the Word of God, and boy, great crowds were coming to him. And then John the Baptist got thrown in jail. And he found out that it's one thing to stand on Jordan and give it, but it's another thing to be in jail and take it. And he's down in the jail now. And John the Baptist gets so frustrated and so confused in jail that he almost loses his faith. He sent some of his messengers. He "*sent two of his disciples, And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*" (Matthew 11:2–3). Here was a man—he couldn't figure out what God was doing. "If He's so great and He's so powerful, then what am I doing down here rotting in this dungeon?"

All I'm trying to say to you, folks, is that you're on for a real roller coaster ride if all you know about God is what God does and you don't know the heart of God. Oh, the only time you'll have rest—the only way you'll ever have true peace—is not by observing the works of God but by knowing the heart of God, because, when you cannot trace His hand, you can always trust His heart. You had better listen to who God is, not simply what God does.

III. To Know the Ways of God Is a Powerful Relationship with God

Now, let me go on. May I tell you, dear friend—we're back in Exodus chapter 33 now—I'm saying that to know the ways of God is a personal relationship with God. To know the ways of God is a peaceful relationship with God. And, thirdly, to know the ways of God is a powerful relationship with God. Look now, if you will, in verse 15. I've been reading Exodus 33, verses 13 and 14—now verse 15: Moses "*said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.*" That is, "God, if you don't go, then I'm not going." And then, notice Exodus 33, verse 16: "*For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight?*" That is, "God, I want it to be seen; I want it to be known, Lord, that you are working and that your grace is there." "*Is it not in that thou goest with us?*" "Not in anything else, except, Lord, in your presence." "*So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth.*" Now, in Exodus 33, verse 17: "*And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee*

by name” (Exodus 33:15–17).

“Now, why did you say, pastor, that it’s a powerful relationship?” Because, dear friend, Moses is now interceding for people. Did you know that the only people who really know how to intercede—the people who really know how to touch the heart of God—are those people who know the ways of God? You cannot pray as a prayer warrior; you cannot intercede; you cannot touch history; you cannot lead; you cannot teach; and you cannot be the man or the woman of God that you need to be, until you know the ways of God. And Moses was a great leader, because he knew how to pray and intercede for his people.

You see him later on standing in the gap for his people who had sinned a great sin. But he just stands in the gap for his people the same way that Abraham did. By the way, we’ve not finished our series on Abraham, and I’m preparing a message on the intercession of Abraham. But how Abraham knew the ways of God! And it looked like Sodom was going to be destroyed, and his nephew Lot was there in Sodom. And Abraham says there, in the Book of Genesis, in chapter 18, *“That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked,”* and he says, “I know your ways, God” (Genesis 18:25). And because he knew the ways of God, he knew how to intercede.

So many of us do not know how to pray. So many of us do not know how to get what we need from God, because all we see are the works of God, and we don’t understand the ways of God. And we’re spending so much time seeking God’s hand when we need to be seeking God’s face. We’re asking God to do things, rather than to know God and to love God.

Now, let me get right down to the crucible of the matter. How can you know the ways of God? Okay, let me give you some steps. Get out your pen, and get your pencil, and I want talk to you about how you can know God personally and intimately: how you can know God with that personal relationship, that peaceful relationship, and that powerful relationship that you ought to have. Now, thank God we have an example right here. Moses has prayed and said, “O God, show me your way.” And the Lord here is going to do it.

Now we’ve been in chapter 33—let’s look in chapter 34. And let me tell you this, dear friend: You’re not going to know the ways of God by reasoning. Can a man by reason find out God? No. His ways are past finding out. You’re not going to know the ways of God by research. You’re not going to know Him by studying history. All you can do by reason and research—all you can do—is to know the works of God. The only way you can know the way of God is by revelation. You know the works of God by reason, and by research, but you know the ways of God by revelation.

And, by the way, let me just say this. Revelation is by direct dealing with God. How

do I know Joyce as I know her, and how does she know me? We've had so much communication, so much direct dealing, and no second-hand knowledge. I haven't been reading books about Joyce. I've been living with her. Let me say this. If you're a counselor—and all of us are counselors in some way... Suppose that somebody comes to you, Brother Mike, over here, and they have a problem—Mike's our church counselor and heads our counseling department—and they come to you, and they have a problem. Well, if you tell them what to do, and you don't get them in direct communication with God, then you've failed. Now so many people want me as a counselor to tell them what to do. Oh, my dear friend, my job as a counselor may be indeed to give you some advice, but my job is, first and foremost, to bring you into the presence of God and to get you to know the ways of God personally and intimately.

A. Preparation

All right, here it is. Let me give you the steps now. Moses is getting ready for his encounter with the Lord in a deeper way. And we're in chapter 34. Let me just give you these steps. Step number one is preparation. Look in Exodus 34, verses 1 and 2: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount”* (Exodus 34:1–2). Do you do that in the morning? Are you ready in the morning to present yourself to the Lord, and do you bring some tablets to write on? I mean, you're expecting to meet God in the morning, and you're wanting to have this personal time with God. My dear friend, there needs to come that preparation. God says, “If you're going to meet me in the morning, be thou ready.” So many times we come so carelessly into the presence of God, and we just mumble and stutter. We're not ready for anything.

B. Isolation

All right, first of all: preparation. Prepare your heart. Number two: isolation. Look, if you will, in Exodus 34, verse 3: *“And no man shall come up with thee”* (Exodus 34:3). “Moses, you be ready, and you be alone. You want to know me? You want to know my ways? Then you get alone with me.” Now Moses had to separate himself from a nation of three million people. Well, wasn't he their leader? Absolutely, he was. But, my dear friend, if you are a Sunday School teacher, or whoever you are—if you're a pastor, whoever you are—then the best time you'll spend for your people is not when you're with them, but when you're with God. I mean, dear friend, you have to separate yourself from them for them—to get alone with God in a time of isolation.

Pastors need to do this. Sunday School teachers need to do this. Parents need to do this. Jesus taught us, when we pray, to get alone. We need to shut the door of the world

and open the window to heaven. Jesus said, *“But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly”* (Matthew 6:6).

You study the history of the saints: their greatest blessing came when they were alone. Abraham was alone when God appeared to him in the plains of Mamre (Genesis 18). Daniel was alone when God appeared to him (Daniel 10). Paul was alone in Arabia when God spoke to him (Galatians 1:17). Peter was alone on the rooftop when God spoke to him (Acts 10:9). John was alone on the island of Patmos when God spoke to him (Revelation 1:9). Moses was alone up here, on the mountaintop, in the wilderness.

C. Expectation

All right, watch it. You want to know God personally? Preparation, isolation, and expectation. Expect God to meet you. Notice here, in Exodus 34, verses 4 through 7: *“And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.”* Why did he take two tables of stone? Well, he expected God to give him something. And he expected to get it written down. *“And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation”* (Exodus 34:4–7). What a revelation of God Moses had! And Moses was expecting a revelation.

Now, friend, when you come to that time of preparation and that time isolation, do you come to a time of expectation? How many of you—don't raise your hand—but how many of you have a quiet time where you also have a notebook? Many of you don't even come to church with a notebook. I'll tell you why. You're not expecting to hear much. I mean, if you say, “Hey, I'm going to get something good,” then you'd come prepared to write it down. You say, “I'll remember it.” No, you won't. I can't even remember it, and I preach it—unless I write it down. I'm going to tell you, my dear friend, that the weakest ink is better than the best memory. Get something to write it down so that you can have a record of what God shows you.

You ought to have a spiritual journal. Let me tell you how to get spiritual truth, my dear friend. You get the Word of God out, and as God begins to speak, you ask yourself, “Is there a lesson to learn? Is there a sin to avoid? Is there a blessing to enjoy? Is there a new truth to assimilate?” You begin to ask yourselves these questions, and as God speaks to your heart—not just simply about what it meant then, but what it means

to you personally—let me tell you what to do. You write it down; but, first of all, you think it through. And then you write it down, and then you pray it in. Pray the Bible back to God. I pray my sermons back to God. I say, “God, is this true? Is this what you want to say? Is this what you mean?” And I talk to God about it. You pray it in. Write it down, think it out, write it down, and pray it in. I’ll tell you what else to do, my dear friend. Live it out. When you find something in the morning, and God gives you a truth, don’t wait to put it into action. I mean, as soon as God gives it to you, find a way to put it into shoe leather. Whatever it is, just begin to live out that truth; express that truth in your life. And then pass it on; share it with somebody else. I mean, give it away. The more of the Word of God you give away, the more the Word of God will speak to you. Have you got it? Look: read it through, think it out, write it down, pray it in, live it out, and pass it on. That’s it! You see—listen—as you get alone with God, have a quiet time with God. I’m telling you that you need to know God’s ways.

D. Adoration

Preparation, isolation, expectation; and then, my dear friend, adoration. Look, if you will, in Exodus 34, verse 8: “*And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped*” (Exodus 34:8). That’s the way to know God. We become like what we worship as we adore Him and praise Him and glorify Him. Then you’re going to know, my dear friend, the ways of God. You’re not going to know the ways of God by studying a theology textbook. You’re not going to know the ways of God by listening to Adrian Rogers preach about the ways of God. You are going to know the ways of God when you get alone with God and you worship God: adoration.

E. Intercession

Then, intercession. Exodus 34, verse 9: “*And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O LORD, let my LORD, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance*” (Exodus 34:9). Now you’re ready to intercede. Intercession—that’s a part of your quiet time. I wish I had more time for that.

F. Observation

But let me just give the last point, and it is observation. Notice Exodus 34, verses 10 and 11: “*And he said,*”—God says to him—“*Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.*” Now, notice: “*Observe thou that which I command thee this day*” (Exodus 34:10–11)—observation.

Conclusion

Jesus said, *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them”* (John 13:17). May I give you one of the greatest truths that I can possibly give you? And I’m going to give it, and then I am finished. Bible study will give you knowledge *about* God; obedience will give you knowledge *of* God. Bible study only gives you knowledge about God. It is not until you obey that you begin to know. Jesus said, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21). I want you to know, dear friend, God: personally, peacefully, and powerfully.

Don't Pass Over the Passover

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 28, 1986

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 12:1–4

Outline

Introduction

- I. They Were to Eat the Lamb
- II. They Were to Eat It with Bitter Herbs
- III. They Were to Eat It with Unleavened Bread
- IV. They Were to Eat All of the Lamb
- V. They Were to Eat Ready to Travel
- VI. They Were to First Rest, Then Work

Conclusion

Introduction

I would like you to turn for a few moments with me to the Old Testament—to Exodus chapter 12. I want to give you the background for this supper that we will partake of—

Exodus chapter 12. The children of Israel, as you know, in Exodus chapter 12, are in the land of Egypt, which represents the land of sin and bondage—the land of darkness, depravity, debauchery. Pharaoh, the cruel taskmaster, is a picture of prophecy, a type of Satan himself.

I begin reading here in Exodus chapter 12, verse 1: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire;*

his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.” (Exodus 12:1–14)

Now the Bible tells us clearly that all of these things that happened to these people so long ago happened to them for examples to us—1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 11 (1 Corinthians 10:11)—so this is not simply what God has said; it is what God is saying. This Passover lamb that was slain, this lamb without spot, this lamb without blemish, is beyond a shadow of any doubt whatsoever a picture, a prophecy of Christ. For the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 7, *“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”* (1 Corinthians 5:7)

This Passover lamb pictures the Lord Jesus. That's the reason that John the Baptist, that rugged, eccentric prophet of the outdoors, when he saw Jesus coming, John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Ghost, pointed to Jesus, and said there, in John chapter 1, verse 29, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29)

Now the Jews so long ago had a feast. They called it the Feast of the Passover. Our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper, his memorial feast, on the night of the Passover, so the two are linked, and the one foreshadows the other.

Now there are several things I want you to think of as we think of the Lamb of God.

I. They Were to Eat the Lamb

And the very first thing I want you to think of as we take this feast tonight, I want you to think and look with me, if you will, in verse 8 again of this chapter, and we're going to comment very little. But as they took that lamb, the Bible says they were to eat that lamb. And look in verse 8: *“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.”* (Exodus 12:8)

Now when the lamb was roast with fire, it speaks of excruciating pain, of Jesus Christ who died for us. Jesus Christ tasted the fires of hell for us. Jesus for us walked the burning corridors of hell. Jesus baptized his soul in hell. Jesus suffered on that cross not only all that you would suffer, but that all of us would suffer, and all that all who ever lived would suffer, when one died for all. Some people can't understand this, because

they say, “Pastor, how could Jesus stay on the cross for a few hours and suffer my hell for all eternity?” I’ll tell you how. Jesus, being infinite, suffered in a finite period of time what we, being finite, would have suffered in an infinite period of time. The eternities were compressed upon Jesus, and the sins of the world were distilled upon Jesus. And the suffering and the agony of Jesus is beyond the ability of pen to write, tongue to tell, poet to describe, or artist to paint or sing—how Jesus suffered for us.

II. They Were to Eat It with Bitter Herbs

And so the Bible says, when we take this lamb that is roast with fire, we are to eat it with two things: number one, with bitter herbs; and, number two, with unleavened bread. Now the bitter herbs are to tell us of the sorrow and brokenness and the contrition that we ought to have when we feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. God forbid that we should lightly or carelessly feed upon the Lamb tonight! That’s what we’re going to be doing. Oh, with bitter herbs! It was for me that He died. He died in my place. God forbid that we should coldly, callously, thoughtlessly, without tears of gratitude, remember the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ!

III. They Were to Eat It with Unleavened Bread

But not only are we to eat this Lamb with bitter herbs, which speaks of a humble and a contrite heart, but we’re to eat this Lamb with unleavened bread. Leaven, in the Bible, is a type, a symbol, of sin. The Bible tells us that we are to purge out that old leaven before we eat the Passover feast. (1 Corinthians 5:7) Now if there is in your heart the leaven of malice, or pride, or hypocrisy, or resentment, my dear friend, you not only are irreverent, but you’re absolutely foolish, and you’re living dangerously—if you take the Lord’s Supper with un-confessed sin. I would not dare do it. You’re playing with fire.

You see, what you’re doing, if you eat this feast with anything other than unleavened bread—that is, with your sins un-confessed—you’re making a mockery of the death of Christ. You’re crucifying to yourself the Son of God afresh. (Hebrews 6:6) You are harboring in your heart and in your life the very thing that nailed Him to the cross. But you’re doing it with your eyes wide open. When others crucified Him so long ago, He could pray for them, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”* (Luke 23:34) But you crucify to yourself the Son of God afresh and put Him to open shame. (Hebrews 6:6) If you’re not a Christian, do not partake of this Lord’s Supper. If you are a Christian, out of fellowship with God, and there’s un-confessed, un-repent of sin in your heart and in your life, do not take of this Lord’s Supper.

IV. They Were to Eat All of the Lamb

They were to take of it with bitter herbs. They were to take of it with unleavened bread.

And now, read verses 9 and 10: *“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof.”* Notice verse 10: *“And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.”* (Exodus 12:9–10)

What does He mean by that? Not only were they to feed upon the lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread; my dear friends, they were to partake of all of the lamb. They were to consume it all. What does that tell us? That means, when we come to Christ, we take all of Christ.

Now we hear a lot of talk today about taking Jesus Christ as your Savior. I’ve been guilty of saying that many times, as many of you have; but that is not Bible language. The Bible doesn’t say we are to receive Christ as our Savior. The Bible says we receive Christ. You say, “What’s the difference?” Well, friend, not only do you take Him as Savior, but you take Him as Lord. You know, the Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Acts 16:31) *Lord*: that means “Master.” *Jesus*: that means “Mediator.” *Christ*: that means “Messiah.” He is Master, Mediator, Messiah. Now you people say, “Now that you’ve received Christ as your Savior, why not make Him your Lord?” Friend, if He’s not your Lord, He’s not your Savior. The Bible says, in order to be saved, that, *“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (Romans 10:9) Have you fed upon all of the Lamb? *Salvation is not a cafeteria line where you say, “I’ll have some saviorhood today, but no lordship, thank you.”* No, they were to feed upon all of the Lamb.

V. They Were to Eat Ready to Travel

Then I want you to notice, if you will, in verse 11, that they were to feed upon this lamb ready to travel: *“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD’s passover.”* (Exodus 12:11) Now when they fed upon this Passover, they were to have all day to be all dressed up. They are to be shod and ready to travel: with a staff, and ready to go.

What’s He telling us here? He’s telling us that salvation is the beginning; it is not the end. When you get saved, that’s not the completion; that’s not what God is trying to do. That’s why so many have the idea that the end result is to get saved. Oh, no, getting saved just gets you where you ought to be so you can be doing, then, what you ought to be doing.

Suppose you’re lost. Suppose you’re going down a road, and you get off that road, and you get out in the woods. Now you’re on a road, you’re on a journey, but somehow you miss the road, and you get out in the woods, and you’re hopelessly lost. And so somebody finds you. And they bring you back right to the point where you got off, and they say, “Now you’re no longer lost; you’re found.” What do you do: just sit down there

by the edge of the road and say, “Now I’m saved; now I’m found”? No. They brought you back to the road so you can get back on it again.

You see, this thing of salvation, it’s not an end in its self; it brings you to the point of service and living for the Lord. I think I’ve told you about the young man that I performed a wedding ceremony for. He was like so many grooms: he was nervous. I won’t say he was sweating, but he was certainly perspiring. And after it was over, he looked at me and said, “Preacher, is it all over?” I said, “No, son, it’s just beginning.” And feeding upon the Lord Jesus Christ is just the beginning.

VI. They Were to First Rest, Then Work

And so, look again, if you will, in verse 16 of this chapter. The Bible says here, in verse 16, “*And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.*” (Exodus 12:16) It is to be a day that is marked with no work, but rest.

Because you see when we feed upon the Lamb of God, we first rest and then work. Now, what’s He saying here? That it’s all of grace; nothing of self, but all of Him. When I say that you eat with a staff in your hand, and your shoes on your feet, that doesn’t mean that you work *for* salvation. It means, dear friend, that you work *from* salvation; that you don’t work *in order to* be saved, but you work *because* you’re saved.

*I would not work, my soul to save,
For this my Lord has done;
But I would work like any slave
For love of His dear Son.*

—HARRY A. IRONSIDE

You see, when God made that first creation, He worked and then rested. But in God’s new creation that’s us, we rest, and then we work. That’s the reason we worship on Sunday not on Saturday. Saturday is the last day of the week. Sunday is the first day of the week. Our day, in this dispensation, begins with rest, and then ends to work. Never think of Sunday as the weekend. Sunday is the first day of the week.

Conclusion

Well, I wanted just to bring those thoughts to you tonight. And I want us now to turn to the New Testament and see what the Apostle Paul has to say about this. Then we are going to observe together the Lord’s Supper. Would you turn with me, please, to 1 Corinthians chapter 11—I begin reading in verse 23. Paul says, “*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and*

said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily,"—that is, in an unworthy manner—"shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." (1 Corinthians 11:23–29)

Did you know, when our Jewish friends today keep the Feast of Passover, if they are an orthodox family, they have a time of ceremony where they go through all of the house. They look in every nook and corner and crack and crevice to find out if there's any leaven in the house. All of the leaven is to be put out of that house before they keep this feast.

Now, friend, I want you to bow your head right now. And I want you to go on a spiritual search. Is there any leaven in your house? *"Let a man examine himself."* We're to eat with bitter herbs, unleavened bread; we're to eat all of the lamb, and we're to eat the lamb ready to serve, ready to travel, with our shoes on our feet, our staff in our hand. It is the Lord's Passover.

Lamb of Promise

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 27, 1988

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 12:1–11, 14, 22

Outline

Introduction

- I. Moses' Lamb
 - A. The Character of Moses' Lamb
 - B. The Condemnation of Moses' Lamb
 - C. The Confession of Moses' Lamb
 - D. The Communion of Moses' Lamb
- II. Mary's Lamb
 - A. The Character of Mary's Lamb
 - B. The Condemnation of Mary's Lamb
 - C. The Confession of Mary's Lamb
 - D. The Communion of Mary's Lamb

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn, if you will, please, to Exodus chapter 12, and when you have found it, look up here for just a moment—Exodus chapter 12. This week we are presenting an Easter pageant; the title of that pageant is the title of my message this morning: “Lamb of Promise.” Mary had a little Lamb: His name was Jesus. We’re going to be talking today about that Lamb of promise. I was here last night sitting up in the balcony when that presentation was given. And when it came to a climax, and all of those banners came in telling us what the Lord Jesus means and who the Lord Jesus is, my heart began to thunder within me; the tears came down my cheeks. I was so full, I tried to shout, but I only croaked. It was beautiful and wonderful what we saw and what we felt in our hearts. And I felt today that perhaps the message could make even more clear and more plain what we’re trying to say when we’re talking about our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Lamb of promise.

Actually, today, we’re going to be telling you how to keep Passover. You see, this coming week is an interesting week, because, in the next few days, our Jewish friends will be observing Passover, and we who are Christians will be celebrating Easter. I’m going to surprise you. The Lord never told us to celebrate Easter, as such. He did tell us to keep the Passover. You say, “Is that true?” Well, let’s just pay attention, and we’re going to find out that we, as Christians, ought to keep Passover.

Now I'm not against celebrating Easter. Hey, folks, I'm for celebrating Easter. I'm for it with all of my heart, and I want you to invite as many friends as you possibly can. I never make fun of people for coming to church on Easter. I'm glad they come, because I want to shoot them full of Jesus. I mean, I want them to come, and I want to tell them about Christ. Invite as many as you can. I'm glad for Easter. But listen, folks. We celebrate Easter 365 days a year. I mean, He lives within our hearts; and every Lord's Day that we meet is a day that we commemorate His resurrection. I don't put that down: I glory in it. But, my friend, we need to understand the meaning of the Passover and see how it relates to those of us who are Christians. And I want to show you that we, as Christians, are told to keep the feast of Passover. It's going to be very interesting.

Notice here—and I begin here in verse 1: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt”* (Exodus 12:1). Now here they are down in the land of Egypt. What is Egypt? Well, you will remember that they were enslaved in Egypt; they were under taskmaster ol' Pharaoh. Egypt represents the bondage of this world; and Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, represents ol' Satan, Lucifer himself. Now they're down in the land of Egypt, but God says to them, “I'm going to give you a brand new life.”

Listen to verse 2: *“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you.”* That is, it's going to be the beginning of a new life for you. *“Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb...”*—underscore that—*“a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening”* (Exodus 12:2–6).

And then I'm going to skip down to verse 11: *“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is”*—the what?—*“the LORD's passover”* (Exodus 12:11). Right? That's what all of this is about; this is how Passover got started. It is the Lord's Passover.

Wonderful! All right now, take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 5, and let's see what the New Testament has to say about this. Let's see if New Testament Christians are to keep Passover. All right, look with me in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 7: *“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump...”*—now, what he's talking about here is when a woman bakes bread. Paul says, “Don't put any yeast in your bread—not in that lump of dough. Just get that out; purge that out—*“...that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our*

passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Now, who was that Passover lamb? Who did that Passover lamb represent? What was that Passover lamb a picture, a prophecy, and a promise of? The Lord Jesus Christ! Right here the Bible calls Him what? Christ our Passover. Now, notice verse 8: "*Therefore let us keep the feast*" (1 Corinthians 5:8). That's what the Bible says: "*Let us keep the feast.*" This is not Old Testament; this is New Testament. We are to keep the feast of Passover.

Now if we're to keep Passover, then we'd better learn how, because the Apostle Paul says, "Christ is our Passover," and then he says, "Let's keep the feast." So I want to show you today how, as a good Christian, you can keep Passover. Well, it's all wrapped up in this promise of the Lamb—the promise.

Let's go back to Exodus chapter 12. Just go right back where you were, and I want you to notice several things about this Passover. Now, remember that they are down in the land of Egypt, and God is going to deliver them out of the land of bondage and from under the iron fist of Pharaoh. And what is God going to use?

Before I tell you what God is going to use, let me tell you, first of all, what the symbol of Egypt was. Do you know what it was? A venomous serpent. Had you seen the Pharaoh, you would have seen Pharaoh wearing a fixture on his head. He would be wearing a crown-like ornamentation on his head, and protruding from that ornament would be a deadly serpent. Have you seen any pictures of the Pharaoh with that serpent up there on his head? Do you know what I'm talking about—that thing right up there? And had you seen him with a scepter, you would have seen him with a scepter with a snake wrapped around that scepter. That was the symbol of Egypt. Fitting, isn't it? Because that serpent first crawled his slimy corroding path into the pages of history way back there in Genesis 3. Do you remember that? The serpent is the devil. And in Revelation chapter 12 he's called "*that old serpent*" (Revelation 12:9)—the devil, the serpent. When you think of a serpent, you think of something sinister, something powerful, and something deadly: that's the picture of Egypt.

I. Moses' Lamb

And now, what is God going to use to deliver His people from the power of and bondage of the serpent? He is going to use a little lamb—a lamb. There is nothing weaker than a lamb, nothing gentler than a lamb, and nothing more defenseless than a lamb. A little lamb, he has no fangs, he has no claws. Even a grown sheep is not a good runner, much less a wobbly little lamb—just a little lamb. Lambs are so gentle. They seem to say, "Are you hungry? Kill me. Are you cold? Shear me." That lamb is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, because the Bible says, "*a sheep before her shearers is dumb*" (Isaiah 53:7). That is, she doesn't say a word. So Jesus "*opened not his mouth*" (Isaiah

53:7).

I heard of man who worked in a slaughterhouse and had been slaughtering beef, and they began to process lambs. He said that, when a lamb came through, he wasn't prepared for it. He lifted the chin, put the knife in, and the blood began to run. That little lamb just looked up at him when the blood spurted on his hand—on the man's hand—and the lamb began to lick the blood from that man's hand. And he said, "I put down my knife and got another job." He said, "I felt guilty for killing the lamb."

He takes a little lamb, and it is the lamb that is going to destroy the serpent. I want you to notice several things about Moses' lamb back here in Exodus chapter 12.

A. The Character of Moses' Lamb

First of all, I want you to notice the character of this lamb, because this lamb was a lamb without spot and without blemish. Look in verse 5: *"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats"* (Exodus 12:5). That is, this lamb was to be so perfect. The Bible makes it plain that they were to keep that lamb in the house for three days, and all during those three days they were examining that lamb to make sure there was not a blemish on the skin—not a flaw, and not a crooked limb. They were examining the ears to see if the ears had not been torn. They would at the hooves to see if they had not been slit or battered in any way. They would look inside the mouth of that lamb. They would examine the eyelids of the lamb and the nostrils of the lamb. That lamb had to be a spotless lamb, a pure lamb, because that lamb pictured the Lord Jesus. The Bible calls Him *"a lamb without blemish and without spot"* (1 Peter 1:19). And so we see the character of the lamb.

B. The Condemnation of Moses' Lamb

But now I want you to see the condemnation of the lamb. Why should a little lamb like this be condemned? Why should a little lamb like this be put to death? He was innocent; he had done no wrong. But notice in verse 6: *"And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening"* (Exodus 12:6). Now they take this little lamb that they have been examining, beginning the tenth day, and when they get to the fourteenth day now, in the afternoon, in the evening—really about three o'clock in the afternoon—the father, the head of that household, would take that gentle, woolly, wobbly little lamb—that innocent little lamb—and he would pull up the chin, take a razor-sharp knife, and cut the throat of that little lamb. The blood would come spurting out. That blood would be put in a basin, and that innocent lamb would die.

Now, right away, God is teaching us another lesson that is found in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 22, which is this: *"Without shedding of blood [there] is no remission of sin"* (Hebrews 9:22). That shedding of blood pictured that one day God's Lamb would shed

His blood for us. And so the lamb's blood is shed.

Now there are a lot of people today who don't like the idea of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, did you know that some denominations have gone through the hymnal and taken the songs concerning the blood of Jesus Christ out of the hymnal? Did you know that? Do you know why? It's repugnant to them. They call that *the slaughterhouse religion*. But, friend, the Bible says, "*Without shedding of blood [there] is no remission.*" The Bible says, "*The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7).

Billy Graham said that, when he was a young preacher, there was a professor from Cornell University who came to him and said, "Young man," he said, "you're a good speaker. You have ability. You have a lot of winsomeness, a lot of charm, and a lot of intelligence. You can go far if you'll leave out that blood stuff." Graham said, "I determined in my heart more than ever to preach the blood of Jesus Christ."

You see, as we're going to see in a moment, God said, "The death angel is going to come through the land of Egypt." And God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." They could have put rubies and diamonds over the doorposts of their houses, and there would have been no Passover. They could have put beautiful poetry, and marvelous thoughts, and good intentions written on letters, and tacked them on the door, but there would have been no Passover. God said, "When I see the blood."

Now the more liberal people are, they like to talk a lot about Jesus Christ being our example. Friend, listen. He cannot be your example until, first of all, He becomes your Savior. If you don't hear anything else I'm telling you today, then I want you to hear this: Salvation *does not come by* learning lessons *from the life of Christ but by receiving life from the death of Christ.*

Okay, by receiving life from the death of Christ. Now we cannot follow in His steps until we have become His disciples, and we cannot become His disciples until we receive what He did for us on the cross. So you see the character of this lamb without spot or blemish, and then you see the condemnation of this little gentle lamb. He's killed, slain: a gentle, innocent lamb.

C. The Confession of Moses' Lamb

But now, wait a minute. It is still not enough. There has to be the confession of this lamb. "*Take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it*" (Exodus 12:7). And then, look, if you will, in verse 22 of this same chapter and see what it says: "*And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning*" (Exodus 12:22).

Now what is happening is this: There's the basin of blood. There is the slain lamb. Here's the house. Inside the house there is safety, but there's only safety if the blood has been applied to the outside of the house on the doorposts. Now God said, "Do it with hyssop." Do you know what hyssop is? Well, hyssop is a very common shrub—a weed, if you will—that grows commonly in Israel. If you ever go to the Holy Land, then you'll see hyssop growing out of almost every wall. It just grows there in the crevices, and you could just reach up and get a handful of it anywhere. Now it's a very common substance, and it represents to us faith that applies to the blood. It is there, easily accessible, and they were to take a bunch of hyssop. They would take that hyssop, put it in that basin of blood, and then the father of the house was to put that blood—first of all, he was to strike that blood upon the lintel, right up *here*, and then, on the doorposts. And, as has been pointed out so beautifully, when he does *this*, and *this*, and *this*, he's made a cross. There's the blood of the lamb that was slain on the doorposts of that house. And then they go under that canopy of blood into that house. They go, and there is the blood on the outside.

Now, dear friend, had you lived in the land of Egypt that day, there would have been no secret as to who believed in the blood and who didn't—no secret. I mean, it's easy to see that there's a believer and there's not—there's a believer and there's not. "Here's the blood." "No blood here." "Here's the blood." "No blood here." Do you understand what I am saying? Now, my friend, not only did there need to be the death of the lamb, but there also needed to be the declaration of the lamb. They needed to see the blood. God said, "When I see what others can see—when I see the blood—I will pass over you." I want to call that, my friend, the confession of the lamb, and we're going to apply that a little later in the message. So I want you to remember that we can never be ashamed of the blood of the Lamb, but God is not finished yet.

D. The Communion of Moses' Lamb

Not only was there the confession of the lamb, but, friend, there was also to be the communion of the lamb. Look, if you will now, beginning in chapter 12 and verse 8: "*And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning*" (Exodus 12:8–10). Now they were to take this lamb, and after they shed the blood, they were to roast the lamb that pictures Jesus Christ suffering the fires of God's judgment.

Whenever fire falls on a sacrifice in the Old Testament, it represents the fires of judgment. You see, when Jesus Christ, God's Lamb, died, He took our hell. Jesus Christ walked the burning corridors of hell for us. Jesus Christ baptized His soul in hell

for us, and on the cross He suffered the judgment—the wrath—of God. And God's wrath was poured out upon that innocent lamb: it was roasted.

But wait a minute. They ate it. They were to eat it; they were to consume it. Can you imagine the aroma in the land of Egypt with a quarter of a million barbecued lambs on it at one time? What would the Egyptians have thought? All over the land of Egypt they smelled this roasted flesh. And then these Jews—this bunch of slaves—are now becoming a people. They are now becoming a nation. They are now being drawn together. They are fellowshiping over a lamb. Now the lamb is on the inside. When they came out of Egypt, a lamb walked out in them. A lamb was in every one of them. “*Christ in you, the hope of glory,*” (Colossians 1:27) the Bible says. And as they walked out of Egypt, the lamb destroyed that serpent, as we can so well see. He was in them, and they fed upon him; they ate of the lamb. I call that the communion of the Lamb.

Now I want you to fast-forward the centuries, and I want you to learn what had begun to happen. Jesus said, in verse 14 of this Exodus chapter 12, “You keep this feast as a memorial forever. You keep on keeping the feast” (Exodus 12:14). And they did keep the feast. Once a year they would have the feast of Passover. And when they would have the feast of Passover, it was made, not only with the Passover lamb, but also wine and bread. Now they took the bread, and they began to put the bread in three parcels, or compartments, of a bag to hold the bread. And the bread was put into that bag. There were three compartments: an upper compartment, a middle compartment, and a lower compartment. Bread would be put in each compartment.

At a particular time, when these Jews would keep the feast of the Passover, the head of the house would take a piece of bread from the middle compartment, and break it, and give it to members of the family. You'd ask them, “Why?” They'd say, “Well, that's just the way we do it,” and there would be all kinds of strange interpretations and meanings and explanations of why that was done. “How did it get started?” They said, “I don't know. We just felt that's what we ought to do.” “What does it mean?” “Well, it means different things to different people, but we're not quite sure what it means.” But they took that middle piece of bread. Also, there would be a cup of wine that they set at the table, and there would be an empty chair. No one would sit in that chair, because they said, “It's for Messiah. When He comes, He will sit in that chair.” And there would be a cup of wine there, and they would fill it. But no one would drink it, because they said, “When Messiah comes, He will drink of that cup.” They didn't call it a cup; they called it *the* cup. And for centuries this is the way they kept the feast of the Passover.

II. Mary's Lamb

Now, fast-forward the centuries a little more, and you'll come to a time when there was a prophet, a man of God—his name was John the Baptist. He was preaching down in

the wilderness of Judea, by the shores of Jordan. As Dr. Robert G. Lee used to say, “He ate honey, but he didn’t preach it.” Brother, he was a man of God up there preaching, “*Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers,*”—he still has the serpent in his mind—“*how can ye escape the damnation of hell?*” (Matthew 23:33). “How are you going to overcome the serpent?” Then, in John chapter 1 and verse 29, he saw Jesus coming, and he says this: “*Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29).

A. The Character of Mary’s Lamb

Now we thought of Moses’ lamb. I want you to think a little bit about Mary’s Lamb, the Lord Jesus. We thought of the character of Moses’ lamb. I want you to think of the character of Mary’s Lamb. You see, the Jews, by this time, had begun to breed a certain generation of Passover lambs. Do you know where they bred those Passover lambs? They bred those Passover lambs in Bethlehem, in the fields of Boaz, down in Bethlehem, in the suburbs of Jerusalem. Those were the best lambs—the perfect lambs without spot, without blemish. Now on the day that we call Palm Sunday, do you know what was happening? Those Passover shepherds were bringing those Passover lambs into the city of Jerusalem, into the sheep gate, up to the Temple Mount to be killed. On that same Sunday, Jesus Christ was coming through the Eastern Gate into the city of Jerusalem up to the Temple Mount. Those lambs are coming. God’s Lamb is coming. Now those lambs began to be examined by the priest. They would look so meticulously, so carefully, over each one of these little lambs, these little Passover lambs. At the same time, the Lamb was being examined.

Have you ever wondered why the Gospel spends so much time on the last week of Jesus? It seems out of proportion. You see, almost a third of the Gospel is given just to a few days. I’ll tell you why it was. In those days they were examining God’s Lamb. The Sadducees examined Him. The Pharisees examined Him. The Herodians examined Him. The civil leaders examined Him. And they had to say, “*Never man spake like this man*” (John 7:46). Even Pilate, when he was finished with him, had to say, “*I find in him no fault at all*” (John 18:38). Even Judas had to say, “*I have betrayed the innocent blood*” (Matthew 27:4). Not a spot, not a blemish, was on that Lamb. Jesus Christ could stand and say, “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*” (John 8:46). I wouldn’t ask that to my friends, much less my enemies, but Jesus Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God, could say that. And they examined the Lord Jesus. They picked at Him, they questioned Him, and they badgered Him. They did all they could do, but He is still the spotless Lamb of God. That’s the character of the Lamb.

B. The Condemnation of Mary’s Lamb

Now I want you to notice the condemnation of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. He told His disciples, “Now it’s time for Passover.” The Jewish day began at sundown, 6:00 p.m.

Jesus said, “Go prepare a place where we can have a Passover, for,” He says, “I must eat this Passover with you; I must.” This is the important Passover. “You go and prepare a place.” And so they prepared a place; and Jesus is there with His disciples in the upper room. You see a picture in *Living Pictures*. The disciples are there; and the Bible says, in that feast, Jesus did what? He took bread and broke it. What bread did He break? If He kept Passover as a traditional Jewish family would keep it—and we have every reason to believe that He did—then He broke the pieces. He took it out, and broke it, and said, “*This is my body, which is broken for you*” (1 Corinthians 11:24).

And the mystery of the centuries is cleared up. For centuries they had held the Holy Trinity in their hands and had not known it, that middle piece representing God the Son; for we worship God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit: one God revealed in three persons. And Jesus took that middle piece of bread out, and broke it, and said, “I’ll tell you what it is: *This is my body, which is broken for you.*” And then Luke tells us, in Luke chapter 22, that He took the cup—not a cup, *the* cup, the Messiah’s cup, *the* cup—and He said, “*This cup is the new testament in my blood*” (Luke 22:20). That’s what that stands for. And now they knew. And Jesus had that Passover with them.

By nine o’clock the next morning, Jesus Christ is on His way to be crucified. He’s been beaten, scourged, abused, and adjudicated wrongly in a civil court and a religious court. And now the Lord Jesus Christ is going where? To Mount Moriah. We call it Calvary. It was on Mount Moriah that God told Abraham what? “*God will provide himself a lamb*” on that mountain. “*God will provide himself a lamb*” (Genesis 22:8). And, my friend, God was doing that. “*In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen*” (Genesis 22:14). That is, in this mount it will be seen. “Abraham, do you want to know where it’s going to happen? Right here, Abraham, where you offered up Isaac and were willing to do that.” “*In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.*” “*God will provide himself a lamb.*”

And the Lord Jesus Christ is nailed upon that cross, suffering in anguish and blood. It’s about three o’clock in the afternoon. All of these little Passover lambs are there. The priests are sharpening their lethal knives. It is three o’clock. They lift up the bodies of those little lambs, and they cut their throats. But at the same time, the Lamb is bowing His head and saying, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). “It is finished. It is paid in full. It’s done. It’s over. Levites, we don’t need you anymore. Put away your knives. You can go home now. It’s over. It’s finished. The Lamb has defeated the serpent.”

C. The Confession of Mary’s Lamb

My dear friend, there was the crucifixion of the Lamb. But now, wait a minute. It’s not yet over, because, for you, there must be the confession of the Lamb. The death angel will not pass over you unless you put the blood on the doorposts of your heart. How do

you keep the feast of the Passover? First of all, you apply the blood. Now the Apostle Paul said, *“Let us keep the feast”* (1 Corinthians 5:8). You cannot keep the feast until, first of all, you have applied the blood. How do you apply the blood? With a hyssop of faith you apply the blood to your heart.

Listen: *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:9–10). Are you paying attention to me, dear friend? You’ll not slip into heaven without confessing Christ. You’ll not bootleg a blessing. You will not get God’s death angel of judgment to pass over you if you’re ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the land of Egypt so long ago, it was obvious who had the blood and who didn’t. Jesus said that, *“If you’re ashamed of me and of my Word in this sinful and adulterous generation, then I’ll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels”* (Mark 8:38). But *“If you will confess me before men, then I will confess you before my Father”* (Matthew 10:32). *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”*

Now, how is the blood applied? It is applied by faith. How is it made known? By confession: *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth...and believe in thine heart.”* That’s the reason we ask you to come forward in a service like this, my dear friend. You must let it be known. You must let it be known that you’re not ashamed of Jesus Christ.

Everybody in this building, presumably, in a few moments, will leave this building. Oh, you leave this building, and I’ll tell you how you’ll go out. Everybody here will go out one of two ways. Number one, you’ll go out under the blood. The blood will be upon the doorposts of your houses, and you’ll go out protected by the blood of Jesus. Or else, you will go out over the blood, trampling beneath your feet the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Everybody—everybody—will go out either under the blood, saved, or over the blood, trampling the blood beneath their feet, lost.

Can you imagine a greater crime than to count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing and to spite the Spirit of grace when God brings you here and tells you about the Lord Jesus Christ? And you say, *“I don’t want the blood of God’s spotless Lamb,”* and you walk out over that blood with the blood of Christ beneath your feet. What sure judgment there will be for those who despise the blood of Christ and count it as an unholy thing (Hebrews 10:29). Everybody here will leave either under the blood or over the blood.

D. The Communion of Mary’s Lamb

The character of the Lamb: He was a spotless Lamb. The condemnation of the Lamb: He died on that cross. The confession of the Lamb: the doorpost must be

displayed with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus. One last thing, friend: the communion of the Lamb. Back in the Old Testament, they were told to feed upon that lamb. Today, we not only have our sins forgiven, but, my dear friend, we have fellowship with one another and with God Himself as we feed on God's Lamb, and as we take Him into our bodies. And listen, my friend—listen. Every time we come to the Lord's Table, do you know what we are doing? We are keeping Passover. We're keeping Passover. We're keeping Passover. We are feeding, obviously, openly, and publicly, on Jesus. The broken bread: *"This is my body"* (Luke 22:19). The cup: *"This cup is the new [covenant] in my blood"* (Luke 22:20).

And we are showing that we believe that the Lamb has conquered and that He lives in us. *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27)—what a beautiful thing that is! What an exciting thing to know that we have the Lord Jesus Christ in us! Listen. The next time you go to the Lord's Table, don't come like you've been to a funeral or like you're going to a funeral. We are not there to mourn a corpse; we are there to hail a conqueror. The Lamb has slain the snake, friend.

Conclusion

I want you to turn to Revelation chapter 5 with me, and we'll finish this message. Turn to Revelation chapter 5. And I hope you'll remember this every time you come to the Lord's Supper. If you come to the Lord's Table, then I hope you'll remember Revelation chapter 5. And let's look in verse 11: *"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts"—that means, "the creatures"—"and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever"* (Revelation 5:11–13). Mary had a little Lamb: His name was Jesus.

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. Friend, Jesus died for you. I wonder today, are you willing to receive Him as your sacrifice? With His blood He paid your sin debt. One of these days, God's angel of judgment is going to come; and if there's no blood applied, then you will be judged; you will die in your sin and go to hell. But the Bible teaches very clearly and very plainly that when He sees the blood, He'll pass over you. Would you like to have the blood applied right now? Would you pray a prayer like this: "God, I know you love me, and I know you want to save me. Jesus, you are my Passover Lamb. Jesus, you died for me. Thank you, spotless Lamb, that you died for me. Thank you that your Lamb cleansed me. I accept you, Lord Jesus. I believe

in you. I receive you. And in just a moment, Jesus, I'll make it public. I'll not be ashamed of you, Jesus. I'll put the blood publicly on the doorpost of my life. I'll not be ashamed of you, Jesus." Tell Him that. "Lord, I receive you now, and I'm going to confess you now as my Lord and Savior." Tell Him that. "Lord, I'm going to confess you now as my Lord and Savior. Thank you for saving me—for forgiving me and saving me. In Jesus' name. Amen."

Going Deeper

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 12:1–14

Outline

Introduction

- I. The People Were to Keep the Feast
 - A. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Unleavened Bread
 - B. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Bitter Herbs
 - C. They Were to Feed upon All of the Lamb
 - D. They Were to Feed on the Lamb Dressed Up and Ready to Go
 - E. They Were to Eat the Lamb Without Doing Any Work
- II. The People Were to Keep the Feast in Canaan

Conclusion

Introduction

Tonight, I would like for you to open your Bibles to the Old Testament, to the Book of Exodus the twelfth chapter. I guess we could call our message tonight, “Going Deeper.”

Let’s pray one more time. Bless, Lord, the message. Jesus taught us that we can have ears, and hear not; we can have eyes, and see not. But, our Lord, help us to hear with our ears, and to see with our eyes, and to comprehend with our heart that these things that we’re talking about tonight shall not be just something way off; Lord, that they might be reality to us. Lord, help me as I preach. Father, I realize that I cannot preach about that which I do not know effectively, and I cannot lead people, Lord, to places where I myself have not been. So, Father, let me be thy man, thy shepherd, thy servant, thy spokesman, tonight. O Lord, I trust thee, and I look to thee. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

I want us to understand one fact as we get started tonight in this message on going deeper: that there are basically three types of people in the world. There’s the lost man; there’s the carnal man; and there is the spiritual man. Now I know I’ve just given you one verse of Scripture in Exodus, and we haven’t even read it yet. Just keep your finger there and turn over to 1 Corinthians the second chapter, and let me just point out the three types of men. In 1 Corinthians 2, verse 14, Paul mentions these three types of men: *“But the natural man...”*—there’s the first one—*“But the natural man...”*—this is 1 Corinthians 2:14—*“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually*

discerned.” Now there’s the natural man. To try and teach him spiritual things would be like trying to describe a sunset to a blind man, or Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony to a deaf man. He cannot comprehend them. The natural man is the lost man, as he is naturally. And then Paul mentions another man: *“But he that is spiritual judgeth all things”* (2 Corinthians 2:15). And so there’s the spiritual man—the natural man and the spiritual man. But in between the natural man and the spiritual man is a third kind of man. And in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 1, we read about him. And Paul says, *“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Now the carnal man is a babe in Christ. He is saved; he’s no longer a natural man, but neither is he a spiritual man. He’s a carnal man. There are three groups of people in the world: the natural men who’ve never been saved; the carnal men who have been saved but are not Spirit-filled; and then the spiritual man. And, of course, we’ll include the ladies too. But everyone in the congregation is in one of those three groups. Either tonight you’re lost, you’re the natural man; or else you’re saved, but you’re what we call a kind of a wishy-washy, “good Lord/good devil,” milquetoast sort of a Christian that’s got a cotton string for a backbone, and you never really have done much for the Lord Jesus Christ; you’re a carnal man. And the word *carnal* means, “fleshly.” It’s the word we get *carnivorous* from—“flesh-eating.” He’s the fleshly Christian. And then, there’s the spiritual person, the one who’s grown up in the Lord Jesus Christ. Three classes of people: one is like a dead man; the other is one who has life but he’s sick; and the other is healthy. You see, the three classes of people.

Now I wanted you to understand that in order to understand the scripture that we’re reading in the Old Testament, because the scripture that we’re reading in the Old Testament tells us a great lesson about these three types of people. Now all the Scripture’s given by the inspiration of God, and it’s amazing how many New Testament truths we can learn from the Old Testament. And especially in the history of the Hebrew children can we learn some tremendous spiritual truths. Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 11, speaking of the Jews and their wanderings in the desert and so forth—he said, *“Now all these things happened unto them for examples [unto us]”* (1 Corinthians 10:11). See, Paul uses the Hebrews for examples to Christians.

Now if you want to find out what is happening in the life of the Christian, go back and study, and see what happened to the life of Israel, God’s Old Testament people; and then you can learn many spiritual truths to be applied. And as we go through this message tonight on going deeper, you just remember that the illustrations that we find in the life of the Jewish people apply to our lives as Christians. All of these things happened to them for examples to us. Now we just kind of said that just to get set for the message.

Now, let's start reading the Scripture as we're reading here in Exodus the twelfth chapter, verses 1 to 14: *"And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."* Now, remember they were in the land of Egypt when God spoke this. *"Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever"* (Exodus 12:1–14).

Now here God was giving the Hebrew children instructions for preparing the Passover lamb. God was telling them how to kill a lamb and make an offering out of this lamb. Now, remember that the Hebrews were in the land of Egypt, and the Hebrews in the land of Egypt represent a lost man in the land of sin lost in the world. As these Jews were in the land of Egypt, they represent you and me before we were saved. Just as Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was a cruel taskmaster to them, the devil is a cruel taskmaster to us. Just as they were slaves to Pharaoh, we are slaves to the devil before we're saved.

Now there was a lamb whose blood was shed that marked their deliverance from bondage. That lamb was the picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know that, don't you? You know that, that that lamb that we're talking about was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he said, *"Behold the Lamb of God, which*

taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 5, verse 7, "*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*" (1 Corinthians 5:7). It's very plain that this Passover lamb was the picture of Jesus. Christ is our Passover lamb. "*Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.*"

And so, let's just learn some truths right here about this lamb.

I. The People Were to Keep the Feast

So the very first truth that I would have you to learn that is so precious to me is that this Lamb, the shed blood of Jesus, is the only way to be saved. "*Without shedding of blood is no remission*" (Hebrews 9:22). You know, there are many churches where they've gone through the hymnals and taken out all of the songs that deal with the blood. They say it's too gory for them. And I'll tell you, my dear friend, without the shedding of blood is no remission. And God has said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." And as long as I'm the pastor of this church, I intend to preach the book, the blood, and the blessed hope: the book—God's holy Word; the blood—the precious blood of Jesus; and the blessed hope—that Jesus Christ is coming again.

And God told them to take a lamb and to kill it, and to apply the blood to the doorpost of their house. This represents the applying of the blood by faith to our heart. Now God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." Now it would have made no difference if they'd written all kinds of beautiful poetry and tacked it on the doorpost, nor if they had overlaid the doorpost with rubies and emeralds and sapphires and diamonds till they flashed like lightning. It would have made no difference. God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." And no matter how good, and how moral, and how upright your life may seem, if the blood of Jesus Christ has not been applied to your heart by faith, you're going to die and go to hell. Only when God sees the blood will He pass over.

But I want you to notice some lessons here that we learn about this lamb.

A. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Unleavened Bread

The first thing that I want you to notice is, in verse 8, that the lamb was to be fed upon with unleavened bread. Notice here verse 7 tells us about putting the blood on the doorposts. But how do we do it? There's more to it than that. Not only were they to apply the blood, but they were to feed upon the lamb. Get the lesson now. Not only were they to apply the blood, but they were to eat the lamb. And not only do you receive the blood of Jesus as a covering for your sin, but you must receive Jesus Christ into your heart. You must feed upon Jesus.

Notice in verse 8 then, "*And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread.*" When you feed upon Jesus, you're to feed upon Him with

unleavened bread. Now, what did leaven stand for in the Bible? Leaven always, in the Bible, is a picture of sin, a picture of evil. Jesus said, *“Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees”* (Matthew 16:6). When they had the feast of the Passover, every Hebrew would go through his house and search it very carefully and very diligently to make sure that no leaven was present. And they were to feed upon this lamb with unleavened bread. What does that mean? It means, ladies and gentlemen, when we come to Jesus, we forsake our sin. Leaven is a sign, a symbol, of sin.

Now, when we would come to Jesus, not only are we broken over our sin, but we’re to be broken from our sin. We are to repent. That’s what this means. Not only must the blood be applied, but when the blood is applied, we must repent of our sins. We must feed upon the lamb with unleavened bread.

B. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Bitter Herbs

And then, the next thing, in verse 8, they were to eat it with bitter herbs. What does that mean? It means, not only will there be a forsaking of sin, but there will be a brokenness, a humbleness, a bitterness, if you please, when we come to the Lord Jesus.

Have you watched people sometimes, when they come, they act like they’re doing God a favor? Oh, my friend, the Bible says, *“A broken and a contrite heart...thou wilt not despise”* (Psalm 51:17). And many people have never been broken over their sins. They have never seen themselves a poor lost sinner. I say, they’ve never fed upon the Lamb with bitter herbs. But until this bitterness comes into your heart, until God convicts you down deep in your heart that you’re a poor lost sinner, you have never been saved; you’ve never really fed upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. They Were to Feed upon All of the Lamb

And then, the next thing I’d have you notice is that they were to feed upon all of the lamb. Notice in verses 9 and 10 of this chapter: *“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning”* (Exodus 12:9–10). Not only is there to be repentance, and not only is there to be bitterness or brokenness when you come to Jesus; but, my dear friend, you’re to feed upon all of the lamb.

Now, what does that mean? It means, when you receive Jesus Christ, you receive all of Him, or you don’t receive any of Him. There are a lot of people who talk about receiving Jesus as Savior. You don’t receive Jesus as Savior. You receive Jesus, period. Now He happens to be Savior. That’s wonderful. But you don’t receive Him as Savior. You receive Jesus. As a matter of fact, very few times does the Bible call Jesus “Savior.” Most of the time it calls Him “Lord.”

There are a lot of people who want to receive Christ as Savior, but they don’t want to

receive Him as Lord. They think that salvation is something like a cafeteria line you go through and you say, “Well, I don’t think I’ll have any salad, but I’ll have a dessert; and I’ll have some celery, but I won’t have any vegetables and so forth.” And they say, “Well, let’s see. I’ll take the peace and the joy and the happiness, and I’ll receive Jesus as Savior; but I don’t think I’ll take Him as Lord.” They’re pretty good at reciting the promises, but they’re not too good at obeying the commands.

Now they have the idea that you can just more or less take a choice and receive part of Jesus and not all of Him. Some people foolishly make the statement, “You’ve made Jesus your Savior; now, why not make Him your Lord?” My friend, if He’s not your Lord, He’s not your Savior. The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31). And many people have never really and truly made Jesus Christ Lord of their lives. And the lesson here is that they were to feed upon all of the lamb. They weren’t just to take a part, and despise the other part; but they were to feed upon all of the lamb.

D. They Were to Feed on the Lamb Dressed Up and Ready to Go

Now I want you to notice another lesson that’s a wonderful lesson that we can learn. And, in verse 11, “*And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet,*”—not on your hands, as I said, but on your feet—“*and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord’s passover*” (Exodus 12:11). What lesson do we learn here? We learn not only must the blood be applied; and not only must there be repentance that’s taught us by the unleavened bread; and not only must there be brokenness that’s taught by the bitter herbs; and not only must there be a complete and total surrender that’s taught by feeding upon all of the Lamb; but we learn that, when they fed upon the lamb, they were to feed upon the lamb dressed up and ready to go: their staff in their hand, their shoes on their feet, their loins girded about, all dressed up. What does that teach us? It teaches us that, when a man receives Jesus Christ, it’s not the end of the journey; it’s the beginning of the journey.

Now there are a lot of people who look back to some experience in the dim, dark, dank past, and they say, “Well, I was saved back yonder.” Now they’re not walking for the Lord now, they’re not serving the Lord now; but they say, “I was saved, because I had a marvelous experience back yonder.” My friend, if you don’t have an experience today that’s kept up with that experience back yonder, I wouldn’t give you two cents for your hope of salvation. You know, a lot of people are talking about what happened back yonder. The Chinese Christian said, “The trouble with you Americans is you too much *talky talky* and not enough *walky walky*.” But the Bible says, “As you have received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in Him” (Colossians 2:6). And there are a lot of people who are talking the talk, but they’re not walking the walk.

Moses says that we are to eat upon the lamb with our shoes on our feet, getting ready to walk the walk; getting ready to walk redemption's walk. They weren't supposed to feed upon the lamb, and then stay right there; but there was a journey to be taken. A lot of people get up and walk down an aisle, and say, "I've given my heart to Jesus Christ"; and they think everything ends there. It hasn't ended; it's just started.

I performed a wedding ceremony; and after I got through, a young man wiped his brow, and he said, "Boy, I'm glad that's over." I said, "Son, it's not over; it's just starting."

And, you know, there are a lot of people who get the idea that, when they come to Jesus, and they get saved, and they get baptized, then they sit down. But that's not the lesson at all. The lesson is that, when we feed upon the Lamb, we do it ready to travel. It's not the end, but it's the beginning of a journey walking for the Lord Jesus Christ. And I wonder, are you living for the Lord Jesus Christ day after day?

E. They Were to Eat the Lamb Without Doing Any Work

Then I'd like for you to notice something else in verse 16. God is telling them how to prepare this feast, and He says, "*In the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them*" (Exodus 12:16). What's the lesson here? The lesson here is that, when you feed upon the Lamb, you don't mix it with works. So many people think that you try and help God to save you by your good works. But the Bible says it's "*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us*" (Titus 3:5). Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9, says, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8–9).

We have a lot of people today say, "Well, unless you're baptized, you can't get to heaven." Someone says, "Unless you take communion and attend mass, you can't get to heaven"—unless you do this, unless you do that. My friends, I want to tell you that salvation is faith in Jesus plus nothing: "*not of works, lest any man should boast.*" And God made it very plain, "There shall no work be done."

What was the lesson? He's telling us that, when a person becomes a Christian, the blood must be applied. There must be repentance—no leaven. There must be brokenness—bitter herbs. There must be a willingness to serve. We're ready with our shoes on our feet, and our loins girt, and our staff in our hand. We are to feed upon all of the Lamb. We are to take all there is of Christ, His saviorhood as well as His lordship, and His lordship as well as his saviorhood. And then we are to not try to mix grace and works.

Well, you see how the gospel is hid away in the Old Testament? Do you see the beauty of it? And then, come down to verse 14, and He says, "*And this day...*"—the day

that you came out of Egypt, the day that you were delivered from the slavery and the bondage of sin—*“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial”* (Exodus 12:14). In other words, it shall be a day to be remembered, a memorial day.

Do you have a day to be remembered? I thank God I do. I thank God that I can remember the day when the blood was applied to the doorpost of my heart. I can remember the bitter herbs. I can remember feeding on all of the Lamb. I can remember having the Lord Jesus come into my heart. Oh, I thank the dear Lord that I have a memorial day. I have a day that I can look back to when I trusted Jesus. And I can remember looking up to Him and saying, “Dear Lord, as much as in me is, with all of my heart, now and forever, once and for all, I trust you to save me.” And God’s Spirit bore witness with my spirit that I was a child of God. And a sweet river of peace started flowing through my soul, and it hasn’t ceased to flow. Praise the Lord for it!

People ought to have a day to be remembered. It ought to be real to them. They ought to have a memorial to celebrate. And Moses said, *“This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations”* (Exodus 12:14).

II. The People Were to Keep the Feast in Canaan

Now that feast is the feast of the Passover. Moses taught them they were to keep this feast, the feast of the Passover. But where were they to keep it? This is the next thing I want you to notice. The first thing: they were to keep the feast. They were to have a day to be remembered. Now we’re going to get a little deeper. The first part you could understand about feeding on the lamb; but now, the second part, where were they to keep this feast? Were they to keep it in the land of Egypt? Absolutely not! Well, where did they go when they left the land of Egypt? You know where they went. They came out of Egypt, and they came into the wilderness, and they stayed in the wilderness for forty years wandering around in the wilderness. They were headed toward a promised land: the land of Canaan. Now, actually, it should have taken them only a few days to get to Canaan, just a few days; but it took them forty years to get there.

Now, were they to keep the feast in Egypt? Absolutely not! Were they to keep the feast in the wilderness? No, they were to keep the feast of the Passover; they were to celebrate their redemption in the land of Canaan. Let me show you where the Bible says that very plainly, because this is so important. Exodus 13, verses 3 to 5—now Moses is telling them again to remember this day: “Remember the day you were saved; remember the day you were delivered.” Notice Exodus 13, verse 3: *“And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten”* (Exodus 13:3). And notice in verse 5: *“And it shall be*

when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites...—I'm skipping on down now to the end of the verse, because there are a lot of hard words to pronounce—*“And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites...a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month”* (Exodus 13:5).

Now God said that they were not to keep the feast in Egypt, they were not to keep the feast in the wilderness, but they were to keep the feast in the land of Canaan. You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, so what? I can't see why you preached five minutes trying to teach us that. That doesn't mean anything to me.” Well, it means a tremendous amount to me. And I'm going to try to explain it to you right now. This is one of the greatest spiritual truths, I believe, in all of the Bible, if you can comprehend this.

Now, remember we said there are three types of people. There's the natural man; there's the carnal man; and there's the spiritual man. The natural man is lost. The carnal man, he's lukewarm. And the spiritual man is Spirit-filled. Now, notice the parallel. The natural man is in Egypt. The carnal man is in the wilderness. The spiritual man is in Canaan. So many times we use Canaan as a picture of heaven. And people talk about crossing over Jordan and going to the Promised Land: “to Canaan's fair and happy land, where my possessions lie.” We've got a lot of songs that don't have their theologies exactly right. Canaan in the Bible is not a picture of heaven. “On Jordan's stormy banks I stand, and cast a wishful eye.” But Canaan is not a picture of heaven. Canaan is a picture of the Spirit-filled life. There was war in Canaan. There's not going to be any war in heaven. There was death in Canaan. There's not going to be any death in heaven. There was sin in Canaan. There's not going to be any sin in heaven. They came back out of Canaan after they went into it. You're not going to come out of heaven once you're there. Canaan is not a picture of heaven, but Canaan is a picture of the Spirit-filled life.

Now some people are in Egypt. They have never been saved. They've never fed on the Lamb. They don't have any day to be remembered. Some people have come out of Egypt, but they've gone into the wilderness. They haven't entered into Canaan. They're saved, but they just are. They've come out of Egypt, but they've never entered into Canaan. And then, some people, bless God, have gone all the way. They're not the natural man, they're not the carnal man; but they're the spiritual man. They go all the way on over into Canaan, and they are feeding upon milk and honey that the Lord has for them.

Now the teaching here is that they should keep the Passover in the land of Canaan. Here's the teaching: You really don't have much to celebrate until you've been filled with the Spirit. Canaan stands for the Spirit-filled life: not heaven one day, but heaven right now; not victory in the bye-and-bye, in the sweet bye-and-bye, but victory in the nasty

now-and-now. You know, there are a lot of people always waiting for the sweet bye-and-bye. Oh, but, my, what we need is some people to live for Jesus in the nasty now-and-now, don't we? Not to get to heaven someday, but heaven in our heart right now. And that's what Canaan stands for.

Now, notice that Canaan stands for the victorious life, and only in Canaan were they to keep this feast. Now that's important for this reason. Notice, in verse 8, he's telling them how to keep the feast to celebrate, and he says you do it when you get in the land of Canaan: "Don't do it while you're in the wilderness; do it when you get in the land of Canaan." And here's the reason—notice in verse 8: "*And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt*" (Exodus 13:8).

Now, get the picture. We're going to learn a real spiritual lesson right here. Here's a man now out in the wilderness. Suppose he decided to disobey the Lord and keep the feast in the wilderness. Suppose he's getting ready to keep the feast of the Passover. How long did they stay in the wilderness? How long? Forty years. Now, let's imagine a man had a son thirteen years old, and the dad is out there in the wilderness, and he's getting ready to keep the feast of the Passover. He's getting ready to celebrate some. Now, think of it from this child's viewpoint. He's been out there for thirteen years. He hadn't been in Egypt, and he hadn't been in Canaan. Do you know what they fed on when they were in the wilderness? What did they eat? Manna. They ate it for breakfast; they ate it for dinner; they ate it for supper.

Now, remember, his dad had eaten something else besides manna; but this kid, he never had anything but manna. This is all he's eaten for thirteen years. He can tell you five weeks from now what he's going to have for breakfast: manna. Manna in the morning; manna in the evening; manna at suppertime. It's just manna, manna, manna. He was afraid his mother was going to buy him a manna freezer. This is all he had, was manna—manna. And so, here's this boy sitting out there. You know, it's kind of like Hugh Beasley. He told me, "Back during the depression," he said, "we had three meals." He said, "We had oatmeal for breakfast, and cornmeal for dinner, and no meal for supper." And this kid, he had manna, just manna all the time.

And suppose now they're out there in the desert, you know, in the wilderness. There are scaly snakes crawling around; cactus; burning, blistering sands; stones, rocks all around. And so they're getting out there, and the father's getting ready. The boy's sitting on a red-hot rock, and the daddy's sitting on a cactus; and they're sitting around there getting ready now to do something. And the father is busy about all of this, getting this feast ready, see? Now the boy doesn't understand it. That's the point in verse 8: "Thou shalt say to thy son,"—you see—"This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me."

Now, suppose the man didn't understand that you were supposed to keep the feast in Canaan, and he tried to keep it out in the wilderness. And the boy says, "Now, Dad, what's all this mean?" And the dad says, "Oh, I'm celebrating." This kid's been feeding on manna now for a long time. He's sick of it. He's sick of all of this. He's heard sermons about Canaan, but that's all. "Oh," he says, "you're celebrating, Dad. What are you celebrating?" "Oh," he says, "I'm celebrating what the Lord's done for your dad." He says, "What's He done for you, Dad?" I can imagine he's going to say, "If this is all He's done for you, don't you think it's about time we got back to Egypt?"

Now, you listen to me, ladies and gentlemen. You want me to tell you why the devil is getting so many of our children? You want me to tell you why deacons' children, and preacher's children, and people who sing in the choir and pay their tithe and come to church twice on Sunday and once in the middle of the week; you want me to tell you why the devil is getting their children, and wrecking and ruining them? Because they're trying to celebrate the Passover in the wilderness, and these children see through their superficial lives. The parents have been saved. Yes, they've come out of Egypt, all right. But they have never entered into Canaan. And all these poor children have had to feed upon has been manna, manna, manna, manna. And they've never fed on the fleshpots of Egypt, nor have they fed on the milk and honey of Canaan. The poor kids are caught in between. And, before long, the allurements of this world gets them.

Now I'll tell you, I believe the only way to deliver our children from the vice grip of the devil is to live Spirit-filled lives in the land of Canaan and to get out of the wilderness. We've got many, many homes that are wilderness homes; many, many Christians who are wilderness Christians. We come to church and act big, but they see different in our homes. And they know that we've been saved, but we just have been. We've come out of Egypt, but we've never entered into Canaan. There's not much victory. And I'll tell you, the devil is going to get our children, if we're not careful. We need to celebrate this feast, not in the wilderness—not in the wilderness. We have too many wilderness Christians. We need to celebrate this feast in the land of Canaan.

You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, what's wrong with manna? I thought manna was all right. I thought manna was a picture of Jesus. I thought it was angel food." Well, it is all right, but God never meant for them to eat it for forty years. It was to be a temporary thing. It was only to whet their appetite for the land that flowed with milk and honey. If you read the Bible, you'll find out there was the taste of honey in the manna, just a taste of it. And all it was for was to whet their appetite. They weren't supposed to be dumped in the desert for forty years. But most Christians have come out of Egypt, but they've never entered into Canaan. They're out in the wilderness, and they're trying to celebrate; and they're not filled with the Spirit of God, and they've got just enough religion to make them miserable. They're not feeding on the milk and honey of Canaan,

nor are they feeding on the fleshpots of Egypt; they're right in between. And that's where the majority of people are right now: in between. They've come out of Egypt, but they've never entered into Canaan. They're in no man's land. They're carnal Christians. They're not the natural man, nor are they the spiritual man; but they're babes in Christ. They're wilderness Christians. And, oh, my, how we need to be delivered!

Now, what will happen when a man enters into Canaan? What will happen when a person begins to live the Spirit-filled, the victorious, the overcoming life? We have a clue to it in chapter 13, verses 8 and 9: *"And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD's law may be in thy mouth"* (Exodus 13:8–9)—*"thine hand"*; *"between thine eyes"*; and, *"in thy mouth."* When they kept this feast in the land, it was to show that what they did was different, what they thought was different, and what they said was different: a law in the hand; between their eyes—that is, their mind; and in their mouth. When a man is filled with the Spirit, what he says, what he thinks, and what he does will be changed.

Now, let's see how that works out here; and let's find out what they did in the wilderness, and what they were supposed to do in Canaan; and then you'll see the difference. Now, look with me for just a moment in the Book of Deuteronomy. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—Deuteronomy 12, verse 1. Now, remember we said, first of all, that it was to be a sign in their hand. It was to change what they did. Now Moses is speaking, and he says, *"These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land,"*—remember now the land is the land of Canaan, and it stands for the Spirit-filled life—*"which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth"* (Deuteronomy 12:1). Now he says, "This is what you ought to do." And then, skip on down to verse 8, and he says, *"Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes"* (Deuteronomy 12:8). Now he says, "There are certain things you are going to do when you're filled with the Spirit"; and he says, "You won't do what you're doing now."

Now, what did they do at this particular time? Where were they? They were in the wilderness. And what does a wilderness Christian do? He does that which is right in his own eyes. This is the place that most church members are in. They're in the wilderness; and therefore they do that which is right in their own eyes. This is what they do.

Now we're having a business meeting, and we get ready to vote on something, and someone says, "Shall we have visitation on Thursday nights, or should we have visitation on Tuesday nights?" And somebody sits there and says, "Well, what seems right to me?" And he says, "Well now, I like to bowl on Tuesday nights. Let's have it on

Thursday nights.” So he says, “I vote for Thursday night.” He doesn’t stop to pray, and say, “Now, Holy Spirit, which would be best?” He just does what’s right in his own eyes. He doesn’t think he’s doing wrong. He never even stops to consider the leadership of the Holy Spirit. He just simply does what’s right in his own eyes. It doesn’t mean that he gets drunk; it doesn’t mean that he steals; it doesn’t mean that he commits adultery. Most wilderness Christians don’t do this. They are just simply not led of the Spirit. They do what’s right in their own eyes, without praying for the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Everybody says, “Well, every member has his right to say whatever he wants to in a Baptist church.” He doesn’t have any rights at all. He’s got to do what the Spirit of God leads him to do. We lose our rights when we get saved and filled with the Spirit. We don’t have any rights. A person says, “I’m going to stand up for my rights.” My friend, when you come to Jesus, you lose your rights. But a wilderness Christian, he does that which is right in his own eyes. A lot of time we think it’s good. A lot of people don’t even know what it is to be led by the Spirit.

Suppose you wake up in the morning, and your hand would say to you, “Good morning.” Well, you say, “Well, good morning.” And your hand says, “Now, today, I’m going to do a lot of things. I’m going to write some letters. Oh, I’m going to shave you, and I’m going to comb your hair, and I’m going to drive a few nails, and shift some gears, and so forth.” And this hand is telling you what it’s going to do, see? And after it gets through, it says, “Now, since I’m going to do all of these things, bless my efforts, and help me to do them well.” He’s talking to the head, see? I don’t want a hand like that shaving me. I don’t want a hand that wakes up in the morning and tells me what it’s going to do, and then asks me to bless its efforts.

But isn’t this the way most Christians are? They do what’s right in their own eyes. They’re not led of the Spirit. They get their ideas of what they’re going to do, and then they say, “Now, Lord, bless our plans; here’s what I’m going to do,” rather than saying, “Lord, here I am; do with me and through me as thou wilt; not my will, but thine, O Lord.” But the mark of the wilderness Christian is that he does that which is right in his own eyes. But, my friend, when a man is filled with the Spirit, he realizes he doesn’t claim the right to his career, his wife, his leisure time, his money, his vacation time, or anything else; but he must say, “Not my will, but thine, Lord.”

Now what they did: what did they do? Remember it was a sign in their right hand. They did that which was right in their own eyes. Now, notice, not only was it a sign in their right hand, but also it was a sign between the frontlets of their eyes. When they were filled with the Spirit, not only was it to change what they did, but it was to change what they thought.

Now, what did these people think about while they were in the wilderness? Well, let’s see what they thought about. Look with me in Numbers the eleventh chapter, verses 4

to 8. We've already seen what they did in the wilderness. They did that which was right in their own eyes. Now, let's see what they thought. Numbers 11, verse 4: *"And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes"* (Numbers 11:4–6). What did they think about? I'll tell you what they thought about—and here's what every wilderness Christian thinks about: they thought about Egypt.

Now they had come out of Egypt, but Egypt had never come out of them. And the whole time they were out there in the wilderness, they were saying, "We remember." They remembered the fish—fish in a hot climate in the desert, ugh—and the cucumbers—about nine inches of indigestion—and leeks and onions—and they speak for themselves—and the melons—ninety-five percent water and five percent seeds. But these are the things they remembered, you see? The old fleshpots of Egypt. They said, "We remember."

Now, notice they had come out of Egypt, but they'd not entered into Canaan. They were not feeding on milk and honey, and therefore they were longing after leeks and garlic. Now, catch the point. What does the carnal Christian think about? We know what he does: he does what's right in his own eyes. What does the carnal Christian think about? He thinks about Egypt. He has imagination; and while he wouldn't drink beer anymore, when the beer ads come on the television, he licks his chops. And while he would not commit adultery, he still likes to read the foul magazines, the girlie magazines, and so forth. And he still smiles and laughs at those old dirty, crude jokes that make fun of God's seventh commandment that says, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). And he remembers what he used to do before he was saved. And he has unclean pictures hanging on the wall of his mind, and he strolls up and down through the corridors of his mind, looking at the pictures on the wall, and saying, "I remember; I remember."

And there are many, many people who have been saved, and they come to the Lord Jesus Christ; they have come out of Egypt, the blood has been applied, but their mind is constantly filled with the things of the world rather than the things of God. They remember. And, secondly, they're fed up with the manna. In other words, they're bored. Notice again this verse of Scripture that we were reading to you, Numbers 11, verse 6—and it says, *"But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes"* (Numbers 11:6). They were bored—bored stiff. You want to find a Christian that's bored with his Christianity? He gets up and drags himself to church because it's his duty. There are no praises, there are no shouts, there are no

hallelujahs, there are no victories; he's feeding on manna, and if he were to tell the truth, he's sick and tired of the same ol' thing.

You want me to tell you why there are so many boring sermons? Because there are so many bored preachers preaching them. When the preacher's filled with the Spirit of God, he won't bore you to death, because it will be real to him. Oh, but there's so many people who say, "Our soul is dried away. There's nothing but this manna; and we remember the leeks and the melons and the garlic and the fish and the cucumbers of Egypt." I wonder, is that true about you? Have you been doing that which is right in your own eyes? And have your thoughts in your heart, your mind, been constantly filled with Egypt? Even though you've come out of Egypt, Egypt has never come out of you. They had no memories of Canaan. All they had were sermons about Canaan—second-hand talk.

Now, not only was it to be for a sign in their hand, and for a sign between the frontlets of their eyes; but also for a law in their mouth. Not only was it to change what they did, and what they thought; but also what they said. Well, what did they say in the wilderness? Look in Numbers 16, verse 3: "*And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you...*"—they rebelled against their leadership—"Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?" (Numbers 16:3). What did they say? They said, "Moses, who are you: some sort of a holy roller trying to lead us into Canaan? Don't you know we're good enough like we are? You take too much upon you, seeing how all the congregation's holy." What were they saying? "We're good enough just like we are." "We're holy," they said. "We're all right."

Now they were out in the wilderness when they said this. They rebelled against their leader who was trying to get them to a promised land, and they said, "We're all right." Now, how holy were they? Well, they were holy enough to make themselves naked and dance around a golden calf. That's how holy they were. But they couldn't see that. They were blind. And, you know, when you preach a sermon like this, there are many people who think that, "The pastor is some sort of a weirdo who is trying to lead us all somewhere where we don't have any business going; that we've been like this since kingdom come, and we're going to be this way, and we're all right like we are." And, ladies and gentlemen, our biggest need is to understand our need; to see where we are; to understand that there's more to the Christian life than the desert diet; to understand that there's a land to be possessed; to understand that we really don't have anything to celebrate until we get out of the wilderness and into Canaan. God said they would eat the feast of the Passover in Canaan, the land flowing with milk and honey. And your redemption is not complete until you've gone all the way.

Conclusion

You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I’m tired of being a carnal Christian. I’m tired of being defeated. I’m tired of feeding upon the same ol’ manna. I’m tired of being dumped in the desert and eating a desert diet. I want to go on. I want to go deeper. How can I enter into Canaan? How can I have the victorious life, the Spirit-filled life?” Well, I’m glad you asked. And I want to show you. Just a moment, and we’ll be finished.

Turn with me to the Book of Joshua. *Joshua* is the Old Testament word that means “Jesus,” and Joshua indeed is a picture of Jesus. Now, Joshua chapter 1, you remember Moses died in the wilderness: how tragic! How tragic! As great as he was, able administrator, but poor ol’ Moses, because of a lack of faith, died in the wilderness. He went to heaven, but he didn’t go there knowing the rest of Canaan. “*Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.*” They were to cross over the river Jordan and go into the land of Canaan. Now, notice this next phrase, and notice it very carefully: “*Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses*” (Joshua 1:1–3). He didn’t say, “I will give it to you.” He said, “That have I given unto you.”

Right now, as you’re sitting there, if you’re saved, God has already given you victory. Already you have it. When you got saved, you got everything that you’re going to get. I’m not talking about a second blessing. I’m talking about an understanding of the first blessing. Brother, when you got saved, you got it all. But a lot of people just haven’t understood it. They never have possessed their possession.

Now from the time they left Egypt, God said, “I’ve given you Canaan”—not “I will give,” but “I’ve given it to you. It’s yours.” Now, you want it? He said, “All right, just go possess it.” He said, “*Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you.*” But you’ve got to possess your possession. He didn’t say, “I will give it to you”: “I have given it to you.” Oh, if people could only understand what they have in Jesus. My, if you’d just start reading this Bible and the promises of God, and get up and start walking around and putting your foot down, and saying, “This one’s mine,” “this one’s mine,” “this one’s mine,” and possess your possessions, glory to God, you can have a Spirit-filled life. The devil will tell you it’s not for you; but God says, “I’ve already given it to you.” It’s already yours if you would just have enough faith to possess your possessions.

When He brought them out of Egypt, they came out by faith; and when they stepped into the Red Sea, the Red Sea opened up and they went through on dry ground. When they crossed the Jordan, as soon as they stepped in, the Jordan opened up, and they

went through on dry ground. And God said, “As I brought you out, so I will bring you in.” You’re filled with the Spirit just like you’re saved. You were saved by believing and receiving; and you’re filled with the Spirit by believing and receiving. I pray to God that many, many people tonight will be hungry to get out of the wilderness and into Canaan, the land that flows with milk and honey.

Let’s bow our heads and pray. Have you fed upon the Lamb? Has the blood of Jesus been applied to your heart? God said, “When I see the blood, I’ll pass over you.” Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Are your garments spotless? Are they white as snow? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Why not right now, with bitter herbs, with a broken heart, why not right now, with unleavened bread—that means turning from all sin—why not right now say, “Lord Jesus, I’ll apply the blood by faith to my soul, and I’ll receive you Lord Jesus with a staff in my hand and shoes on my feet, ready to go to work for you Lord; I’ll do it right now”? He’ll save you.

And those of you who have been saved, those who’ve come out of Egypt, you remember the night you were saved. You remember the day. You remember when you took a simple act of faith and said, “Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night, into thy glorious freedom and light, Jesus, I come.” You remember that. Well, just as you trusted the Lord to save you, why don’t you trust Him to fill you with the Spirit? Why don’t you trust Him to deliver you from the wilderness, that you might not feed on the manna, but that you might start feeding upon milk and honey, and living the victorious life?

The Kidnapper

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 18, 1983

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 12:1–14

Outline

Introduction

- I. There Was to Be a Day
 - A. We Are to Feed upon the Lamb
 - B. We Are to Eat It All
 - C. We Are to Eat It with Bitter Herbs
 - D. We Are to Eat It with Unleavened Bread
 - E. We Are to Eat It Ready to Travel
 - F. We Are to Eat It by Grace through Faith
- II. There Was to Be a Destination
- III. There Was to Be a Departure

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, tonight, I want you to take your Bibles and turn, if you will, to Exodus 12—the book of Exodus chapter 12. Right away you will recognize that as one of the most familiar chapters in all of the Bible. It deals with that dreadful but wonderful night that we call the night of the Passover. And I want to make a little different application tonight. Tonight, I want to try to answer a question. It's a very pertinent question. And if it doesn't apply to you, per se, it will apply to somebody that you know. Now it will perhaps answer some riddles for you tonight why a particular thing happened. Now, here's the question.

Here's the problem. How does the devil get the children of good people? How does the devil get preachers' kids, and deacons' kids, and the kids of saved people, both moms and dads, who love the Lord, who serve the Lord, who go to church, who pay their tithe, who sing in the choir, or serve as deacons, ushers, Sunday School teachers, and so forth? How does the devil get those kids?

And he does. You know, often we hear about preachers' kids going wrong. And, you know, it's almost like a little cliché, "Well, you know about preachers' kids." I have to be careful what I'm saying. One of mine is sitting on the front row here tonight. They say that preachers' kids get that way playing with the deacons' kids. How does the devil get the hearts and lives of children who become renegades and reprobates, dope addicts and God-haters, many of them children of some of the best people in our churches? Isn't that a heartbreaker? And, friend, don't say it doesn't happen. It happens. And the

message tonight is going to be dealing with that subject, and why it happens, and what can be done to stop it from happening—and the title of the message: “The Kidnapper.” The kidnapper is Satan himself, and he’s out for your family. And as I preached Wednesday night, if he can’t keep you from going on to Canaan, he’ll try to keep your kids from going with you, just keep them for his dirty, nefarious kingdom.

Well, we’re going to look for a moment in these Old Testament records, and I think we’re going to find a clue here. One of the most meaningful things I’ve seen, as I’ve looked over these Scriptures, is how the kidnapper works, and how he manages to capture the lives, the hearts, the minds, the souls of our most precious possessions, our children, and to keep them from going to heaven with us and from serving the Lord. I want to remind you that, as I’m reading these materials from the Old Testament, lest some of you say that they’re not relevant and they don’t apply to us, the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 10:11, “All of these things happened unto them for examples unto us.” These Old Testament stories are poignant examples and grand object lessons for those of us who live in this world and in this age today.

Now, let’s look, if we might, here for a moment in Exodus 12:1: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: and if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next to him unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it upon the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD’s passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto*

you for a memorial: and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.” (Exodus 12:1–14)

I. There Was to Be a Day

Now, look in verse 14: *“This day shall be unto you for a memorial.”* That is, this is a day that you are to remember. It is to be a memorial day. What day? The day of your redemption, the day when you came out of Egypt by the shed blood. You are to have a day that we sang about:

*I never shall forget that day,
When Jesus washed my sins away.
Blessed be the Name of the Lord!*

—CHARLES WESLEY

I hope you have a day like that.

You see, all that happened here in the twelfth chapter of Exodus is a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of the type and prophecy of the Passover lamb. I am not reading into that. I am not forcing the meaning there. That is the clear biblical meaning. Paul the Apostle said, in 1 Corinthians 5:7, *“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”* It’s just as plain, just as clear as it can be, that what happened here in the twelfth chapter of Exodus is a prophecy and a figure and a foreshadowing of the Lord Jesus Christ, God’s Lamb. And that’s the reason John the Baptist said, in John 1:29, when he saw Jesus Christ coming that day, *“Behold the Lamb of God.”* And this Lamb, whose blood was sprinkled on the doorposts of the house so long ago so the death angel would pass over was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now God had said to these people, “Take a lamb of the firstlings of the flock, a lamb without spot or without blemish. Kill it. Take the blood of that lamb, and put it on the doorposts of the house. And if you don’t put some blood on the doorposts of the house, when the death angel comes through the land of Egypt, he’s going to enter into that house and the firstborn male in every house will be slain.” It will be judgment. But God said, “If I see the blood, when I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

Now that, again, is a marvelous lesson, for the Bible says, in Hebrews 9:22, *“Without shedding of blood is no remission.”* Had they put a live lamb tied before that door, it would have done no good. *We’re not saved by learning lessons from the life of Christ, but by receiving life from the death of Christ.* Had they put rubies, gold, emeralds, poetry there on the door, it would have done no good. God said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” We have a blood-bought salvation.

A. We Are to Feed upon the Lamb

But every detail here is important. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10 of this

chapter. He says, *“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning.”* (Exodus 12:9–10) Now, what’s the significance of that? Friend, we are to feed upon the Lamb who has redeemed us. Not only are we to go out under His blood, but we are to go out filled with Himself. And the same Lamb that has redeemed us is the Lamb that strengthens us and energizes us—and we are to feed on the Lamb.

B. We Are to Eat It All

Now it is important here that he said eat it all—eat it all. You see, when you come to Jesus Christ, you don’t really just come to Jesus Christ and say, “I receive Christ as my Savior.” I think we use that terminology, but perhaps we ought not to use it as much as we do, or the way we do. “Will you take Christ as your Savior?” Friend, you don’t take Christ as anything. You take Christ.

You say, “What’s the difference?” Well, suppose you go to the marriage altar, and the minister says, “Will you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?” You say, “Well, I’ll take her as housekeeper,” or, “I’ll take her as sex partner,” or, “I’ll take her as *this*” or “as *that*.” I think she might say, “Back off, bud.” I mean, you take her.

And, friend, there’s sort of an erroneous kind of an idea going around here. You know, I hear people say something like this: “Now that you’ve taken Christ as your Savior, why not make Him your Lord?” Well, friend, let me tell you something. If He’s not your Lord, He’s not your Savior. You can’t have Him as Savior and not have Him as Lord. The Bible says, *“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth [that Jesus is Lord], and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (Romans 10:9) The Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) Lord, Master, Jesus, Mediator, Christ, Messiah: you must receive Him as Master, Mediator, Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ—all there is of Him. You feed on all the Lamb—all the Lamb. *Salvation is not a cafeteria line where you say, “I believe I’ll have some saviorhood, thank you, but no lordship today.”* You receive Christ not as anything. Oh, He is Savior, but you don’t receive Him as Savior. You receive Christ and all that comes with Him. And with Christ comes salvation.

C. We Are to Eat It with Bitter Herbs

Now, something else. Look again, if you will, in verse 8. The Bible says you’re to eat that lamb *“with bitter herbs.”* (Exodus 12:8) You know what that means? That means, when you come to the Lord Jesus Christ, when you feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, you’re to feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ with a humble and a contrite heart. There is to be no bitterness. There’s to be brokenness. I see people who saunter forward in churches like they’re joining a country club, thinking perhaps they’re doing God a favor, and they’re not broken. They’re not repentant. There’s no contrite spirit. I wonder, have

they really, truly, given their heart to the Lord Jesus Christ?

D. We Are to Eat It with Unleavened Bread

And not only are they to feed upon all the lamb, and not only are they to feed upon that lamb with bitter herbs, but with unleavened bread, according to verse 8. Leaven, in the Bible, is a symbol, a type, of sin. And when we feed upon the Lord Jesus, the Passover Lamb, with unleavened bread, that means we feed upon Him in repentance, that we repudiate all sin. Now the bitter herbs show that we're broken over our sins. The unleavened bread shows we're broken from our sins. I told you this morning; I want to tell you again: *Jesus didn't come to save you from hell. He came to save you from sin. And if He can't save you from sin, He can't save you from hell.* Now if you are saved, you'll not go to hell. But the Bible didn't say, "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from hell." The Bible says, "*Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*" (Matthew 1:21) And here tucked away in this chapter, this idea of the unleavened bread is the idea, dear friend, that there is a repudiation, a putting away, of sin—a repentance of sin. What is repentance? It is a change of mind that leads to a change of life and action.

E. We Are to Eat It Ready to Travel

And then, notice again, if you will, in verse 11: "*And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand.*" (Exodus 12:11) What does that mean? It means that there is a journey. It means that you're to feed upon it ready to travel; that salvation is not an end, it is a beginning.

I think I told you about a wedding ceremony I performed one time and the groom was exceedingly frightened. Finally, after I pronounced them husband and wife, and they'd taken the pictures, he said, "Pastor, is it all over?" I said, "No, son, it's just beginning."

Now, friend, the wedding ceremony is the beginning of the married life. And feeding on the Passover Lamb is not the end of the thing. That gets you into this thing called the Christian journey. And so you're to have your staff in your hand, you're to have your loins girt, you're to have your shoes on your feet.

F. We Are to Eat It by Grace through Faith

And then, also, I want you to notice, if you will, in verse 16: "*In the first day of the week there shall be a holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them.*" (Exodus 12:26) What's he saying here? "Salvation is by grace through faith, and *that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (Ephesians 2:8–9) No work. It is of grace. We're saved by faith—by grace through faith, by the shed blood of the Lamb.

We're not against good works. God forbid! The Bible says that we who believed in Christ should be careful to maintain good works. And the Bible says we're "*created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" (Ephesians 2:10) But no work was done on this day, to let it be clear, to let it be plain, to let it be known, that salvation is by grace.

*I would not work, my soul to save,
For this my Lord has done;
But I would work like any slave
For love of His dear Son.*

—HARRY A. IRONSIDE

Salvation is by grace.

II. There Was to Be a Destination

Now, go on down to verse 14. Again, I want to remind you that Moses said, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that all of us are to have a day like this. All of us are to have a memorial day, a day when Christ came into our hearts, a day when we were saved, came out of Egypt, by the blood of the Lamb, where we were redeemed and set free. But not only was there to be a day; along with that day there was to be a destination. Now, look, if you will, in chapter 13, and let's read verses 3 through 5: "*And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. This day came ye out in the month Abib. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.*" (Exodus 13:3–5)

Now it's very important that you understand what he's saying. He's saying, "God brought you out of Egypt that He might bring you into Canaan. He brought you out of bondage that He might bring you into blessing. He brought you out of the land of Egypt that He might bring you into a land flowing with milk and honey. He brought you out that He might bring you in." And then He said, "When you get in, when you get into Canaan, it is there that you're to keep the feast of the Passover. You're not to keep it until you get there. But you are to keep it when you get there."

Look again. It says here, in verse 5, "*And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.*" And it's the feast of unleavened bread. Continue to read. "*Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread, and in the*

seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be any leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.” Now, look at verse 8—key verse: *“And thou shalt shew thy son in that day,”*—what day? The day that you’re living in Canaan, the day that you’re celebrating in a land flowing with milk and honey. In that day you shall shew to thy son— *“saying, This is done because of what the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt. And it shall be a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD’S law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he sware unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee, that thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix,”* and so forth. (Exodus 13:6–12) All of these promises are promises that are to be assimilated, fulfilled in joy, and exercised in the land of Canaan.

Now if Egypt represents a lost man in bondage—and it does—coming out of Egypt represents salvation by the shed blood of the Lamb—and it does—what does Canaan represent? Well, I’m afraid, Dr. Tommy Lane—not to your fault, but I’m still afraid—that many of the songs that we sing have wrong typology and terminology. We speak of Canaan as heaven. You know, “And I’m bound for the Promised Land,” and all this. And in that kind of terminology we speak of Canaan as heaven. But that is not true biblical typology, I don’t believe. Canaan, in the Bible, does not represent heaven. It does not represent heaven—some day, at least. It represents heaven today—not heaven above, but heaven below; heaven in our hearts right now. Canaan, in the Bible, the land flowing with milk and honey, represents the believer’s rest. It really represents the victorious Spirit-filled life.

There are three categories of persons: unsaved people—they’re in Egypt; carnal people—they are in the wilderness; Spirit-filled people—they’re in Canaan. And everybody here is either in Egypt, the wilderness, or Canaan. Do you understand what I’m saying? Either you are a natural man, a carnal man, or a spiritual man: natural man—you’re in Egypt; a carnal man—you’re in the wilderness; and a spiritual man—you are in Canaan, the land that flows with milk and honey. Now the way I know that Canaan doesn’t represent heaven, friend, there was warfare in Canaan. There’s not going to be any warfare in heaven. They could sin in Canaan. You can’t sin in heaven, and so forth. They were able to backslide out of Canaan, and so forth. You’re not going to be able to backslide out of heaven. The typology doesn’t fit if you try to make Canaan typical of heaven. It is a picture, it is an illustration, a marvelously wonderful illustration of the victorious life that there is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now God brought you out of Egypt that He might bring you into Canaan. Now here’s

what I'm saying. There is a day: that's salvation. There is a destination: that's sanctification. There is to be a day that is to be remembered in a land that is to be possessed. Chapter 12 tells us about the day to be remembered; chapter 13 tells us about the land to be possessed: a day and a destination. Now God said that, "When you get into the land of Canaan, then you're to start to celebrate." And your celebration is to be so wonderful, and your celebration is to be so glorious, and your celebration is to be so impressive, that, according to verse 8, your son is going to ask you a significant question: *"And thou shalt shew thy son this day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt."* (Exodus 13:8)

Now I want you to imagine a scenario. I want you to imagine a boy who was raised in the wilderness. Now, remember, the journey from Egypt to Canaan was really only a journey of a few short days, had they been obedient and gone as the crow flies. But how long did they spend out there? That's right. Forty years! So let's just take a boy, and let's say that he belongs to Mr. and Mrs. John Doe Baptist. They have come out of Egypt. I mean, they're saved—no ifs, ands, and buts about it—but they're not sanctified, not truly sanctified, not filled with the Holy Spirit, not living in Canaan, not living in the Spirit-filled life. What they are doing is going in circles in the wilderness. And they have stayed in the wilderness for all of this boy's life. He was born in the wilderness, and he's lived in the wilderness for thirteen years.

Now I want to ask you a question. What do you reckon that kid ate for thirteen years? You know what he ate, don't you? Manna. When did he eat it? Well, if he ate three meals a day, he had manna in the morning, manna in the evening, and manna at suppertime. That's all he ate. That's all he had to eat. That's all there was to eat: manna, manna, manna. And, friend, he had manna up to *here*. He was sick of it. You see, manna was not meant to be eaten for thirteen years, much less for forty years. Here's this kid. He never said, "Mama, what's for supper?" He knew what was for supper. He didn't ask about dessert. Now manna had in it the taste of honey. And what it was meant to do was to whet your appetite for the land that flowed with milk and honey. It had in it a taste of oil. But what it was meant to do was to whet the appetite for the land where the olive trees grew, a land of oil and corn and wine, and grapes and pomegranates, and waterfalls and rivers and valleys. But here's a kid. He's dumped in the desert. And for thirteen years, if we'll say he's thirteen years of age, he's had nothing but a desert diet. All he's had is manna.

Now there's nothing wrong with manna. In a sense—in a sense—manna pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. But it only pictures the Lord Jesus Christ as the believer's first food, as he's to go on to the deeper things of Christ and the more wonderful things of Christ as are typified in the land of Canaan. Now you can get sick of manna. You can get bored with manna. Manna can become insipid, as we're going to see in a moment. They

finally said, “Our souls are sick and tired of this. We hate it. We loathe this light bread.” (Numbers 21:5)

Now here’s the picture. Here’s this boy. Remember, his parents have come out of Egypt. His parents are real Christians. They love God, but they’re not Spirit-filled. They’ve never entered into Canaan. They’re not living in victory. They’re not enjoying corn and wine and oil and grapes and pomegranates and all of these things. It’s manna. Now get the picture. I explained this to you once long ago, but many of you haven’t heard it. Here they’ve been going around out there in the wilderness. This kid’s been going around following Mom and Dad out there for thirteen years. And Dad gets the idea, “Well, if I’m going to keep the Passover, I guess I’d better keep it.” Now, when did God say to keep it? “When you get into the land.” But it doesn’t look like they’re going into the land. So the dad says, “Well, I just believe I’ll keep the Passover out here.” And so he gets all the elements he has. Maybe he’s got a little corn, and he makes him some unleavened bread. Got a little bit left over. He’d brought it out of Egypt. And he starts to celebrate the Passover.

Now I want you to see the scene. That broiling sun is beating down on the Sinai Desert. They’re out there. The son’s sitting on a hot rock. Dad’s sitting on cactus. A rattlesnake goes slithering by. This kid has been breathing dust, eating dust, going in circles in the Sinai. And his Dad is going through this ritual. He says, “Hey, Dad, what does all this mean? What are we doing, Dad?” “Oh, son, we’re celebrating.” “Oh, yea? Hey, Dad, what are we celebrating, Daddy?” “Oh, son, we’re celebrating what the Lord has done for us.” And this kid, who’s had it up to *here* with manna, and this kid who’s never seen any victory in his parents—but they’re saved, but all he’s seen is them going around in circles in the wilderness, criticizing, murmuring, murmuring, murmuring, murmuring, murmuring—all he has heard is sermons about Canaan. He’s never seen it. But he has memories about Egypt, if he’s old enough. You know what he’s going to say? He’s going to say, “Hey, Dad, if this is all we’re celebrating, don’t you think it’s about time we got back to Egypt?” And if Dad doesn’t want to go, he’ll go by himself. He’ll hotfoot it back.

You see the problem. And here’s where the devil gets our kids, folks. It’s not that we’re not saved. It’s not that we don’t love the Lord. It’s not that we’ve not been redeemed. It’s not that we’re not going to heaven. It is that our children do not see in us the Spirit-filled life, and they’re sitting ducks for the devil. People say, “Well, listen. I made that kid go to church. I took that kid to church with me. I made him go to Sunday School. I taught him right. I tanned his hide when he did wrong. I brought him up right.” Were you living in Canaan, where the corn and the oil flow? Were you living in victory? Was there, indeed, a Spirit-filled life? Did your son, did your daughter, see you celebrating Jesus Christ, really celebrating Jesus Christ in such a way it was real? And

when he said, “Hey, Daddy, what does this mean?” you say, “Oh, son, it’s what the Lord has done for Dad, what the Lord has done for Mom.” He’ll say, “You know, Mom and Dad, that’s wonderful. I want Him to do that for me.”

You see, they don’t see Canaan in us. That’s the problem. All they have heard is sermons about Canaan, but they haven’t seen Canaan. They haven’t tasted Canaan. They haven’t experienced Canaan. And right here is where the kidnapper gets them.

III. There Was to Be a Departure

Now, listen. In order for there to be a day, and a destination, there has to be a departure. That’s the third thing. You’re going to have to get out of the wilderness. Now, what was all of the feast about? I mean, let’s get right down, as they used to say, to the nitty-gritty. I think that’s passé now, but we’ll use it one more time. Look, if you will, in chapter 13, verse 8: *“And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.”* Now, watch it—verse 9: *“And it shall be for a sign unto thee”—what? The feast—“upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD’s law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt.”* (Exodus 13:8–9)

Now, what does that represent? Well, “for a sign in your right hand”: that represents that, when you’re in Canaan, the things that you do will be changed; “for a memorial between thine eyes”: that means that, when you’re in Canaan, the things that you think are going to be changed; and then it goes on to say, “for a law in thy mouth”: that means that, when you’re in Canaan, the things that you say are going to be changed. Now, you see, when a person lives in Canaan, when Christian parents are living in Canaan, when they’re enjoying the Spirit-filled life, when they are celebrating their redemption, the things that they do, the things that they think, the things that they say, are going to be changed.

Now, let’s see what people do when they’re in the wilderness; let’s see what people think when they’re in the wilderness; and let’s see what people say when they’re in the wilderness, because these are the things they’re going to have to depart from. These are the things they’re going to have to leave. Well, leave Exodus for a moment, and go to the book of Deuteronomy. And let’s look, if you will, in Deuteronomy 12. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy—now, look, if you will, in Deuteronomy 12:1: *“These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land...”*—again, he’s talking about the land of Canaan. Here’s the way you’re to live—*“in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.”* And then he tells them how to live. But the significant thing is in verse 8—Deuteronomy 12:8: *“Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.”*

Now, what does a wilderness Christian do? Well, Moses just said, “When we get in the land, we’re not going to do like we’re doing today.” What were they doing in the wilderness? Here’s what they were doing in the wilderness. Every man was doing what was right in his own eyes. Do you want me to tell you how a carnal Christian operates? You want me to tell you how a wilderness Christian operates? He does what is right in his own eyes. That doesn’t mean that he wants to do wrong. He’s sincere, but he’s not Spirit-led. *“As many as are led of the Spirit...they are the sons of God.”* (Romans 8:14) But he’s fleshly. He’s carnal. And so he schemes, and he dreams, and he plans; and no matter how good his motives, he’s still wrong, because, rather than letting God lead him, he does what is right in his own eyes.

A carnal Christian thinks he has a right to choose his career. A carnal Christian thinks he has a right to choose his wife. A carnal Christian thinks he has every right to decide how he’s going to enjoy his leisure, where he’s going to invest his money, how he’s going on a vacation, where his children should be educated. All he does is to take his mind, his flesh, his logic, his ingenuity, his good intentions, and he does what is right in his own mind, and he messes it up. He’s not led by the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit of God is not taken into consideration. He’s out there in the wilderness going round and round in circles. Sincere as he may be, he’s a wilderness man. She’s a wilderness woman. And “for a sign in your right hand” means that, when you celebrate that feast, it means what you do has been changed. You don’t do any longer that which is right in your own eyes. Now you’ve come under a new law, *“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 8:2)

But now we’ve seen what a wilderness Christian does. He does what’s right in his own eyes. What does a wilderness Christian think? Well, turn to the book of Numbers for a moment. Look with me in Numbers 11. You have to turn left to get to Numbers chapter 11. Begin in verse 4; we’ll read right on through verse 8. Now they’re out there in the wilderness, *“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again...”*—it’s hard to tell the saved from the lost. It’s hard to tell a carnal Christian from a hypocrite who’s not a Christian at all. *“The mixt multitude”*: those were the hypocrites who went out with them, who had never really been a part of them. But then—*“the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.”* You see it? They were sick of manna. *“And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium”*—whatever that is. *“And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, and beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.”* (Numbers 11:4–8)

It doesn't take much imagination here. Buddy, they ground it. They fried it. They fricasseed it. They roasted it. They did everything they could do to this manna. I mean, they cooked it inside out and upside down to see if they could do something different with it. But, finally, they said, "We're sick of it. I mean, we've had a belly full of manna." So would you. They said, "Our souls loathe it. We remember the melons. We remember the leeks. We remember the garlic. We remember the fish. We had all that in Egypt. And now all we've got out here in this wilderness is manna."

What does a wilderness Christian think about? Egypt—Egypt. He's bored with his Christianity. He's bored with it. Oh, he's saved. He's going to heaven. But he's bored stiff on the way. One pastor said, "After church, there will be a meeting of the board," and about 500 people went out. Oh, how tedious and tasteless are the hours! We took a Sunday School survey down at Merritt Island, the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island, and we said to our kids, "Don't sign your name, but just tell us why you don't come to Sunday School." Do you know the key word? Boring: over and over and over again. Boring. I want to tell you that boring lessons are taught by bored teachers. Did you know that? And boring sermons are preached by bored preachers. And the kids who are raised in homes where there's no excitement, no victories, no thrills, no miracles, no Jesus being real—sermons, yes; go to Sunday school, yes; daily devotions, yes; "you sit still while we instill"—but manna, manna, manna; no milk, no honey, no grapes, no wine, no corn, no oil, no waterfalls, no hills, no valleys, all they have is sermons about Canaan, but memories about Egypt. "We remember the leeks. We remember the melons. We remember the garlic. We remember the fish."

Some of you guys will sit here in church and listen to me preach, thinking about a six-pack, remembering what it used to be, feeling sorry for yourself because you can't do those things anymore. Now you're a Christian, you've got to walk the straight and narrow. I want to tell you, when you get filled with the Spirit, you'd just as soon eat dirt as to go back and do that again. But you're almost feeling sorry for yourself. Your buddies are having a big time. They're back there in Egypt. And you're dumped in the desert. But you're going to make it, because you did come out of Egypt. I mean, you are saved. You may die in the wilderness, but you'll go to heaven. You're a carnal Christian. A carnal Christian is saved; but I tell you, a lot of your kids are not going to make it. The kidnapper is going to get them. You're going to say to that kid out there in the desert, "We're celebrating." He's going to say, "Dad, this is a colossal joke." He can't see that you've been saved. He can't tell that you've been born again. He's looking for reality, not sermons, not lectures, not four spiritual laws, not youth programs. He's looking for reality.

I don't mean that you have to be perfect. I've got four children who love the Lord. I've got a little baby in heaven—five children altogether. Two of my children are married to preachers. One's in seminary. One lives in Florida, who works in the music program of

his church and produces Christian music. Joyce and I have not been perfect; and we have sinned, and we have failed. And I don't want to say this braggingly, but you can ask our children if Mom and Dad love the Lord Jesus, and they'll tell you we do. And you can ask them, "Are Mom and Dad phonies?" and they'll say, "Mom and Dad are not phonies. I've seen Dad get mad. I've seen Mom fail. But they admit it. They confess it. They ask forgiveness. And they walk in victory. They live in Canaan." I'm not holding myself up as a perfect example. God knows I'm not. But I want to tell you something, friend. The kidnapper's going to get them if you don't move them into Canaan. He's going to get them. You stay out there in the wilderness, you try to serve your God going in circles out in the wilderness, you've got nothing to celebrate. When you get in the land—in the land—you're to keep the feast. That's where you're to keep it!

Conclusion

Some of you are saying, "Oh, God, I wish I could go back and start over," aren't you? "Oh, God, if I could just go back before my daughter, my son, whoever it was, got away. Oh, if I could just turn back the years." And maybe you can help somebody else on down the road. And maybe God, in His mercy, will help you to go down into the fleshpots of Egypt—and God is good, and God is merciful—and to get those precious children out. Maybe now you need to start to work, to walk, and live in victory. But, you see, this feast is to be a sign, number one, in your right hand; a sign that what you do has been changed. You no longer do that which is right in your own eyes. And it is to be for a memorial between your eyes. What you think is to be changed. You're not looking back over your shoulder to Egypt and saying, "We remember, we remember."

And, also, not what you do, and what you think, is to be changed, but what you say is to be changed. Here's the classic thing of all. Do you know what a wilderness Christian says? Because it's to be forlorn. Look in Numbers 16:3. Now Moses is trying to lead them into Canaan. And notice, if you will, in verse 3: "*And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?*" You know what a wilderness Christian says? "I'm fine just like I am. I'm fine just like I am. Why, Moses, the audacity of you, saying we're not fine like we are. Why, all the congregation of Israel is holy, every one of them."

Now that's the sad thing about the carnal Christian. When you preach to him, you always think you're preaching to God sitting behind him or next to him: it's not him. He doesn't need it. "Now, don't look at me, preacher. You take too much. Who do you think you are, preacher? Don't you know we are fine folks?" The kidnapper loves that kind of message.

The Passover

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 11, 1973

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 12:8

Outline

Introduction

- I. A Special Day
 - A. They Ate the Passover Lamb with Unleavened Bread
 - B. They Ate the Passover Lamb with Bitter Herbs
 - C. They Ate All of the Lamb
 - D. They Ate the Passover Lamb Ready to Move Out
 - E. They Ate the Passover Lamb Without Work
 - II. A Special Destination
 - III. A Special Deliverance
- Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn, if you will, to Exodus 12—the book of Exodus chapter 12. Right away you will recognize that as one of the most familiar chapters in all of the Bible. It deals with that dreadful but wonderful night that we call the night of the Passover. God had some special lessons that He wanted to teach the children of Israel through the celebration of the Passover. But I believe He also has some special lessons in the Passover for us as Christians who are members of Bellevue Baptist Church in AD 1973. For the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 11, “*All these things happened unto them for examples [unto us].*” (1 Corinthians 10:11) You see, God allowed certain things to happen to the Jewish people in the Old Testament, that they might be examples or lessons to us. So there are three things that I want you to see about the Passover.

I. A Special Day

The first thing I'd like for you to see is that the Passover was to be a special day. And that day, really, in Old Testament symbolism represents the day that we have found the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, the Lamb that was slain. Remember, God told the Jewish people in this passage of Scripture—they were in bondage in the land of Egypt, and God told them to take a lamb, slay it, take the blood, and put it on the doorposts of your house. And He said, “This night there's coming through the land of Egypt the death angel, and that death angel's going to be looking for the blood, and,”

God said, “when I see the blood, I will pass over you”—that is, that “my angel of judgment will not come upon this house.” (Exodus 12)

Now that lamb, as you well know, represents the Lord Jesus Christ. You’ll remember John the Baptist said, in John chapter 1, verse 29, when he saw Jesus, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” (John 1:29) And the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 5, verse 7, “*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.*” (1 Corinthians 5:7) And so you know this Old Testament lamb was a picture of Jesus, the Lamb of God. This Old Testament Passover was a picture of Jesus our Passover.

A. They Ate the Passover Lamb with Unleavened Bread

Now, having said that, I want you to see several things about the Passover lamb that needs to be instructional to us. In the first place, when they fed upon the lamb, the Bible says, in verse 8, they were to “*eat [it] in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread.*” (Exodus 12:8) What does leaven stand for in the Bible? It always stands for evil, for sin. Sometimes people misinterpret Matthew 13 and the woman who hid three measures of yeast in a loaf. (Matthew 13:33) They say that speaks of the invisible influence of good in the Church. Don’t you believe it. Leaven is a symbol of evil. Jesus said, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees,” “the leaven of the Sadducees,” and so forth. (Matthew 16:6, 11; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1) When these Old Testament saints took the Passover, it was always with unleavened bread, because leaven speaks of the insidious working of sin in the life.

So, what is God telling us? God is telling us, first of all, when we come to Jesus the Lamb of God, we must repent; that is, we must feed upon Jesus with unleavened bread. We must repent. You must choose Christ or your sins. You cannot choose both. And the Bible clearly and plainly says, “*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” (Luke 13:3, 5) You cannot be saved, unless you repent. You cannot feed upon the Lamb, unless you do it with unleavened bread.

B. They Ate the Passover Lamb with Bitter Herbs

Now, secondly, not only did they eat it with unleavened bread, but verse 8 tells us that they ate it with bitter herbs: “*...with bitter herbs they shall eat it.*” (Exodus 12:8) And this tells us that, when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ, not only must we repent of our sins, but there must be a genuine brokenness and contriteness. The bitter herbs speak of the brokenness of our hearts when we come to the Lord Jesus. Do you know what’s wrong with many folks who join the church? They never get saved. They come strutting down the aisle like they’re doing God a favor, and saying, “God, aren’t you lucky to get me?” Friend, you’ll never be saved that way. The Bible says, “A humble and a contrite spirit thou wilt not despise, O God,” (Psalm 51:17) and Christ must be received with that spirit.

C. They Ate All of the Lamb

Now the third thing I want you to notice is this. Notice in verses 9 and 10 they were to eat all of the lamb: *“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire;”—*and that speaks of the fire of judgment that Jesus took for us—*“his head with his legs, and with the [inward parts] thereof; and ye shall let nothing of it remain”—*that is, “You are to eat all of the lamb.” (Exodus 12:9–10)

Now, what does this tell us about? This speaks of the totality of the commitment when we come to the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, there are so many folks who use this terminology, which is not really biblical terminology. I’m guilty of using it. I suppose you have been. Have you ever heard anyone say, “Take Christ as your Savior”? I use that terminology, and perhaps you do, but that’s not really biblical terminology. I’m not saying Christ is not the Savior. He is the Savior. And when you receive Him, indeed He becomes your Savior, but you don’t really take Christ as anything. You take Christ—the head, the legs, and the purtenance thereof—all of Jesus. You see, He’s more than Savior. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord: that means Master. Jesus: that means Mediator. Christ: that means Messiah. Master, Mediator, Messiah: the Lord Jesus Christ.

You say, “What are you driving at, Brother Rogers?” Well, I hear people say, “Well, I took Christ as my Savior fifteen years ago, but I never made Him my Lord.” There’s something fishy about that, friend. The Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”;* (Acts 16:31) *“...that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth [that Jesus is Lord], and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (Romans 10:9)

Now, suppose, when Joyce and I stood there to get married, and that minister said to me, “Adrian, will you take Joyce to be your lawfully wedded wife?” and I said, “Well, I’ll take her as housekeeper”—because what I see is I need a housekeeper: Joyce would start walking back up the aisle, I’m certain, the other way.

You see, salvation is not the cafeteria line where you say, “Well, I believe I’ll have some saviorhood, but no lordship, thank you,” you see? *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”*

Now someone says, “Oh, do you mean nobody can be saved until Jesus is completely in charge of everything?” Well, I don’t guess Jesus is completely in charge of anybody’s life here tonight, including mine, although I want Him to be—but that’s not the point. You’re saved by faith in the Lord Jesus. But I don’t believe any of us have ever completely one hundred percent ever trusted Him. I think there’s a flaw in all of our faith. But, nonetheless, we wouldn’t say you can do away with faith, or we wouldn’t say that you can do away with the idea of lordship. As we know it, we must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, Master, Mediator, Messiah. They fed upon all the Lamb.

That's the point.

Oh, we have some sort of an idea that Jesus Christ is something that can be tacked onto our life as some sort of fire insurance, and then we go on our own way living our lives for ourselves. That kind of life ends up in hell. Jesus said, *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46) They ate all the Lamb.

D. They Ate the Passover Lamb Ready to Move Out

Then I want you to notice, in verse 11, as we continue on down, they ate it ready to move out: *"And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover."* (Exodus 12:11) That is, as you feed upon the lamb, be ready to travel; be ready to journey. You see, getting saved is not the end of the business; it is the beginning. It is not the destination; it is the commencement. It is beginning with the Lord Jesus Christ, ready to travel. You see, the Bible says, in Colossians, *"As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him";* (Colossians 2:6) and, in Romans chapter 8, verse 1, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."* (Romans 8:1) Once we're in Christ, we're to walk with the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Chinaman looked at some of our churches, and he said, *"The trouble with the American churches is this: They are too much talkie-talkie and not enough walkie-walkie."* And I think that's true. *We talk too much, and we don't walk the walk.*

You see, we are not saved by works, but we are saved to do good works. And when a man says he trusts the Lord Jesus Christ, he'd better do it with his shoes on his feet. He'd better do it with a staff in his hand. He'd better understand that it is not just walking down an aisle and shaking hands with some preacher; it is a way of life. And we need to understand this.

I was performing a wedding ceremony for a boy frightened to death. After it was over, he looked at me, and he said, "Preacher, is it all over?" I said, "No, son, it's just beginning." And that's the way it is with getting saved. It's not just a matter of a ceremony, and saying, "It's all over." It's like getting married. It's a lifetime contract.

E. They Ate the Passover Lamb Without Work

And I want you to notice also, in verse 16, no work was to be connected with the Passover. The Bible says, in verse 16, *"And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them."* (Exodus 12:16)

Now, what does that mean? It means that God was telling us that, when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, we stop trying to work for our salvation; we trust in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not what we do for

God; it's what God has done for us. We are saved "by grace...not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:8–9)

All right, so we're saying, in essence, that this Old Testament picture here is really a New Testament picture of what it means to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as one's personal Savior. And then, after they had had this first Passover, the Lord says to them, in verse 14, these words: "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever." (Exodus 12:14) In other words, God said, "You are to continue keeping this feast; not only are you to feed upon the lamb once, but you are to continue to have a Passover feast." And so we look to God, that we would realize what the Lord is saying. It is a day for a memorial.

Look at it in verse 14: "This day shall be unto you for a memorial"—that is, it is a special day. As Ian Thomas says, "It's a day to be remembered." Do you have a day like that? Can you say, "Bless God, I know the day when I fed upon the Lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, when I fed upon all of Him, with my staff in my hand and my shoes on my feet"? Have you? Are you saved? Do you know it? Does God's Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God? I hope so. I hope you won't be like so many Baptists I know, who are vaccinated with a mild form of Christianity, so the real thing never takes.

II. A Special Destination

Now, not only was there to be a special day—"this day shall be for you for a memorial"—but, secondly, there was to be to these people a special destination. They were moving out that night. God was taking them out of Egypt, and God was taking them on to Canaan.

Now, let me say something at the risk of being repetitious, but we have to say it over and over again, because new people come into the church, and old people don't pay any attention to what you say. So, let me say this: that there are three types of people in the world. There's the natural man: he's an unsaved person. There is the carnal man: he is a saved person, but he's not been Spirit-filled. The word *carnal* comes from the Latin word *carnalis*. It means "fleshy." That is, it doesn't necessarily mean he's overweight; that's not the point. He gives special attention to what the Bible calls *the flesh*, the *sarkos*, which is the old nature. Not the blood and corpuscles: that's not what he's talking about. He's talking about the old nature that the Bible calls "*the flesh*," when it says, "The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." (Galatians 5:17) Now there is the natural man: he's an unsaved man. There is the carnal man: he's the childish, babyish Christian. And then there's the spiritual man: he's a Spirit-filled person.

Now one is dead. One is sick. And one is healthy. Typically, it is pictured by Egypt, the wilderness, and Canaan. They came out of Egypt, into the wilderness, and then into Canaan. Egypt is where the natural man lives. Just as Pharaoh was a cruel taskmaster, so these people are under bondage to the devil. The wilderness is where the carnal man lives. He's not still in Egypt. He's been saved. He's come out under the blood. He's been redeemed, but he's wandering around in the desert. And Canaan, the land that flowed with milk and honey, the Promised Land, is a picture that typifies the spiritual man or the Spirit-filled man.

Now, tonight, everybody here is either dwelling in Egypt, in the wilderness, or in Canaan, you see? Now you'll have to classify yourself. I can't classify you. But God's Holy Spirit will help you to see in a moment, I'm certain, where you are. Now so often we preach that Canaan stands for heaven. You know,

*On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan's fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.*

—SAMUEL STENNETT

Then we take the typology, and so forth, and apply it to heaven. But, in the Bible, Canaan is really not a type of heaven; and crossing Jordan, while it is a type of a picture of taking death to self, is not a type or picture of physical death, where one goes to heaven. It symbolizes a person taking death to the old nature, the old Adam, that he might move into the spiritual realms of Canaan and be Spirit-filled.

So that will mess up some of our songs. I go ahead and sing 'em. I like 'em. But, really, there was sin in Canaan. There won't be any sin in heaven. There was war in Canaan. There won't be any war in heaven. Some people went into Canaan and went back out. I like to think that, when I get to heaven, I'm going to stay there. Canaan is not a picture of heaven. The Promised Land is not a picture of heaven. It is, as Hebrews tells us, a type or a picture of the believer's rest: when he stops struggling in the Christian life, and learns the marvelous, glorious secret of being still with the Spirit of God, to begin to live the victorious life, and let Christ live through him.

All right, Egypt's the natural man. The wilderness is the carnal man. And Canaan is the spiritual man. Now, get this. He brought them out that He might take them in. He took them out of Egypt for a purpose: to put them into Canaan—not to leave them wandering in the wilderness. We sing another song that I think really does hit the nail on the head:

*Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night,
Into Thy freedom, gladness, and light,
Out of my sickness, into Thy health,*

*Out of my want and into Thy wealth,
Out of my sin and into Thyself,
Jesus, I come to Thee.*

—WILLIAM T. SLEEPER

He brought them out, the Bible says, that He might bring them in.

Now Moses, I believe, was a Southern Baptist, because Moses got them out, but he never got them in. Moses' long suit of clothes was evangelism. Now I'm picking on Baptists, because that's what we are. But if I were somewhere else, I'd say, "You *ain't* doing as good as we are." But I'm just going to pick on us. I'm going to pick on us, because we need to stop comparing ourselves to one another, and find out what God's Word says that we're supposed to be. But I'm saying, in the average church the emphasis is simply getting out of Egypt. It is getting under the blood, getting out from under Pharaoh, getting your fire insurance, and that's about all the average person is concerned about, isn't that right? The average person really does not understand, much less is concerned about, being Spirit-filled or knowing the life of victory that God intends for us to have.

How many really victorious people do you know? I mean, victorious people, people who are living as you would think that God would expect us to live as Christians. Most Christians I know are defeated. And they are doing their best to hack it, and they can hardly do that. And they're living one day from the next, but they do not live in victory. Then somebody comes along, and he is victorious, or she is victorious, and we say, "My, what an unusual Christian!" Well that, dear friend, is supposed to be a normal thing. Christians who are not victorious are abnormal, sub-normal. But we don't know it, because we compare ourselves to one another.

Dr. Havner says that the average church is in such bad shape that you have to backslide to be in fellowship. And we compare ourselves one to the other. You see, there's a vast difference between an average Christian and a normal Christian. Don't ever make the mistake of thinking that an average Christian is a normal Christian. He's sub-normal, abnormal, but he's average. And that's a shame, because we end up comparing ourselves to others, and we really get the idea there's not supposed to be any victory, because everybody else is this way. We don't think there's really anything for us—I mean, to live as the Bible teaches that a Christian really ought to live: loving his enemies, happy in tribulation, sharing Jesus, power in his life, victory every day, and in all things giving thanks to God.

Well, all right. God brought them out that He might bring them in. It was not God's will that they wander around in the desert. It was not God's will that they stay in the desert. Most Christians I know have come out of Egypt, but they've not gone into Canaan. They have been dumped in the desert. They have bogged down between

Calvary and Pentecost. They are like Lazarus. When the Lord Jesus Christ said to Lazarus, *“Lazarus, come forth,”* (John 11:43) do you know how he came forth? He was a mummy wrapped in the grave clothes. He must have been something to see. And so Jesus said, *“Loose him, and let him go.”* (John 11:44) Now he had life, but he didn’t have liberty. You see, he was saved from death, but he was not loosed to live. And there are so many people like that who are wrapped in the grave clothes of the old life. They have indeed come out of Egypt, but they have not indeed gone into Canaan, and claimed all that God wants them to have.

Now, here’s what God said to these people. Look in Exodus chapter 13, verses 3 through 5: *“And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. This day came ye out in the month Abib. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee…”*—now, notice this—*“And it shall be when…”*—and underscore the word *when*—*“when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee, a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month.”* (Exodus 13:3–5)

Now, notice what He’s saying. God says, “You’ve had the Passover. You know what it illustrates. You know what it represents.” Now God says, “When you get into the land that flows with milk and honey; when, I say, you get there, then you are to keep the Passover feast as a perpetual memorial.” The point of the matter is, they were not to keep the feast in the desert. They were to keep the feast in Canaan.

What was God showing them? God was showing them that, as long as you’re still in the desert, you don’t have much to celebrate. You see, there are lots of folks who are trying to keep the feast of the Passover, and they’re still in the desert. And it’s really quite a ludicrous thing. Do you know how long they stayed in that desert? Forty years. They should have been there for several days. At the end of forty years, they were sick of Moses, and he was sick of them. They were fed up with each other. And they were bellyaching and complaining and fussing and finding fault.

Now, continue to read here. Look in chapter 13, verse 8. God talks about the feast in verse 7; and then He says, in verse 8, *“And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt.”* (Exodus 13:8)

Now, that’s very important, because children need to understand that God has done something for Mom and Dad. Have you ever wondered why the devil gets the kids from our best families? Do you know any deacons, and the devil’s gotten their children? Do you know any preachers, and the devil’s gotten their children? Do you know any WMU workers, and the devil’s gotten their children? I’m talking about people who come to

church twice on Sunday, sing in the choir, and pay their tithes—and the devil gets the kids. Why is that? How can the devil get the kids of some of our best people? I'm talking about people who are truly saved.

Well, I'll tell you why. These people have been saved, but they are not Spirit-filled, for the most part. Now, there may be some other reason, and I'm not trying to say this is always the case, but I'd say 99.44 percent of the time this is the case. Those kinds of parents are the parents who have come out but they haven't gone in. And they live at home, and the children see them. The children halfway think the parents are hypocrites. Now the parents are not hypocrites. The parents literally came out of Egypt. The parents literally were saved. But the children see us at home at our worst time.

Now, suppose here's a father and son, and they're out there in the wilderness. The sun is beating down upon their heads. And the father is sitting on a red-hot rock. The son is sitting on a cactus. Here goes a rattlesnake by him. And the father's doing something, and the son looks at him, and says, "Say, dad, what are you doing?" "Oh," he says, "we're going to celebrate." "Oh, you're going to celebrate? What are you celebrating?" "Well," he says, "we're going to celebrate what the Lord has done for us." This kid looks around: "Oh, you're celebrating what the Lord has done for you, is that right?" Now you know what he's had to eat. Now, let's say he was born in the desert. They stayed there forty years, so he could have been born there. So, let's say he's thirteen years old, and he was born in the dessert. Do you know what he had to eat that morning for breakfast? Manna. Do you know what he had to eat that day at noon? Manna. If it's in the evening, do you know what they had for supper? Manna. Do you know what they had the day before that for breakfast? Manna. You know what they had the day before that for lunch? Manna. Do you know what they had the day before that for supper? Manna.

Let's go back three years. Do you know what they had for breakfast? Manna. Do you know what they had for lunch? Manna. Do you know what they had for supper? Manna. Manna in the morning, manna in the evening, and manna at suppertime. Brother, they had it. That's all they had. He's afraid his mama's going to buy an Amana freezer. Manna—that's all. He'd never had anything else. He was sick of it. Sure, he was. And he'd heard people talk about a place where there were leeks and onions and garlic and fish—that's Egypt. And he also heard sermons about a place where there was milk and honey, and grapes and pomegranates. But all he gets is manna. Would that be a terrible place for a kid to be?

Now his dad says to this boy, "We're going to celebrate." And the boy says, "Dad, I don't mean to be disrespectful, but if this is all the Lord's done for you, don't you think it's about time we got back to Egypt?" I'm telling you, friend, that's what a lot of the young people in our churches think when they look at their parents. They hear them

argue, they hear them fuss, they hear them cut corners that hinge on dishonesty, they hear them criticize and gossip, and they hear them yell and scream, and act anything but Christ-like. This boy has never seen the milk and honey. He's never tasted the pomegranate, and the fruit of the Spirit. And therefore he thinks that to be in Egypt, that some people have seen, and must be real, is better than a land that nobody has seen, and he doesn't know anything about it, except in sermons. The devil gets him.

So God was very wise when God said, "You don't celebrate until you get over in the land. Don't try to keep this feast in the wilderness. Keep it when you get into Canaan. And it shall come to pass that, when you come into the land of Canaan, you'll keep this feast." That is, there was a special day. And there was to be a special destination. May God help us to understand that we don't really and cannot really celebrate until we've gone all the way to the Spirit-filled life.

III. A Special Deliverance

Now, not only was there a special day, and not only was there a special destination, but there was, thirdly, a special deliverance, because, when you go into Canaan, you come out of the wilderness. Now, notice in chapter 13, verses 9 through 11: "*And it shall be for a sign unto thee...*"—he's talking about the feast that they keep—"*And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the LORD's law may be in thy mouth: for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt. Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore unto thee and to thy fathers, and shall give it thee.*" (Exodus 13:9–11)

Now God says that, when they kept this feast, it was to be for a threefold sign. First of all, it was to be—look at it again in verse 9: "*It shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand,*"—that is, what you do. The hand speaks of activity, of power, of commerce, all the activities. What you do will be changed—"*and for a memorial between thine eyes,*"—what you think will be changed—"*that the LORD's law may be in thy mouth:*"—what you say will be changed. You see, a spiritual person and a carnal person are different. They're different in what they do; they're different in how they think; and they're different and how they speak. This is what this feast is all about: to show that there's been a change when you get out of the wilderness and get into Canaan.

Well, let's put some teeth into that. And I'm indebted to Major Thomas for this, but what did they do in the wilderness? Well, look, if you will, please, in Deuteronomy chapter 12. And if what they did has to be changed, as symbolized by the sign in the right hand, let's see what they were doing when they were in the wilderness, and see why God wanted to change it. All right, Deuteronomy 12, verse 1: "*These are the statutes and [ordinances], which ye shall observe to do in the land,*"—that's Canaan—

“which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.” (Deuteronomy 12:1) Now, read verse 8: *“Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day...”*—now, where was *“here this day”*? In the wilderness. That’s where this was spoken. He says, “This is what you’re going to do, but you won’t do what we do here this day. Now, what did they do there that day? That is, what do people in the wilderness do? That is, how do carnal people live, people who have come out of Egypt but never have gone into Canaan?—*“Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.”* (Deuteronomy 12:8)

What does a carnal Christian do? What does the wilderness person do? He simply does what is right in his own eyes. That doesn’t necessarily mean that he does bad things. He does wrong things. That is, he does what he thinks he ought to do rather than being led of the Spirit. He may have good motives. He may be sincere. But he’s still wrong.

And this is what’s wrong with so many Christians. They are not led of Spirit. They simply do what’s right in their own eyes. And they think it’s their right to do it. I suppose you think it’s your right to go where you want to go on a vacation, don’t you? I suppose you think it’s your right to decide where you want to buy your house. I suppose you think it’s your right to decide where you’re going to work. I suppose you think it’s your right to decide who you want to marry. I suppose you think it’s your right to do what you want to do with your money. Most people do. But, you see, a Christian doesn’t do what’s right in his own eyes. He says, “Lord, where should we go on our vacation? Or, should we go?” He says, “Lord, should we buy this house or not?” “Lord, do you want me to have this job?” “What is thy will for my life, Lord?”

Do you know what so many of us do? We do what’s right in our eyes. We cook up a little scheme, and then we ask God to bless it. Have you ever been guilty of that? Suppose I wake up in the morning, and my hand says to me, “Hello.” And I say, “Hello.” And he says, “I’ll tell you what I’m going to do for you today.” “Oh, what’s that?” “Well,” he says, “I’m going to shave you, and I’m going to write you some letters, and then I’m going to spade the garden for you.” I say, “Forget it. I don’t want that kind of a hand.” “Well,” he says, “I want you to help me to do it. Please bless my efforts.” I say, “Forget it. All I want is a hand that’s there whenever I get ready to shave, or write letters, or whatever. I want it to be there.” Right?

Most of us say, “Now, Lord, here’s what we’re going to do for you. Bless our efforts.” It’s not that we’re necessarily doing things wrong. We’re simply not led and guided by the Holy Spirit. We just simply do what is right in our own eyes. Now, that’s what they did. Now, remember that there was to be a sign in their right hand, to show what they did had been changed; but not only what they did was to be changed, but what they

thought was to be changed; for it was also for a sign between their eyes, to show their thought processes were to be changed.

Well, what did they think when they were in the wilderness? Well, turn to Numbers chapter 11, and you'll find their thought processes. Here's what they thought when they were in the land. Numbers 11, verses 4 through 9: *"And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes. And the manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium. And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it."* (Numbers 11:4–9)

And what did they think about in the wilderness? Well, this verse tells us what they thought about: they thought about Egypt. Look in verse 5: "We remember. We remember the fish. We remember the melons. We remember the leeks. We remember the onions. We remember the garlic. Oh boy, wasn't it good?" Do you know that's the way a carnal Christian is? He's headed toward heaven, but he's looking back over his shoulder. He doesn't drink beer anymore. But when the commercial comes on television, he licks his chops. He remembers how it used to be. He remembers the times he had with the boys. He remembers things they used to do before they became an ol' narrow Baptist. Now all he gets is manna. And he's sick of it.

He comes to church on Sunday morning and sits down, and gets a little more manna. And that's the reason that he enjoys these devilish shows so much, and the reason why he has to go to some of these R-rated things, you know: he kind of sins vicariously. He has unclean pictures on the walls of his mind, and in his idle time he walks up and down the corridors and looks at those pictures on the wall. He doesn't really do these things most of the time. Of course, give him an onion, and he'll probably eat it. But he doesn't do these things most of the time. But he remembers. He remembers. And he's sick and tired of manna.

Now manna is a symbol of Jesus—a type or picture of the Lord Jesus—but they were not supposed to eat manna for forty years. Manna was a temporary provision. And it had in it the taste of oil, which represents the Holy Spirit, and the taste of honey, which speaks of the land that flows with milk and honey. It was only to whet their appetite for the land that flowed with milk and honey. It was to be a temporary provision. There is a legitimate babyhood. Milk belongs to babies. It's all right for a baby to be babyish, but it's not so good for an eighteen-year-old boy to say, "Da-da." I mean, it's all right for

children to have a bottle, but not for a forty-year-old man to suck a bottle.

Now what I'm trying to say is this. Manna has its place, and there was nothing wrong with it, but they weren't supposed to eat it for forty years. And they were sick of it. Most people in our churches are bored stiff.

They were having a church meeting, and when it was over, the pastor said, "There will be a meeting of the board next door." One man went. He said, "Nobody's more bored than I am."

Do you know why we have boring sermons? Bored preachers. Do you know why you have boring Sunday School lessons? Bored teachers. People are just bored to death.

A little fellow came to a service one day, and he looked up there, and they had a banner, and there were some stars on it, and he asked his mama, "What does that stand for?" She said, "Well, that's for the people who died in the service." He said, "The morning service or the evening service?"

Now, what did they think about? What does a carnal Christian think about? What does the desert Christian think about? He thinks about Egypt. That's what most of our folks think about. They think about it. They read the ads, and drool.

Okay now, thirdly and finally, what did they say? Because, remember, it was also to change not only what they did, and what they thought, but what they said, when they got into Canaan. What did they say? Well, look in Numbers 16, verse 3. And here's the ironical thing of the whole thing. Now, remember Moses is endeavoring to lead them into the Promised Land. He's endeavoring to help them find an exuberant, exhilarating victorious way of life. But this is what they say to Moses, in verse 3: "*And they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the LORD is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?*" (Numbers 16:3)

They said to Moses, "Moses, you're a religious fanatic. And we're getting tired of your preaching about this Spirit-filled business. We're getting tired of you telling us we're not what we ought to be. We're fine just like we are. All the congregation of Israel is holy—every one of them." Do you know what the greatest need of a carnal Christian is? It's to see his need. He'll sit in a service like this, and he'll think the pastor's always preaching to them, but not to him. Isn't that a shame? And sometimes, when a person presses them about this thing, they get indignant about it. How holy were they? Well, they were holy enough by their own standards, but they were also holy enough to make a golden calf and dance around it.

Conclusion

Oh, friend, listen. God brought you out, that He might bring you in. There's to be a special day: that's salvation. There's to be a special destination: that's Canaan, the Spirit-filled life. And there's to be a special deliverance: you're to get out of the wilderness. What you do, and what you think, and what you say, ought to be changed. The world is waiting for church where most of the members are Spirit-filled. When that happens, look out, devil!

Detours, Dead-Ends, and Dry Holes

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 13:17–22

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Discipline of Detours
- II. The Dilemma of Dead-Ends
 - A. Fear Not
 - B. Stand Still
 - C. See the Salvation of the Lord
 - D. God Shows Us the Way
- III. The Disappointment of Dry Holes

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, would you, to Exodus chapter 13—Exodus chapter 13. I want to speak to you today on this subject: “Detours, Dead-Ends, and Dry Holes.” I am reading Exodus chapter 13 and verse 17: “*And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them*” (Exodus 13:17). We’ll just stop right there. And in a moment we’re going to read a whole lot more. But just keep your Bibles opened.

But notice the fact that God led them.

*He leadeth me: O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught.*

—JOSEPH H. GILMORE

He leadeth me. Aren’t you glad that God does lead us? The Bible says: “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*” (Romans 8:14).

*All the way my Savior leads me;
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my Guide?*

—FANNY J. CROSBY

And we thank God for that, and we rejoice in that—that God leads us.

And yet, sometimes, friends, we find ourselves in the biggest messes. And we find

ourselves on back roads. We find ourselves in dead-end alleys. We find ourselves in dry places. And we say, “Well, if God is leading us, then He doesn’t know how to read a map. Or else, I don’t know how to follow. Or, I must be out of His will, because, if God is leading me, how come I keep on ending up on detours and dead-ends and desert roads?” Well, we’re going to try to answer that today from the Word of God. We’re going to find out that God does lead us. And we’re on the King’s highway. And we’re on a journey to joy with Christ as our companion, and the Holy Spirit as our guide, and the Bible as our map. But yet many times it doesn’t turn out just exactly like we expect. We find a lot of unexpected things along the road of life, and it’s not, however, because we misread the map.

I. The Discipline of Detours

First of all, I want you to look here at the discipline of detours—the discipline of detours. *“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt: but God led the people about...”*—now, look at that; just underscore that phrase: “God led the people about.” That means that God led them in circles—*“God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea: and the children of Israel went up harnessed out of the land of Egypt”* (Exodus 13:17–18).

Now the Bible tells us very clearly that God did not lead them the short way—a direct route—but God led them on a detour. God led them ’round about. And it wasn’t a mistake; it was a divine detour. And why did God lead them this way? Why didn’t God just say, as God was taking the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the land that flowed with milk and honey—into the Promised Land—why didn’t God just take the shortest route?

We say that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. Well, it may be the shortest distance, but it’s not always the best distance. And God has a purpose, many times, in His detours. And He tells us, very quickly and very plainly, why He did not lead them directly, in verse 17: *“And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt”* (Exodus 13:17). Now God knew that had He taken them the straight way they would have gone through Philistia. And if they had gone through Philistia, then they would have met the warlike Philistines. And when they saw the Philistines, they would have been frightened. And when they were frightened and their hearts were filled with fear, they would have turned around. They would have turned their heels, and they would have gone back to Egypt. They would have become

dismayed. They would have become discouraged. And they would have become defeated. And so God didn't lead them that way.

Now God knew that they weren't ready. They were to battle. There was a war. And God has called us to a war—a holy war. *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers...against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Ephesians 6:12). But I'm so glad that God knows what I'm ready for. And I'm so glad that God knows what you are ready for.

Now God has a land of blessing for you. And God has a place of fulfillment for you. And God has a job for you to do. And God has blessing upon blessing that He wants to give to you. And yet He may have you right now out in the wilderness, going 'round and 'round in circles. And you may think that you are out of the will of God. But you're not out of the will of God. God is leading you 'round about, because God knows that you're not quite ready for some of the things that He has in store for you. And so that winding road, that rocky road, that desert road, and that wilderness road that sometimes we find ourselves on does not mean that we're out of the will of God. God led them. This is the whole point: that God led them on a detour. God did not lead them on the straightest route.

Sometimes, folks, you can get there too quickly. I've seen these ninety-day wonders. They go up like a rocket and come down like a rock. They get out there, and they want it, and they want it now. But, you see, the reason that God led them in the wilderness was because it was God's boot camp. It was out there that He was going to toughen them. Notice where God led them. In verse 18, the Bible says, *“But God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red sea”* (Exodus 13:18). Now, what was that like? It was a place of hardness; it was a place of drought; and it was a place of discipline. What was God doing with them out there? Well, God was just simply toughening them up. It was God's boot camp. It was God's training camp. And God was getting them ready.

Now, doubtless, they didn't understand it. They didn't know what was going on at that time. They didn't know all that God had in store for them. But they didn't have to know: it's enough that God knew. They had never seen the Philistines. Doubtless, they had never heard about the Philistines. They didn't know what was out there. God knew that they weren't quite ready. Maybe you've been asking God to give you a certain job, and you don't have it. Maybe you've been praying and asking God to give you a home. Maybe you've been praying about your date life, or the person you're going to marry. Maybe some of you are wanting to go to school. Maybe some of you are wanting to get into a ministry. Maybe some of you are wondering why you seem to be going around in circles. You're just not ready. God is never in a hurry. God called Moses, and to get Moses ready he spent forty years in the backside of the desert. God called Paul, and

Paul wasn't ready. Paul went down to Arabia. And God was just simply getting them ready.

You know, that's a blessing to me, sometimes, because we all think we have to be achieving, and we have to be going in straight lines, or we are out of the will of God. Not necessarily so. The important thing is not that you know; the important thing is that God knows, and that you follow Him. Notice, in verse 21 of this same chapter, the Bible says, *"And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night. He took not away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of cloud by night, from before the people"* (Exodus 13:21–22). That pillar of fire and that pillar of cloud represent the Holy Spirit. As they came out of Egypt, the Passover lamb represents the Lord Jesus Christ. And the pillar of fire and cloud represents the Holy Spirit to lead them. You see, after God redeems us, God sends His Holy Spirit to lead us. And Jesus said, "He, the Holy Spirit, will guide you" (John 16:13). And just as that pillar of cloud was their guidance in that wilderness, the Holy Spirit of God is my guidance in this wilderness. And the important thing, ladies and gentlemen, is not that I see where I'm going; the important thing is that, day by day, I have my eyes on the pillar of cloud, and, night by night, on the pillar of fire. Moment by moment, I need to walk in the Spirit.

Now it may be that you're out of the will of God. And it may be that you're going around in circles because you haven't read the map right and because you haven't listened to your guide. It may be that you're completely out of the will of God, and you're stumbling; and you're stumbling out around in some wilderness waste, and you've got no business being there. That may be. But I'm going to tell you something else. It may also be that you are perfectly in the will of God, and God knows exactly what He's doing with you, and you're still going around in circles. So, you see, it is your job just to make sure that you have your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ—that, moment by moment, there is that inner witness of that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire.

And that's all you need to know. You don't need to know the rest, and you don't need to understand why it is that things don't seem to work out for you right now. God knows some things that you don't know. God sees some Philistines you don't see. God sees some weaknesses you don't see. And God knows some things that you may not know. So you just keep your eyes on Him and remember the discipline of divine detours. God had them in the wilderness for a purpose and in His boot camp to tighten them up and to strengthen them up.

*All the way my Savior leads me,
Cheers each winding path I tread;
Gives me grace for every trial,
Feeds me with the living Bread.*

II. The Dilemma of Dead-Ends

Now the second thing I want you to notice is not only the discipline of detours—He led them on a detour to discipline them, to help them to grow, and to toughen them up—but I want you to notice also the dilemma of dead-ends—the dilemma of dead-ends. Look, if you will, here in chapter 14 now, beginning in verse 8: *“And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued after the children of Israel: and the children of Israel went out with an high hand. But the Egyptians pursued after them, all the horses and chariots of Pharaoh, and his horsemen, and his army, and overtook them encamping by the sea, beside Pihahiroth, before Baalzephon. And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness”* (Exodus 14:8–12).

Now, remember they are still being led of the Lord, and this time they come to something more aggravating than a detour. Now detours are aggravating. Nobody likes to get on a detour, a back road. But, friend, there is something worse than a detour: it's after you've been on a detour for a long time, and you come to a dead-end—amen? I mean, when the road just ends there, and there is nowhere to go, it is just a sheer dead-end. Now that's where these Israelites had come to now. And God is still leading them. There—on one side the mountains, and on the other side are the mountains, and in front is the Red Sea, and behind them comes Pharaoh with his sword glittering in the sun, and blood in his eye, and all of his armies, and all of his chariots—they were between the sword and the sea. They were boxed in; they were hemmed in. There was no way out that they could see.

And now they begin to blame Moses. And their aggravation with their detour turns from aggravation to desperation. “Moses, can't you read a map?” He read it, all right. He was following the Lord. They were not there by happenstance. It is very clear that God led them there. Look in chapter 14, if you will: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pihahiroth, between Migdol and the sea”* (Exodus 14:1–2). That's exactly where God wanted them. God put them there. God led them there. And God did it for a purpose. God had a wonderful purpose. And what was the purpose? Look at verse 3: *“For Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land”*—now, you see, God entangled

them there. God put them in that dead-end, because He was baiting His hook. He was going to bring judgment on old Pharaoh, and He was using the Israelites to bait His hook. And—*“Pharaoh will say...They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in.”* That is, they are at a dead-end, and God says, *“And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh, and upon all his hosts; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so”* (Exodus 14:1–4). God had a purpose.

Now, let me tell you something else. In life you’re going to come to some situations that are not just aggravating; you’re going to come right up against it. And if you have not been right up against it, then you’re going to come there. There is no home without its hush. And when God leads, God is going to lead you to a place of desperation time after time again. And you won’t see any way out. I mean, there’s no preacher who can give you a sermon that will tell you a way out. There is no book that is going to help you. You are just there, and there is no human way out. It is not a discipline; it is a dilemma: the dilemma of dead-ends. That’s where they were.

I want to tell you something, friend. When you come to that place, there is still no panic in heaven: only plans, only plans. There has never been any panic in heaven—never! God knew exactly what He was doing. Now the Jews didn’t know what God was doing. And the point I want to make is they weren’t out of the will of God when they came to this dead-end. They were right in the will of God. It was God that led them there.

And why did God lead them there? So that the place of desperation would become the place of dependence; that we come to the place so that we see absolutely no way out, and then we have to cast ourselves completely, totally, upon the Lord. Look in chapter 14, and verse 13, and notice what God said to the children of Israel to do: *“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: but lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea”* (Exodus 14:13–16). Now God brought them to the place of desperation that He might bring them to the place of dependence.

What is the purpose of the dead-end in your life? When you come to the place—I mean, by the hand of God that God brings you there—what is the purpose of it? Well, there are four things that God told the Israelites that are true of you today. What does God want you to do?

A. Fear Not

Number one: Fear not. Look in verse 13—look at it: *“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not”* (Exodus 14:13). You see, God will allow you to come to a place where there seems to be all kinds of things to fear, and then He says, “Fear not.”

Ron Dunn has blessed my heart many times, but I think Ron never blessed my heart more than when I talked to him one night in a hotel room after one his sons committed suicide. Ron Dunn is a preacher. This boy had some mental problems. He had sort of a chemical hormonal imbalance, and there were some problems. And they’d worked with him and worked with him. But over the Thanksgiving holidays this boy died by his own hand. And I talked with Ron after that. Ron had been preaching victory in Jesus, and he’d been preaching how the Lord was sufficient. That is the message that Ron Dunn preaches. If he had just one message, then I would say it is that Christ is sufficient. And I talked with Ron in the late hours in a motel room, and he said, “Adrian, I’ve learned one thing: There is nothing to fear.” He said, “The reason I know that is I believe I’ve met the worst the devil can do, and, Adrian, Jesus is still sufficient. Jesus is still sufficient. Now,” he said, “had it been less, I would have said, ‘Yes, Jesus is sufficient for this, but I don’t know if He’ll be sufficient for the ultimate.’” But, friend, I want to tell you that Jesus Christ is sufficient for the ultimate.

I don’t know where you may come to, but you’re going to come to the place. And God has to bring you to that place of desperation that you may learn that there is nothing to fear. Three hundred and sixty-five times in the Bible—one time for every day of the year—the Bible has said, “Fear thou not,” or its equivalent. *“The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”* (Hebrews 13:6). And so God brings you to this place of desperation, that He might bring you to this place of dependence, that He may say to you, “Fear not.”

B. Stand Still

And then He says to you, “Stand still.” Look, if you will, please, in verse 13: *“And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still...”* (Exodus 14:13). That is, it is out of your hands. Finally, there is nothing you can do. The Bible says, in Psalm 46, verse 10, *“Be still, and know that I am God”* (Psalm 46:10). And, oh, we hurry around. We’re so busy manipulating, trying, conniving, scheming; but finally we come to a place where God hems us in: the sea here, the mountain here, the mountain there, and the devil behind. And there is no way out but up. Just stand still. *“Be still, and know that I am God.”* We always think that we have to do something even if it’s wrong, don’t we?

Somebody talked about those hogs. You remember those 2,000 hogs, those demons that were driven out of that demon-possessed man and they went into a herd of swine? And the Bible says that the swine went into the sea and drowned (Mark 5:13).

Do you remember that story in Mark 5? Someone imagines one of those hogs saying to the other hog, “Look, we’re in a mess. But whatever we do, let’s stay together and keep moving.”

Now I think that’s really the way human beings think today. We’ve got to do something—just do something. Sometimes God places us in a place where there is nothing we can do. There is no counsel we can go to. There is no banker to help. There is no doctor to help. There is no one to help us. God just says, “*Fear...not; stand still*”, “*Be still, and know that I am God.*” And the place, the dead-end that He brings us to—I mean, just the dead-end, a dilemma—and then we just fear not and stand still.

C. See the Salvation of the Lord

And then, notice next: “...and see the salvation of the LORD” (Exodus 14:13). Now that doesn’t mean to see it after it takes place. It hasn’t taken place when he told them to see it. In other words, you, by the eye of faith, see what God is going to do. It means, stand still and watch God do it, because God didn’t do it until they started moving again. It meant, stand still long enough for you to see what God is going to do before He does it. You see, we see things that are not, as though they are, that it might be so. There is just this time of faith where we just simply say, “I refuse to fear. I stop. I place myself, dear God, in your hands. And, God, if you don’t do it, then it won’t be done. And now, by faith, I see my way out, even when I don’t see it.”

D. God Shows Us the Way

All right. And then God shows us the way—the way that we’ve never seen before. Look in verse 15: “*And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward*” (Exodus 14:15). There is no contradiction here, where it says, on the one hand, “Stand still,” and then, on the other hand, where it says, “Go forward.” We have to come to that place of rest and confidence, where, by faith, we see God in action, and then, again, we move in a way that we’ve never seen before.

And notice what God did when God said to them, “Go forward,” in verse 16: “*But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea*” (Exodus 14:16). Do you know what God did to that dead-end? He turned it into an eight-lane superhighway, and, dry-shod, they went through the Red Sea. God knows the way through the wilderness.

*Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?
Got any mountains you can’t tunnel through?
God specializes in things thought impossible
And does the things that others cannot do.*

—OSCAR C. ELIASON

“I am the Lord thy God. Is there anything too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27). And that so-called impossibility is God’s opportunity to display His glory and His might, if you are living in the Spirit, and if you have your eye on that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire.

III. The Disappointment of Dry Holes

Now I want us to move on and think not only of the discipline of detours, and I want us not only to think about the dilemma of dead-ends, but I want us also to think about the disappointment of dry holes. Continue to read in chapter 15 this time, and look in verse 22: *“So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea...”*—now, notice that Moses, God’s man, is still leading. They still haven’t got lost. They still haven’t misread the map. God is still leading, but notice now the strange way that He leads them now—*“Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water”* (Exodus 15:22).

Detours, dead-ends, and dry holes. You think, “Brother, better throw this map away and get another one. All night long, we thought, at least we had a motel. Now we find a motel, and the one we found hasn’t got running water.” Here it is. They come to the end of the road now—at least, they are on the road—and they are bone-weary, and they come to this place. God hasn’t sent them here because they’ve done wrong. This is not punishment when they come to this place of bitterness and barrenness. They are here by divine providence. God brought them here for a purpose.

You want to see what that purpose was? Well, continue to read: *“And when they came...”*—I’m reading in verse 23 now—*“And when they came to Marah they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.”* The word *marah* means, “bitter.” *“And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance,”*—and notice this phrase now; just underscore it—*“and there he proved them”* (Exodus 15:23–25). “There he proved them”: literally, that means, “Therefore, he tested them.”

You know, they make a new automobile, and they take the model of that automobile out to the test track—the proving ground—and they put it through rigors and the bumps. You’ve seen advertisements of them going around skids, and through water, and over bumps, and all of that—they call that the proving ground. That’s exactly what this was for God’s people: there, God was proving them. The reason why it was arid there was that God was testing them. God gave them a test, and they failed it miserably.

Incidentally, turn to Deuteronomy chapter 8 and verse 2, right there in the neighborhood, and you’ll see, again, what God’s plan was for them. Deuteronomy

chapter 8 and verse 2: *“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness,”*—now, watch—*“to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no”* (Deuteronomy 8:2). Now, you see, God knew exactly what He was doing. And when they came to this place in the wilderness where there was no water, it wasn’t because God was mad at them. And it wasn’t because they had sinned. And it wasn’t because Moses was a bad leader. The devil didn’t do it to them. It was perfectly normal and natural.

You are going to come to the same place, friend. If you follow the Lord, then you’re going to find that your life is going to be one of detours, and dead-ends, and dry holes, because you’re walking in the Spirit. Now that’s quite a revelation, because so many times we say, “Well, what went wrong?” Nothing went wrong; not a thing in the world went wrong. God is on the throne, and He’s leading you. And in this particular instance, when you come to the disappointment of a dry hole, God is giving you a test. And I pray to God that you won’t fail it.

Now, how did Israel do when they came to their test? They failed it, and they failed it miserably. Now, look, if you will, please, in verse 24, and see how they failed the test. The Bible says, in Exodus 15, verse 24, *“And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?”* (Exodus 15:24). And they started to murmur against Moses. Now that’s a remarkable thing, because the fifteenth chapter of Exodus is what we call “the Song of Moses.” They’d just come through the Red Sea on that superhighway that we were talking about, and they were dancing, ecstatic with joy, and they were praising the Lord. And now, just three days later, they are murmuring, and they were complaining. I just declare, I believe that was the first Baptist church in the wilderness. There they were: just three days ago they had been singing the Moses Song, and now they are murmuring against Moses. Moses has gone, in three days, from hero to zero.

And I want you to learn this if you are a murmurer. When you come to a disappointment in life, when you come to a dry hole along the road, when there is no motel anywhere with hot and cold running water, and it just seems like life has done you dirty, I want you to notice, when you complain, what you’re really doing. Exodus chapter 16 and verse 8—look at it. Moses says, in the last part of that verse, *“Your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD”* (Exodus 16:8)—one of the greatest lessons you can ever learn. You teenagers who are murmuring about your parents, God gave you those parents. People murmuring about their teacher, their pastor, or murmuring about their boss. You see, God gave them Moses, and they murmured against Moses. And so, if God gave them Moses, and they murmured against Moses, what they were really doing was murmuring against God. God leads you into a circumstance. And when

God, somehow, in His wisdom, leads you to one of life's dry holes and to some of life's bitter waters, and you murmur and you complain, you are really murmuring against God.

I want to tell you something, friend. Murmuring is no little sin. Murmuring is a great sin. And God lists murmuring with idolatry and fornication. Just turn to 1 Corinthians 10 for just a moment—and we're almost finished this morning; but look, if you will, please, in 1 Corinthians 10, and I'm going to begin reading in verse 6, because God is speaking about these same people—to the Church. That is, He is speaking to you and to me. And the Bible says, *"Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents."* And now, notice verse 10: *"Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer"* (1 Corinthians 10:6–10).

Notice God lists murmuring with tempting Christ. God lists murmuring with fornication. God lists murmuring with idolatry. God listed murmuring with lusting. You see, why did they murmur when they came to this place? God was leading them. The pillar of cloud was there. The pillar of fire was there. They were being led of the Lord. Moses was there. The Word of God was there. Why did they murmur when they came to a place like this? It was a lack of faith, and it was also a lack of reason. God had just brought them through the Red Sea.

Now, folks, be reasonable. Would God have brought them through the Red Sea so wonderfully just to bring them to a place to let them die without water? I mean, would God do that? Had God so marvelously delivered them in order to destroy them? That doesn't make sense. Now I want to ask you a question. If Jesus Christ died for you on that cross and has saved you, do you think He saved you to abandon you? Do you? When you come to some place like that, do you think God brought you so far, that God did so much, that God had so much invested in you, that He did all of that for you, and after having brought you that far and having died for you, that now He's going to abandon you? Can't you understand that their murmuring was rooted in unbelief, and it was a terrible, horrible sin against God?

Well, there was no need for them to murmur. They couldn't see it. There was no water. The water that was there was bitter—you couldn't drink it. And as far as they were concerned, it was terrible. But I want you to notice what God did, again. Look, if you will, please, in verse 24—in Exodus 15, verse 24: *"And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD..."*—and there are always those two classes of people in the church: those who bellyache at the pastor, and those who know how to pray. And the people murmured against Moses. But

Moses went to the Lord—*“And he cried unto the LORD;”*—now, watch—*“and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them”* (Exodus 15:24–25).

God showed Moses a tree, and the thing I want you to see is, the whole time they were murmuring. The whole time they were complaining that tree was there—the whole time, the whole time. God had already made provision. God already knew what He was going to do. There is no panic in heaven, only plans. God didn’t create the tree; He showed the tree. It was already here. And that tree, of course, speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ that Jeremiah called the *“righteous Branch”* (Jeremiah 23:5). It speaks, of course, of Calvary, for the Bible says, in Peter, that Jesus died upon a tree (1 Peter 2:24). And there, God brought them to this place of dryness and this place of desperation that He might display to them by type, by picture, and by symbol, the sufficiency of Calvary and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Even in the barren places and even in the bitter places, Jesus is enough. Oh, He wants us to learn it. So many times, we come to the test where God wants to take us and He wants to prove us, and we come to some dry hole along the road of life—some place of barrenness, some place of bitterness. Oh, I pray to God that you won’t fail the test.

You see, the amazing thing about this bunch of murmurers is this: that right over the hill—they couldn’t see it, but they were following God’s map—and right over the hill, not very far away, was a gorgeous, beautiful oasis. Look, if you will, please, in verse 27: *“And they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters”* (Exodus 15:27). I mean, one of the most beautiful oases that you could even imagine—and it was right over the hill. They couldn’t see it.

Now there’s somebody right here, you’re camped right now by a dry hole, and the water that you can find is absolutely bitter. You’re saying, “God has forsaken me.” God hasn’t forsaken you. God is proving you. You’re not out of the will of God. God brought you there. It is right on the map. That’s the route. That’s exactly where God wants to bring you. Don’t complain. Don’t murmur. Calvary is sufficient for you. Right over the hill, God has an oasis. You can’t see it, but God can see it.

Now, look. The important thing in life is not for you to know what God knows—you’ll never know that. His ways are not your ways, and His thoughts are not your thoughts (Isaiah 55:8). The important thing for you in life is this: that you keep your eye on that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire, which, translated out in New Testament times, is that you walk in the Spirit and that you keep your heart right with God. And if you go on a

detour, praise God. If you come to a dead-end, praise God. If you come to a dry hole, praise God. My Lord knows the way through the wilderness. All you have to do is follow. Will you follow Him, and let Him have His way, and not complain, and not murmur?

*Lord, I would clasp Thy hand in mine,
Nor ever murmur nor repine;
Content, whatever lot I see,
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me.*

—JOSEPH H. GILMORE

Turning Bitterness Into Blessing

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 9, 1983

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 15:22–25, 6, 11, 13, 18, 27

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Unfailing Providence of God
- II. The Unknown Purpose of God
- III. The Unseen Provisions of God

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, and I want you to open your Bibles to Exodus the fifteenth chapter. Would you do that? Exodus the fifteenth chapter—a marvelous, wonderful chapter. I want to speak to you on this subject: “How to Turn Bitterness Into Blessing.”

Now the scripture that I have for you today takes place right after that event that we call the exodus, where the children of Israel came out of Egypt and through the Red Sea. Now many of you think you know about it because you saw a movie, and Cecil B. DeMille told you how it was done. Friend, let me tell you that there’s no movie—no film—that can describe the glory, the marvel, the mystery, and the miracle of the opening of the Red Sea, and the bringing of the children of Israel through, dry-shod.

Beginning in verse 22: *“So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah”* (Exodus 15:22–23). The word *marah* literally means, “bitterness,” so I could read it this way: *“And when they came to [bitterness], they could not drink of the waters of [bitterness], for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called [bitterness].”* Now, look in verse 24: *“And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them”* (Exodus 15:24–25).

They came to a place of bitterness, and so will you. There are three categories of

persons that are here today: those who are in trouble, those who are just getting out of trouble, and those who are going into trouble. I mean, that's all the folks that are here today.

Folks, man that is born of woman is few of days and full of trouble, like sparks that fly upward (Job 5:7). We all have difficulties; we all have problems. That doesn't mean that things have gone wrong. That doesn't mean that things have gotten out of hand. As a matter of fact, we are often in trouble by the providence and the plan and the purpose of Almighty God, as I'm going to show you today. So pay attention, because what I'm reading to you today is not just what *did* happen—it is what *is* happening; not just what God *has* said—what God *is* saying; and not what God is saying to the congregation in general, but what God is saying to you today. Now if you'll pay attention, then you're going to learn some truths that are going to stand you in good stead and help you in a tremendous way when you come to the place of bitterness. I didn't say, "*if* you come": "*when* you come" to the place of bitterness. I'm going to show you how God can turn your bitterness into blessing, as He did for these people, and as He wants to do for you. The Spanish have a proverb that says, "There's no home without its hush." What that means is, sooner or later—it's just a matter of time—we'll all know sorrow, we'll all know heartache, and we will all know some kind of bitterness.

I. The Unfailing Providence of God

Now the first thing I want you to notice with me, as we look into God's Word today and try to extract the truth for our hearts there, is this: I want you to see the unfailing providence of God—what I call the unfailing providence of God. Now God led them to this place of bitterness by His providence. They were not there by mistake. They were not there by happenstance. They were not there because of bad luck. They were not there because they could not read a map. The way that they got to this place was by the providence of God, for they were led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They were exactly in the place that God wanted them, by His unfailing providence.

Now they'd just come through the Red Sea. And you talk about being ecstatic. You talk about being happy. You talk about being exuberant. They were leaping and dancing and praising God, and shouting and singing! Let me just show you what I'm talking about. Go back, if you will, to chapter 15 and verse 6. You can pick up the tone of this chapter here and the selected verses I'm going to read. They are singing, and they say, "*Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power: thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy*" (Exodus 15:6). Oh, they were so happy! Look, if you will, in verse 11: "*Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*" (Exodus 15:11). Oh, my, how they were

praising the Lord! Look in verse 13: *“Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation”* (Exodus 15:13). Oh, praise God! Glory, hallelujah! They were saying, “Lord, you’ve redeemed us! You’ve delivered us! Oh, thank you, Lord! Thank you!” They’d just made up their minds they were going to be true to the Lord forever and ever and ever. Look in verse 18: *“The LORD shall reign for ever and ever”* (Exodus 15:18). “We’ve got it settled now. We know whose God is the true God. We know which God is the great God. Glory hallelujah! We’re on the glory road! Nothing can stop us! We’re living on the sunny side of Sunshine Avenue!” Wonderful! Fine!

But now I want you to see something. In the light of all of that, and in contradistinction to all of that, I want you to look in verse 23: *“And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses”* (Exodus 15:23–24). Can you believe it? Can you believe it? I mean, they’re saying, “Our God is the true God! Glorious, wonderful, majestic is His name! He’s God forever and ever!” And three days later—not three weeks later, but three days later—they are griping, grouching, complaining, murmuring, criticizing, carping, and finding fault—the same people. It’s unbelievable. But here they are—three days later, they’re complaining; they’re murmuring.

Now I want to remind you that they were there where they were by the providence of God. Nothing had gone wrong when they got to Marah. They had not sinned. And when they had got to Marah, God had not failed. They were there in the plan of God, the will of God, and the work of God. And you could write over it Romans 8:28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28).

Now so I want to tell you, friend, in the providence of God—the unfailing providence of God—you’re often led to a place of bitterness. Do you understand that? Please understand it today. Don’t get the idea that if you become a Christian, that if you come through the Red Sea by the blood of the Lamb, that your problems are behind you. It is simply not so. And if you get that sort of an idea in your mind, then you’re going to think somehow that you have sinned or that God has failed when you come to a place of bitterness. They were there by the unfailing providence of God. God had led them there: the pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night, which represents to us the Holy Spirit.

II. The Unknown Purpose of God

Now the second thing I want you to see—not only the unfailing providence of God, but I want you to see the unknown purpose of God. Now why did God bring them to this

place? And God brought them to this place. Well, friend, He had a purpose there. I want you to look and see in verse 25—the last part of verse 25: “*There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them*” (Exodus 15:25). Just underscore that phrase, “*there he proved them.*” It was there that He put them to the test. Do you know why God brought them to this place of bitterness? It was a place of test. It was a place where God was going to prove them. That wilderness was God’s proving ground.

When the Ford people, the Pontiac people, and the Chrysler people, or whomever it is—when they build an automobile, what do they do? They put that automobile out on the proving ground, and they ride it over those rough roads and those potholes. And they ride it through water; and they ride it through heat; and they ride it through all of these things—hundreds of miles—screeching, turning, twisting, jamming on the breaks, and spinning it around. They want to see, can it stand the test? Is it safe for the road? They’re proving the automobile. They’re testing the automobile. Now God, unknown to them, was testing them. You see, God is a strange teacher. He gives the test first and the lesson afterwards. And that’s what He did to these people. He gave them a test.

And I want you to know how they did on the test? They failed it miserably. They’re like the boy who went to his college professor and said, “Professor, I don’t believe I deserve this F that you gave me.” The professor said, “Son, I don’t believe you deserve it either, but it’s the lowest grade we had.” That’s how bad they failed this test! I mean, God was putting them to the test, and, ignominiously, they failed the test that God gave them.

And how did they fail the test? Well, they failed the test by murmuring when trouble came. And I want to tell you something, friend. When God gets ready to prove you—when God gets ready to test you—He’s not going to test you in the good times; because that’s not a test. He’s not going to test you in the middle of a revival meeting: that’s not the test. He’s not going to test our church when statistics are up, and it’s growing, and people are being baptized, and the budgets this year are more than they were last year, and all of that—that’s no test. Anybody can serve God in the sunshine. You see, they were leaping, dancing, praising, shouting, singing, and glorifying God when they came out of Egypt through the Red Sea. See, *anybody can shout in the sunshine, but can you sing in the shadows?* That’s the test.

The test is not how you behave when it’s victory all around; the test is how do you behave when God brings you to bitterness—when God brings you to Marah, where there’s no water. There the Bible says God brought them that He might test them. Now He didn’t test them that *He* might know what was in their hearts. He already knew what was in their hearts. He wanted *them* to know what was in their hearts. He wanted *them* to understand the weakness and the frailty of their human nature, if indeed it was there in them. And so He tested them. And the Bible says, in verse 25, that He brought them

there to prove them.

Well, they murmured. And do you know whom they murmured against? They murmured against Moses. Now they were criticizing their pastor. This is a good point, and so I want you all to pay attention. What they started to do now was to criticize their pastor. Now at this point, the pastor hadn't done anything wrong. I'm sure he didn't understand what was happening either, because all he had was the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. He'd never been that way before. All he could do was just do what he thought God wanted him to do and to follow the leadership of the Lord: the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. And that's exactly what he was doing! But they ended up there in Marah, and the people said, "Moses, can't you read a map? How are we...? What are you doing out here in this...? I mean, there's nothing to drink. You've got three million people out here. We're going to perish." And they whined, and they complained, and they grumbled and criticized and carped against Moses.

Now, folks, I want to tell you something. It's an amazing thing how fickle people are. Did you know that people are fickle? This crowd—listen to me—just three days ago had been praising Moses to high heaven. As a matter of fact, their song, in Exodus chapter 15, is called "The Song of Moses and the Lamb." I mean, they were just putting Moses up there with Jesus. I mean, they were praising, "Oh, how wonderful is Moses! We're singing Moses' song!" But in three days Moses had gone from hero to zero. I mean, now they're speaking against Moses. They're criticizing Moses. They are murmuring against Moses.

I want to tell you something, preacher boys—some of you men from Mid-America Seminary. Learn something from your old pastor today. People will praise you when you're in the ministry—and that's fine; nothing wrong with that. As a matter of fact, if you want to praise me, then you have my permission. It's okay. As a matter of fact, I like it. And if you say that you don't like people to speak well of you, then I think you're lying. I think there's something in us: we like to be praised, don't we? Don't look so pious. Nod your head. Sure! We like to be praised. Everybody likes to be praised, and there's nothing wrong with us giving praise to people. The Bible says that we're to give honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7). But I tell you what I've learned. I've learned this. The praise I receive is praise because God has done something in my life. God has blessed me. God has shown me something. God has enriched me. God has empowered me. And I am walking in the Holy Spirit. When I receive that praise, I had better pass it right on to Jesus, amen? I can't keep it; I must pass it on.

Now somebody says, "Well, that was a good message. It really blessed my heart." I might say, "Well, praise the Lord!" Maybe I won't say that. Maybe that sounds so pious. Sometimes it just sounds sticky, and ooey gooey, and like you're just dripping with piety, when you say, "Well, just praise the Lord." But even if I may not say that outwardly, I

must feel it in my heart, and that praise must go to Jesus. I'll tell you why: because if you're walking in the Holy Spirit and you receive praise, then the praise is due to Him. But if you're walking in the Holy Spirit—now, pay attention, preacher—you're walking in the Holy Spirit and following God, and you receive criticism, then you can give that criticism to Him too. See, you can pass that on to Him. And you don't have to live with that criticism when you are walking in the Spirit. But if you don't pass the praise on to Him, then He won't let you pass the criticism on to Him. But if you pass the praise on to Him, then, at the same time, you can pass the criticism on to Him, and you can joy in the fact that you're suffering for Jesus' sake.

Now that's what Moses did. Moses knew that people were so fickle. He didn't get all wrapped up in that. You see, the Bible says it's better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man, *"whose breath is in his nostrils"* (Isaiah 2:22). That is, don't you look to men for your approval. Ultimately, you must look to God. Moses knew—Moses knew that their criticism was really against God. Look, if you will, in Exodus chapter 16 and verse 2: *"And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron"* (Exodus 16:2).

Now that must have been bad. I mean, can you imagine having three million people sniping, murmuring, and complaining? You're the leader and just doing the best you know how, following God, walking in the Spirit. Well, they all murmured against Moses. But Moses saw penetratingly through that thing. And look, if you will, down in verse 7—chapter 16, verse 7: *"And in the morning..."*—he's speaking now to the Israelites—*"And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full;"*—now listen to it—*"for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD"* (Exodus 16:7–8).

Are you listening, ladies and gentlemen? Murmuring is not against your pastor, not against your teacher, not against your parents, and not against your circumstances. Your complaining is against God, who by His providence allowed you to be where you are. Huh? Just nod your head. Say *amen*. Your murmuring is against God.

Well, you say, "Yeah, murmuring. Well, that's not such a bad sin." Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and let me show you something here—1 Corinthians chapter 10, and let's look in verse 1. First Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 1: *"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea"* (1 Corinthians 10:1). Now in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 1, we know here that God is talking about the same experience that we have here in Exodus 15 when they came through the Red Sea and they're

under the cloud that is leading them.

Now with that in mind—remember that it's exactly the same incident that the Bible is talking about—skip down to verse 7. Here's what God said to the Corinthians: *“Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play”* (1 Corinthians 10:7). Do you know what those Jewish people did in the wilderness in that day? They made a golden calf. And after they made the golden calf they had a drunken orgy. And then they stripped off their clothes and danced around the golden calf. You say, “Terrible! Horrible!” I say, “Amen.”

Let's continue to read. Now we're not going to be idolaters, huh? Verse 7, right? All right. *“Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand”* (1 Corinthians 10:8)—sexual immorality in the wilderness. They were committing the sin of fornication, and God judged them. And thousands of them were slain by the hand of God because they committed fornication. You say, “That's right: a terrible, horrible sin!” Look in verse 9: *“Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents”* (1 Corinthians 10:9). Some of them blasphemed God and criticized Him. And because of their blasphemy poisonous serpents came to bite them, and they died. You say, “Well, they probably deserved it.”

Okay now, look in verse 10: *“Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer”* (1 Corinthians 10:10). Do you see that? Do you see that God ranks murmuring with the sin of idolatry? God ranks murmuring with the sin of fornication. God ranks murmuring with the sin of blasphemy. Do you see that? You think that it's a little thing that you murmur, don't you? You think that it's a little thing. You say, “Well, everybody murmurs a little bit.” Listen. Moses said, “Your murmuring is not against me. Your murmuring is against God” (Exodus 16:8). And it is a terrible, horrible sin!

Now, why is it such a terrible sin? Because, you see, murmuring roots in unbelief. And, *“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar”* (1 John 5:10). You see, why did they murmur? Well, they thought they were going to perish out there in the wilderness. “There's no water! There's nothing to drink! We're here in a place where God has brought us here, or Moses has brought us here, or circumstance has brought us here, or bad luck has brought us here!” And there they are, murmuring, because there's no water!

Well, I want to ask you a question. Who had just brought them through the Red Sea three days prior, but Almighty God? Now I want to ask you, do you think that God had invested that much in them and done that much for them to abandon them in three days? You see, what they were doing was disbelieving God. Oh, you say, “If God had done that much for me, then I don't think I would disbelieve Him.” Well, let me tell you

something. God did something more for you than He did for them. He let His darling Son die on Calvary's tree for you. And as God redeemed them by a little ol' lamb that they took out of their flock, God has redeemed you by the Lamb of God—the darling Son of God, who hung in agony and blood upon the cross. And as God brought them out through the Red Sea, God has brought you out of the land of sin. And God has saved you. And yet we murmur and we complain when we come to *bitterness*.

Does God have to keep proving His love to us over and over again? Does God have to keep proving Himself to us over and over again? I want to tell you, do you think that God brought them through the Red Sea to abandon them in the wilderness? And do you think that God has saved you, and then He's going to fail you? Do you think He is? I mean, the Bible says, *"While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him"* (Romans 5:8–9). Much more—I mean, listen to how He saved us, and how much *more* is: *"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32). You see, what was so bad about murmuring—my murmuring, your murmuring, our murmuring, anybody's murmuring—what is so bad about it is that it roots in unbelief. It says, "God, you're going to forsake us. God, you're not going to take care of us." God had not brought them through the Red Sea to destroy them, and God has not saved you to abandon you. And that's the reason the Bible says, in Philippians chapter 2 and verse 14—listen to it—*"Do all things without murmurings"* (Philippians 2:14).

I want to pastor a church with no murmurers in it, amen? I want to be a pastor that doesn't murmur. I want a choir that doesn't murmur. I want deacons that don't murmur. I want Sunday School teachers that don't murmur. I want to be the kind of daddy that doesn't murmur. I want to be married to a wife that doesn't murmur. I want to fulfill this scripture that says, *"Do all things without murmurings."* I want to tell you, some of you kids are complaining about your parents—"My mama... My daddy..."—and you murmur and complain about your parents. I want to ask you who gave you those parents. God did. These people spoke against Moses. Who gave them Moses? God gave them Moses. So when they murmured against Moses, they murmured against God. And when you murmur against your parents, you're murmuring against the God who gave you those parents. Don't you understand that? You murmur about your circumstance.

Well, I want to ask you a question. Have you been walking in the Spirit? Have you been obeying the Lord? Have you been led by that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire? Have you? You say, "Yes." Then, how dare you murmur against your circumstances, for it is God who has led you where you are. And when you murmur against your circumstances, you're murmuring against God. You come to some bitter place and you come to some desert hole where the water is bitter, and then you begin to complain and

murmur. God help us when we do that! God help us to see that it's a sin—a grievous sin—that God ranks with idolatry! God ranks with fornication and God ranks with blasphemy the sin of murmuring. *“Do all things without murmurings.”*

*Lord, I would place my hand in Thine,
Nor ever murmur nor repine;
Content, whatever lot I see,
Since 'tis my God that leadeth me.*

—JOSEPH H. GILMORE

Amen? God, teach us not to murmur.

III. The Unseen Provisions of God

Now what I'm trying to say to you is this. I want you to see the unfailing providence of God: God led them where they were. I want you to see the unknown purposes of God: they were there for a test. Now I want you to see the unseen provisions of God. Look, if you will, back at this chapter again in verse 24: *“And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the LORD”* (Exodus 15:24–25).

And, by the way, there you've got the two categories of persons: you've got the murmurers and the intercessors. There they were: murmuring, complaining, griping, and finding fault. They go to Moses. Moses goes to God. There are some people who know how to complain, and there are some people that know how to pray. There are some people who are part of the problem, and some people are part of the solution. Thank God for Moses, who went to the Lord. They cried to Moses. Moses prayed to the Lord. I don't know how long Moses had to pray. I don't know how many prayers he offered. But I know that Moses was a man who knew how to get hold of God.

And look, if you will, in verse 25: *“And he cried unto the LORD; and the LORD shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them”* (Exodus 15:25). The Lord showed him a tree. Now, friend, it was there all the time. God knew it was there. God had planted that tree months, years, ago, or else God had supernaturally caused it to grow in a few minutes. I don't know which. But from the time when they got there, there was the tree. The Bible doesn't say God created the tree. God just simply said, “Moses, you see the tree?” “Yes.” “Cut it down, Moses. Throw it in the water.” And when Moses took that tree and cast it in the water, the bitter water was made sweet. And the people were able to drink it, and they were able to survive.

Now, listen. What does that tree speak of? What does that tree represent? First Peter chapter 2 and verse 24 tells us that Jesus Christ died upon the tree (1 Peter 2:24). To me, it speaks clearly and plainly about Calvary love and the power of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. It speaks to me of the cross of Christ: that no matter how bad

my circumstances, no matter how bitter my experience, the love of God, explained and expressed by the cross of Jesus Christ, will sweeten that experience. Now some of you say, “That’s just preacher rhetoric.” But you know the reason you feel that way? Because you don’t know about the cross. You don’t understand the love of God revealed in the cross of Jesus Christ.

I imagine some of those carnal people back in that day looked and said, “Here we are dying of thirst, and there’s Moses over there throwing trees in the water. How silly! How foolish that is!” And in their carnal reasoning it didn’t make any sense to them. But it was that tree that sweetened the bitter water.

You see, what happens is this, dear friend: that when we come to a place where we don’t understand what’s happening, and when everything seems to cave in—we go to the doctor, and the doctor tells us we have a malignancy; or we go to the bank, and the bank says you’re overdrawn; or we go to work, and the boss says, “You’re fired”; or we come home, and there’s a note pinned saying that the wife has deserted and she’s gone away; or our children run from us; or some other calamity happens—and we come to a place—a terrible place, a horrible place, a bitter place, something we can’t understand. Now we have a choice. At that time we can begin to murmur and complain and criticize. And we’ll probably find somebody around us to criticize. It may indeed be our pastor, our parents, our teacher, or somebody else. But, really, what we’ll be doing is criticizing God rather than going to God and seeing what God wants. And it’s at that time, dear friend, that, if you are a Christian walking in the Spirit, God’s going to bring you back to the cross. And God’s going to say, “My child, no matter what is happening, this is how much I love you.”

Do you understand what I’m saying? Do you understand? No matter what, no matter how bad it gets, you look at that cross. You see that Jesus died there in agony and blood. And I want to tell you, dear friend, there is power in Calvary. There is power in His blood over all the powers of sorrow, sickness, death, and hell. And sometimes that’s all God’s going to show you. He’s not going to show you anything else. He wants you to be shut up, so the only thing that you have to cling to is that cross. And you’ll find out that not only is it necessary, but it’s also enough to sweeten the bitter waters of life. You see, there was the unseen provision of God.

I want you to notice something. I want you to look at the end of this chapter. Look, if you will, in verse 27: “*And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water...*”—now, how many tribes were there? How many? Twelve. How many wells of water? An oasis for every tribe. Now, look—“*And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees: and they encamped there by the waters*” (Exodus 15:27). Here’s the amazing thing. Here they are complaining, murmuring, and finding fault, when right over the sand dunes—right over the hill—was

an oasis and a bubbling spring for every tribe. I mean, right over the hill! They didn't know it. There was no way they could have known it. They didn't have to know it. It wasn't their business to know it. It wasn't their worry to know it. All they had to do is make certain they kept their eyes on the pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire.

My friend, you don't have to know the future; you just have to walk in the Spirit. Understand what I'm saying. And if God, in His providence, and God, in His unfailing providence, brings you to the place of bitterness, He's got you there for a test. And He's got you there not only for a test, but He's also got you there for a lesson. And He is there to show you that the same God that can bring you with might and miracle through the Red Sea is the same God that can take you in that place of bitterness, and that place of sorrow, and that place of frustration, and that place of misunderstanding. And there He alone will be enough for you. Just the tree, and that's all.

Conclusion

But you say, "Pastor, if it's all the same to you, I don't want to just stay there at Marah." I don't think God wants you to, either. I don't think God wants you to, either. God has more for you. God enjoys giving you His date palms. God enjoys giving you His oases. God enjoys His blessings. And I want to tell you, precious friend, right over the horizon God's got an oasis for you. Did you know that? But He's got a lesson He wants you to learn, first. He wants you to learn that He's enough. And God wants to bless you, but God will never let the victories of the Red Sea or the joys of Elim take the place of Himself. And God's going to bring you to a place where you don't have these other things. God's going to bring you to a wilderness. God's going to bring you to a place of sorrow and difficulty and bitterness. And He's going to show you a tree, and you're going to learn that the tree is enough to sweeten the bitter waters of life. And you're going to be able to say,

*In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time.*

—JOHN BOWRING

And, "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (Galatians 6:14). And you're going to find out that not only is Jesus Christ necessary: Jesus Christ is enough if you don't have anything else. What a wonderful story this is! The unfailing providence of God: He led them all the way. The unknown purpose of God: He was proving them. The unseen provision of God: there was a tree, and there were twelve springs of water. Don't you like that song that says,

*All the way my Savior leads me;
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my Guide?
Heav'nly peace, divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate'er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well.*

—FANNY J. CROSBY

“He leadeth me. He leadeth me. Oh, blessed thought! He leadeth me.”

Our Daily Bread

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 4, 1987

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 16:4

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Mystery of the Manna
 - A. The Source of the Manna
 - B. The Size of the Manna
 - C. The Shade of the Manna
 - D. The Shape of the Manna
 - E. The Sweetness of the Manna
 - F. The Sufficiency of the Manna
- II. The Meaning of the Manna
 - A. A Devotion Test
 - B. A Dependence Test
 - C. A Desire Test
- III. The Manner of the Manna
 - A. The Principle of Hunger
 - B. The Principle of Humility
 - C. The Principle of Habit

Conclusion

Introduction

Exodus chapter 16. I want us just to tune our thoughts towards that cross that Laurie was singing about. But I want us to sharpen the focus just a little more, and think about this subject as we prepare for the Lord's Supper: "Our Daily Bread." That is, "Manna from Heaven." Exodus chapter 16:4: *"Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them,"*—that means "that I may test them"—*"whether they will walk in my law, or no."* (Exodus 16:4)

Now, let me tell you, folks, that all of the Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ. And this story that we're reading right here from Exodus chapter 16, right in the threshold of God's Word, is about the Lord Jesus Christ. And one of the great proofs of the inspiration of the Bible is that we see how the Old Testament and the New Testament are linked together. In John 6, the Lord Jesus said He was that bread that comes down from heaven. (John 6:32–35) What happened here in Exodus chapter 16 was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. And this that I'm reading to you right now is a type of Christ.

When the people of God were in the wilderness, God fed them with bread from heaven. And that bread from heaven was called manna.

Now, turn to verse 15, and look: *“And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna:”—“It is manna”—“for they wist not what it was.”* They didn’t know what it was, so they called it manna. Do you know what *manna* means? Manna means “what is it?” Well, that’s a pretty good name. That stuff lying on the ground, they said, “We’ll call it ‘what is it?’” And that’s what *manna* means. They said, “This is manna,” for they didn’t know what it was. *“And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat.”* (Exodus 16:15)

Now several things tonight, as we get ready to feed upon this bread and drink this cup; as we think about heaven’s bread for earth’s need, for earth’s hunger.

I. The Mystery of the Manna

I want you to think, first of all, about what I’m going to call the mystery of the manna. Verse 15 says they didn’t know what it was. They couldn’t understand it. It was a mysterious thing to them. They did not understand it. Well, dear friend, that tells me that if this manna was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, that means that we don’t have to understand Jesus to enjoy Jesus. Now the Bible says, in 1 Timothy 3:16, *“Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.”* There’s not a man, not a woman, not a boy, not a girl on earth who understands that. You cannot understand how God could be fully God and fully man all at the same time. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ is the world’s greatest mystery. But don’t worry, friend. You don’t have to understand something to enjoy it.

Now, when I was in college, I took a course in human anatomy and physiology. And one of our test questions was this. As a matter of fact, it was a major question on the test. It said, “You’ve just eaten a ham sandwich. Now what?” And I had to begin with the enzymes in the mouth, and I had to talk about how that ham sandwich was masticated and chewed up and mixed with saliva, and what happened when it goes down the esophagus. And I talked about the function of the pyloric valve, and all of the things that happened right on down. I had to say, “Well, if it’s a ham sandwich, there are certain fats, and so forth, in there that have to be dissolved by certain enzymes, and so forth.” And so I had to write an essay just on one question: “You’ve eaten a ham sandwich. Now what?” I passed. As a matter of fact, made a good grade. But listen. Listen, folks. I was eating sandwiches a long time before I knew that. I didn’t have to understand the function of the pyloric valve to enjoy a sandwich.

You don’t have to understand all of the mysteries of the incarnation to believe it and to enjoy it and to assimilate it. These people didn’t understand what that manna was, but they ate it. They fed on it. They were sustained by it. It was, indeed, a picture of the

Lord Jesus Christ. And let me tell you how it pictured the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. The Source of the Manna

First of all, I want you to think of the source. Go back to verse 4: *“Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you.”* (Exodus 16:4) It pictured the Lord Jesus, because He said, “I am that bread that cometh down from heaven.” We know that the Lord Jesus Christ, He is of a heavenly origin like that manna. He came from heaven.

B. The Size of the Manna

But not only do we think of the source, but also I want you to think of the size of this manna. Look, if you will, in verse 14. The Bible says here, *“And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing.”* (Exodus 16:14) And that smallness speaks of the Lord Jesus also. It speaks of His humility. Can you imagine the great God of the universe coming to earth as a tiny baby? Think about it. The infinite became an infant.

C. The Shade of the Manna

But think not only of the source of that bread; think not only of the size of that bread; but think of the shade of it. What color was it? Look with me in verse 31 of this same chapter: *“And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white”* (Exodus 16:31) It was white, snow white. And that white bread that lay upon the ground, again, pictured the Lord Jesus, because, in the Bible, whiteness is a symbol of purity and holiness, and He was the sinless Son of God.

D. The Shape of the Manna

Go back to verse 14 again, and think of the shape of this manna. Look again: *“And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the earth there lay a small”—now, watch it—“round thing.”* (Exodus 16:14) That is, it had no beginning and no ending. The circle has been an emblem of eternity, and it speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ, who always was, and always shall be. Jesus did not have His beginning at Bethlehem. There was no beginning for the Lord Jesus Christ. *“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”* (John 1:3)

E. The Sweetness of the Manna

But think not only of the source, and the size, and the shade, and the shape, but think of the sweetness of this manna. Look in verse 31—the last part of verse 31: *“And the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.”* (Exodus 16:31) Oh, friend, *“Taste and see that the LORD is good.”* (Psalm 34:8) How sweet it is to feast on the Lord Jesus Christ! That’s the reason that you’ll never convince a born-again, Bible-believing

Christian, who knows the Lord Jesus, and who's feasting on the Jesus, that it's not real.

Now, if I'm sitting in a restaurant, eating food, and you come in there and argue, and tell me there is no such thing as food, I'm going to tell you you've got a weak argument—amen?—while I'm sitting there feasting and enjoying it.

You see, we're feasting on the Lord Jesus. And sweet is the Lord Jesus.

F. The Sufficiency of the Manna

But think not only of the sweetness of this bread; think of the sufficiency of this bread. Look, if you will, in verse 17: *“And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it”—or “measure it”—“with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over,”—now, watch it—“and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating.”* (Exodus 16:17–18)

Now, what does that tell us? As much as they needed was available. Jesus is all that you will ever need. And so, dear friend, I want to tell you, they didn't understand it. They said, “What is it?” But while they didn't understand it, they appropriated it and enjoyed it.

II. The Meaning of the Manna

Now, let's move to the second point. I want you to think not only of the mystery of it, but I want you to think of the meaning of the manna. Why did God do this? I mean, why did God say, “I'm going to feed the people this way”? He could have fed them in many ways. Well, it was a test. Go back and look in verse 4: *“Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate”—now, watch it—“every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.”* (Exodus 16:4)

A. A Devotion Test

Now, first of all, folks, it was a test of their devotion. It was a devotion test to see whether or not they loved God enough to obey Him, whether they loved the Lord to feed on Him. You see, the gathering of this manna pictured the New Testament Christian and his quiet time every day. How do you feed on Christ? You feed on the Lord Jesus day by day, daily bread, as you get alone. You pour out your love to Him. He pours out His love to you. You get in His Word. You praise Him. He communes with you. And you just feed on Him. Now, folks, your devotional life tells you more than any other thing about your love for the Lord Jesus—your devotional life. When you love someone, you want to spend time with them.

B. A Dependence Test

And so the Lord said it was a test. Number one: It was a devotion test. Number two: It was a dependence test. You see, God gave it to them day by day to keep them

dependent upon Him. They could not subsist without it.

C. A Desire Test

But not only was it a devotion test, and a dependence test; it was really a desire test. Look, if you will, in verse 8: *“And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD.”* (Exodus 16:8) Now what happened is this: that the people began to murmur about this manna. They said, “We don’t want it anymore.” As a matter of fact, you’re in Exodus. Turn to Numbers there. Just turn right there for just a moment, and turn to Numbers 11, and look in verse 4. It makes it even more clear what they said: *“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?”* Now, remember, they had bread from heaven, but they didn’t want heaven’s bread. They said, in verse 5, *“We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes.”* (Numbers 11:4–5)

Now, folks, listen to me. Not only are you what you eat, but you eat what you are. Now what I mean is this. You can tell what a person is by what he feeds on. And God gave them this manna as a test. It was a test of their devotion to Him, their dependence upon Him, and their desire for Him.

III. The Manner of the Manna

I want to leave that point, and I want to move on to the last point, because we want to have plenty of time for the Lord’s Supper. I’ve talked to you about the mystery of it. I’ve talked to you about the meaning of it. Let me, very briefly, before we have the Lord’s Supper, talk to you about the method, or the manner of it. How did these people feed upon this bread so long ago? And what does that mean for me in this twentieth century in Memphis, Tennessee?

A. The Principle of Hunger

Well, first of all, they had to have a hunger for this bread. Verse 16: *“This is the thing which the LORD hath commanded, Gather of it every man according to his eating”*—that is, “every man according to his appetite.” (Exodus 16:16)

Now, folks, when a person loses his appetite, he’s sick. If you don’t have a desire to feed upon Jesus, if you don’t have a desire to have that quiet time in the morning alone with the Lord, and gather that manna from heaven, it’s because you have no appetite—and that lack of appetite is a sign of sickness.

B. The Principle of Humility

But not only must there be hunger; there had to be a certain humility. Notice verse 14: *“And when the dew that lay [upon the ground] was gone up, behold, upon the face of wilderness there lay a small round thing.”* (Exodus 16:14) That is, they had to humble themselves. They had to stoop and pick it up. They had to kneel to gather it. And, friend, God has so made us that, when we hunger after Him, we’re going to have to humble ourselves. We’re going to have to bend low. We’re going to have to kneel in that quiet time morning by morning.

C. The Principle of Habit

But I want you to notice, last of all, as we talk about the manner of the manna, that not only was there the principle of hunger, and of humility, but there was the principle of habit. Notice in verse 21: *“And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted.”* That is, “Get it early, because if you don’t get it early, it will be too late.” And so the Bible teaches here that you couldn’t get it and store it up. I meant to read verses 19 and 20. Back up and read verses 19 and 20: *“And Moses said, Let no man leave of it till the morning.”* That is, “Don’t leave it lying there on the ground.” *“Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses; but some of them left it until the morning, and it bred worms, and stank: and Moses was wroth”—or “angry”—“with them. And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating.”* (Exodus 16:19–21) That is, you had to get it in the morning. You couldn’t eat yesterday’s bread. You couldn’t gather bread for the next morning. You had to get it every morning fresh—fresh. You couldn’t coast on yesterday’s experience. You couldn’t get enough today to take you into tomorrow. God very wisely said, “You’re going to have to gather it every morning early.” The Psalmist said, *“In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”* (Psalm 5:3)

Friend, I don’t care what happened to you yesterday. Did you have a big meal yesterday or the day before? Did you enjoy it? Fine. But you’ll have to agree with me: you can’t live on the memory of food. And you cannot live on yesterday’s experience with the Lord Jesus. They had to feed upon this manna day by day.

Conclusion

Now, here’s what you do tomorrow morning. You set a time. You must have the right time. Number two: You must have the right tools. Get you a Bible. Get you a notebook. Get you a quiet place. Get you a prayer list. And get alone with God. But not only must you have the right time, and the right tools: you must have the right technique.

Let me tell you what to do tomorrow morning. You get still. Just wait before God. As you go to gather your manna, just get your heart quiet. Gather up the loins of your mind.

Concentrate on Him. Praise Him for a moment. Make certain that you're aware of His presence. And then, begin to read God's Word. And as you read God's Word, let God speak to you from the Word. And talk back to God. Say, "Thank you for that, Lord. Forgive me for this, Lord. Lord, I understand that. Lord, what does this mean? Lord, what would you have me to do about that?" And just talk with God. The Bible is God speaking to you. You speak back with God. After you've done that, spend a time of meditation. Just mull it over. Feast on it. Chew on it. Digest it. Assimilate it. And then, record it. Write it down. What is God telling you? God will give you some precious times, some precious things in those times. Don't say, "Well, I'll remember it." Remember that the weakest ink is better than the best memory. Write it down. And then, just pray it in. Just praise the Lord, and bless Him, and pray it in. It helps your spiritual digestion. And, friend, you've had manna in the morning. That's what you're to do every day of your life.

How to Feed on Daily Bread

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 10, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 16:4–8; 14–18

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Mystery of the Manna
 - A. The Source: Heaven
 - B. The Size: A Small Thing
 - C. The Shape: A Round Thing
 - D. The Shade: White
 - E. The Sweetness: Like Honey
 - F. The Sufficiency
- II. The Meaning of the Manna
 - A. It Was a Faith Test: Dependence on Him
 - B. It Was a Food Test: Desire for Him
 - C. It Was a Fellowship Test: Devotion to Him
- III. The Method of the Manna
 - A. There Must be a Hunger
 - B. There Must Be Humility
 - C. There Must Be Habit
 1. You Must Gather the Bread at the Right Time
 2. You Must Make Time

Introduction

I want to talk to you about daily bread and how to feed on daily bread. Now you know all of the Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ. Tonight, we're going to learn a wonderful lesson on how to feed on the Lord Jesus Christ daily.

When I find these pictures of Jesus in the Old Testament, it greatly blesses me and reinforces my belief in the inspiration of Holy Scripture, though I'll tell you the truth: I really don't need to have it reinforced; I am totally convinced. We're going to read the story of God feeding the children of Israel with bread from heaven called manna. That manna pictured the Lord Jesus Christ.

And even before we read our text, you might want to jot down John chapter 6, verses 47 and 48, in the New Testament, where Jesus said, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life"* (John 6:47–

48). Now what he meant: “That bread, so long ago, that manna in the wilderness: that was a picture of me. I am that Bread of Life.”

So we’re going to talk about something called manna: food that God fed the children of Israel with when they were on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. God fed them miraculously, supernaturally, in the wilderness.

I. The Mystery of the Manna

First of all, I want you to notice what I’m going to call tonight the mystery of the manna. Look in Exodus chapter 16, verse 15: *“And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat”* (Exodus 16:15).

It is manna. Why did they call it *manna*? Because they didn’t know what it was. Do you know what *manna* means? *Manna* means, “What’s that?”—“What is it?” And “What is it?” is translated “manna.” It was mysterious to them; they didn’t know what it was. And, immediately, we see a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and His mystery.

Put in your margin, correspondingly, 1 Timothy chapter 3, verse 16: *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh”* (1 Timothy 3:16). You see, this bread so long ago came down from heaven, and it was mysterious. And the Lord Jesus Christ came down from heaven: glorious, mysterious, wonderfully true.

Now, don’t think that you have to understand everything in order for it to be applicable and wonderful to your life. There are many things that you enjoy that you don’t fully understand.

When I was in college, I took a course in human anatomy and physiology, and one of the examinations was, “You’ve just eaten a ham sandwich: now what?” And what I had to do from there on was talk about the enzymes that are in the mouth and so forth that would help to digest the food, talk about the function of the pyloric valve, and peristalsis that carries the food down, and all of the things that happen in the digestive tract—all of that—and how the food then is carried to the cells and all of that. Without boring you, that was a big question: “You’ve just eaten a ham sandwich: now what?” Well, Joyce doesn’t let me ham sandwiches at all anymore, and I would recommend that you not eat them. But that’s not the point. The point is, friend, you don’t have to understand the function of the pyloric valve to enjoy a sandwich, amen?

There are a lot of mysteries—a lot of things—we don’t understand. They’re mysterious, but we enjoy them. You will never unravel the mysteries of the Holy Trinity. You will never be able to comprehend the hypostatic union of the God-man, the Bread that came down from heaven, but you can enjoy it. This bread, this mysterious bread, was a picture of Jesus. Let me give you some reasons.

A. The Source: Heaven

First of all, the source—consider the source. Exodus chapter 16—look in verse 4: *“Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you”* (Exodus 16:4). What was the source of the manna? It came from heaven.

Well, what is the source of the Lord Jesus Christ? Put in your margin John 6, verse 3: *“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven”* (John 6:33). The bread, in the Old Testament—the manna—came from heaven. The Lord Jesus came from heaven.

Now Jesus is not just another man; He’s not just another religious teacher. He is God in human flesh. *You can’t just tip the hat to Jesus; you have to bow the knee to Jesus.* If He’s not God, He’s not good. “How do you know that, pastor?” For He Himself said, “There’s none good but one, and that’s God” (Matthew 19:17). Figure that out. Friend, if He’s not God, He is not good. If He’s not good, He’s not sinless. If He’s not sinless, He’s not the Savior. He is God come down from heaven. So consider the source of the bread.

B. The Size: A Small Thing

Consider the size of the bread. Look in verse 14: *“And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing”* (Exodus 16:14). Does that picture the Lord Jesus? Absolutely! You think of the great God of the universe who became a baby. The Infinite became an infant, a small round thing.

C. The Shape: A Round Thing

Consider not only the source, the size, but consider the shape. The manna was round like a wafer as it lay there upon the ground. What does roundness speak of? Eternity. A circle has no beginning and no ending, and it speaks of the fact that Jesus Christ is from everlasting to everlasting. When Jesus was born at Bethlehem, that was not a beginning. There never was a time when He was not, and there never will be a time when He will not be. He delineated himself as the great “I AM”—not “I was,” not “I will be”; just “I AM.”

D. The Shade: White

Now, consider also the shade. What color was it? Look in chapter 16, verse 31: *“And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey”* (Exodus 16:31). White—white. What does the whiteness of the manna speak of? It speaks of the righteousness, the purity, of the sinless, stainless Son of God. Hallelujah, what a Savior! He touched sin, but sin never touched Him. He was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin.

E. The Sweetness: Like Honey

Consider the sweetness of the manna. Look in verse 31: *“And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey”* (Exodus 16:31).

When I was coming to church this morning, I was in my automobile praying, and I got to thinking about Jesus. And I don't mind telling you—now I'm not ashamed to tell you, and I didn't do it so I could tell you; but it just came to me this moment—I began to weep and just say, “Jesus, I love you. I do!” Oh, how sweet to feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ! Sweeter than honey is the Lord Jesus Christ to me. Don't tell me that Jesus doesn't satisfy. If you've been feeding on Jesus, you know He is sweet to the taste.

F. The Sufficiency

And consider, not only the sweetness, but consider the sufficiency of this bread. Look in verses 17 and 18: *“And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. And when they did mete it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating”* (Exodus 16:17–18). Now, what does that mean? It means, folks, there was a sufficiency—all you would ever need. May I tell you something tonight? All—yes, all; yes, all, all, all, all—you will ever need is Jesus, spiritually.

People talk about the second blessing. Sometimes they ask me, “Have you had the second blessing?” I say, “Yes.” Oh, they get all excited and say, “Tell me about it.” I said, “It's understanding what I got when I got the first blessing.” Not only have I had the second blessing; I've had the third blessing, which is understanding I didn't understand it all in the second blessing. Friend, *you may go deeper into Jesus but you'll never go beyond Jesus*. Jesus is sufficient, and *“in Him [is] the fulness of the Godhead bodily”* (Colossians 2:9). Oh, thank God for the mystery of the manna!

II. The Meaning of the Manna

But let's move on and think, not only of the mystery of the manna, but the meaning of the manna. Why did God feed them with manna in the Old Testament? Well, look in Exodus chapter 16, and let's read verses 4 through 8: *“Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day,”*—now, watch this—*“that I may prove them,”*—that is, “that I may test them”—*“whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, At even, then ye shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: and in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth*

your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD” (Exodus 16:4–8).

The people were murmuring. They said, “We’re out here in the wilderness, and there’s nothing to eat.” And Moses said, “Look, don’t murmur to me. Your murmurings aren’t really against me. It’s God who has brought us here. You’re really murmuring against the Lord.” God hates the sin of murmuring. If you are a murmurer, for my sake, for your sake, for our sake, stop. Murmuring was idolatry in the Bible.

A. It Was a Faith Test: Dependence on Him

Now, what was the meaning of the manna? It was a faith test; it was a mark of their dependence upon Him. Look in verse 4: *“Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them,”*—“that I may test them”—*“whether they will walk in my law, or no”* (Exodus 16:4). It showed a matter of their dependence upon the Lord.

Now it was a faith test. And, friend, I want to say this: that, when you feed on Jesus daily, that is a faith test, and it shows your dependence upon the Lord. If you don’t have a quiet time, you have a weak faith, and you’re self-sufficient. And, really, the time that you spend with the Lord or you don’t spend with the Lord is a way God is proving you and testing you.

B. It Was a Food Test: Desire for Him

But not only was it a faith test; it was a food test—a food test. It helped with their appetite. Notice verse 8: *“And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full”* (Exodus 16:8). Now the people were murmuring because they remembered the fleshpots of Egypt; they remembered the leeks and the onions and the garlic. So, not only was God testing them according to their dependence—the faith test—but God was testing them according to their desire, which is the food test.

You are what you eat, and you eat what you are. That is, what you desire to eat shows so much about you. If you have an inordinate desire for television, or for novels, or for movies, or newspapers, or whatever, if that is what you desire—the world’s fare—if that is your great appetite, it shows something about you. Do you really, really have a hunger, an appetite, for the Lord?

Look, if you will, in Numbers chapter 11, beginning in verse 4: *“And the mixt multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?”* That is, “We want some mutton! We want

some leg of lamb!” *“We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: but now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes”* (Numbers 11:4–6). That is, they were saying, “Lord, we don’t want heaven’s bread; we want earth’s garlic.”

Now in the passage in the New Testament, in John chapter 6, where Jesus is comparing Himself with the manna, He began to talk to the disciples about eating His flesh and drinking His blood—that is, feeding on Him—and you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, in John chapter 6, verse 66, *“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him”* (John 6:66)—when Jesus talked to them about feeding on Him.

I wonder how many in this congregation tonight really have an appetite for Jesus? Really, do you have a dependence upon Him? Do you have a desire for Him?

C. It Was a Fellowship Test: Devotion to Him

There’s the faith test: the dependence upon Him. There is the food test: the desire for Him. And there is the fellowship test. You see, it spoke of dependence; it spoke of desire; it spoke of devotion. That’s what your quiet time does: it speaks of your dependence upon God; it speaks of your desire for God; it speaks of your devotion for God. The test of your love for the Lord Jesus Christ is this, very clearly and very plainly: do you feed on Him? do you desire Him? are you hungry for Him? Would you say, “Bread of heaven, feed me until I want no more”?

III. The Method of the Manna

Thirdly, let’s notice, not only the mystery of the manna, and the meaning of it, but let’s notice the method of it: how they fed on that bread so long ago. There’s a great lesson for us, to tell us how to have a quiet time, where we feed on the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. There Must be a Hunger

First of all—and this is very important: There must be a hunger—there must be a hunger. I don’t know how much of God you have, but you have all you want. Exodus chapter 16, verse 16: *“Gather of it every man according to his eating”* (Exodus 16:16). What that means is, “according to his appetite.” Now the two reasons that a person doesn’t have an appetite—number one: he’s dead—dead men are not hungry; number two: he’s sick. Either case is not very good.

Do you have an appetite for God? Jesus said, *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”* (Matthew 5:6). You don’t have to beg God to fill you; you don’t have to persuade God to fill you. You permit God to fill you when you are hungry and thirsty.

B. There Must Be Humility

There must be hunger. Number two: There must be humility. Look in verse 14: *“And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground”* (Exodus 16:14). There it was: small, white, and pure. They had to humble themselves and pick it up. Every man gathered together for himself. The elders, the big shots, the little children—everyone had to stoop low to get it. And so it is when you feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now there may have been some too proud and too dignified to do that. Do you know what the worst thing about prayerlessness is? And the thing that condemns me more about my own prayerlessness, when it’s there, is not the fact that I don’t pray, but why I don’t pray. Do you know why you don’t pray more than you do—why I don’t pray better than I do? Because of pride—because of pride. We’re convinced we can make it without prayer. If we knew we couldn’t make it without prayer, we would pray. But we’re fairly well convinced that we can do all right. “Thank you, Lord. If I need you, I’ll call you.” So our prayerlessness and the failed quiet time means that, very frankly, we have not taken time to kneel and pray, to stoop, to bend, to feed on this Bread.

C. There Must Be Habit

But not only must there be hunger, and not only must there be humility, but there must be habit. Now God talked to them about feeding on this bread daily. God arranged it where they could not store it. If they tried to store it, it would breed worms and stink. The Bible says, in verse 21, *“And they gathered it every morning, every man according to his eating: and when the sun waxed hot, it melted”* (Exodus 16:21)—it went away.

No wonder the Psalmist said, *“In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up”* (Psalm 5:3). When do you get your bread? Early in the day. You give the best part of the day to the Lord. You get fresh bread every day, and you cannot live on the memory of food. Daily, you go to the Lord—in the morning.

Now, let’s talk, therefore, about some habits. I said there must be hunger; there must be humility; there must be habit. Now we’re going to talk about some habits.

1. You Must Gather the Bread at the Right Time

First of all, when do you gather the bread? The right time. Now, when is the right time? Well, obviously, in the morning. What part of the morning? The best part of the morning for you. I don’t know when that is. I know when it is for me. When I wake up in the morning, I greet the Lord, but I don’t try to have my quiet time immediately. I try to get my motor running for a little bit. Joyce is a *springer*, but I am a *groper*. Now my motor gets to running faster and faster the longer I stay up. And so I have to get the cobwebs out of my mind just a little bit. It doesn’t mean that I’m not hungry to meet the Lord; it is that I am hungry to meet the Lord, and I want to meet the Lord at the right

time. I find a time that is the optimum time for me. It is not the first waking moment. My first waking moment is to greet the Lord and so forth. But you find the right time.

2. You Must Make Time

Now, let me say this: that Jesus made time. He didn't find time; He made time. You will have to make time. And there's something in all of us called the old flesh that doesn't want to pray. I've been on the trail with Jesus now for many, many years. There's still a part of me that has to be dragged to the place of prayer. Now I know you're much more holy than I, but there's a part of my nature that does not want to pray; and if I were to listen to that part, I would not pray.

I remember hearing the saintly Sidlow Baxter say—he said, “I realized that I needed to spend more time with God in prayer. And my emotions said, ‘I don't want to pray,’ but I wanted to pray. And so I said to *Will*, ‘*Will*, let's you and I pray whether *Emotion* will gather with us or not.’ So,” Sidlow said, “*Will* and I decided, if *Emotion* wouldn't come with us, we were going to pray anyway. So *Will* and I got down and prayed.” And he said, “After I did that for a while, *Emotion* came and gathered with us, and he's been with us for all this time.”

So you just have to say to *Emotion*, “Look, whether you want to pray or not, we're going to pray.” And you pray when you feel like it; you pray when you don't feel like it; you pray until you do feel like it. But in order to have a time, there must be the right time.

Now the right time is not before you get out of bed in the morning. Don't you try horizontal meditation: it's a perfect cure for insomnia. Get out of bed in the morning, and don't just say, “Well, I have my quiet time at the end of the day”...

Four Principles of Victory

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 11, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 17:8–13

Outline

Introduction

- I. Receive a Gracious Provision: Salvation
- II. Realize a Grand Purpose
- III. Respect a Grievous Problem: the Flesh
- IV. Remember a Glorious Principle: the Victory Is God-Given

Conclusion

Introduction

You'll notice in your program a logo which represents the celebration that we're having; and there is a hand holding up a hand, and the caption there says, "A Legend of Loyalty, a Vision for Victory." That is taken from the seventeenth chapter of the Book of Exodus, and I'd like you to turn to that, if you would here, for just a moment. And while you're turning, I want to tell you something about a church member that I had difficulty with. As a matter of fact, I've had difficulty with this church member for a number of years. Really, he's given me a lot of trouble, and he has disappointed me many, many times. And I have had to just expend a lot of energy with this particular church member who really—frankly, we are a wonderful congregation—but this member has given me much, much sorrow and heartache at times. Maybe I ought to tell you his name. I think I will: Adrian Rogers. You're looking at the guy who has given me a lot of trouble. You know, my biggest enemy is my own self.

Have you found that true? We have an enemy inside the fort called *self*. Sometimes the Bible calls that *the old man*. Sometimes the Bible calls that *the flesh*, but we're all in a battle. You see, we have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now we're going to be talking about that center enemy, the flesh; and when I'm talking about the flesh, I'm not talking about your material body—not talking about your skin and bones. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. It is crafted of God, and it is to be wholly dedicated to Him. But when I'm talking about the flesh, I'm talking about the lower part of our nature that we inherited from our parents, who got it from Adam. It is a disposition against the things of God. The Bible tells us, in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 17, that "the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these two are contrary one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that ye would"

(Galatians 5:17).

Now, what does that have to do with the seventeenth chapter of Exodus? Well, let me tell you a secret to understanding the Bible. Now, while the Old Testament is history, it is more than history. Are you listening? It is devotional literature. I'm talking about the Old Testament, and I'm talking about the history of the Old Testament; and I'm talking particularly of the coming of the Jewish nation out of Egypt through the wilderness and into Canaan. The Bible tells us, in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, that "*all of these things happened to them...*"—1 Corinthians 10, verse 11—"*all of these things happened unto them for examples*" to us (1 Corinthians 10:11).

Now you're going to learn a lesson today about the life of conquest. Remember that at one time the Jewish people were in Egypt and they were slaves. Now Egypt represents the world, therefore, that we've been called out of. But God called them out of Egypt. Pharaoh was the king of Egypt. Pharaoh represents the devil. Then they were headed toward Canaan, a land of oil and wine; and corn and figs and pomegranates; and milk and honey; and rivers and trees; and valleys and hills; brass and iron. They were called into Canaan. What does Canaan represent? Not heaven someday. Canaan, in the Bible—don't miss this—Canaan represents victory. Canaan represents the Spirit-filled life—not in the sweet by-and-by, but in the nasty now-and-now, for we can have victory day by day.

So, as Christians, we have come out of Egypt. We're coming through a wilderness, but we're headed toward Canaan; and we ought to already be there. So Canaan represents the Spirit-filled life; Egypt: the world; Pharaoh: the devil; Canaan: the victorious life. But we're going to meet somebody now in just a moment who represents the flesh: that member I've been having such difficulty with. And I know that, if you're saved, you've been having the same difficulty.

Now, with that in mind, begin in verse 8: "*Then came Amalek...*"—Amalek represents the flesh—"*Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.*" I can imagine Dan Rather being there—Dan Rather saying, "There's a battle. Our man on the field is reporting something. Let me get it here in my... Oh, yes, yes," he says, "there's an old man, some man who has a rod in his hand. And as the old man holds up his hand, something is happening down here in the valley, ladies and gentlemen. It seems that, when the old man holds up his hands, Joshua's army is victorious; but when the old man's hands go down, the armies of Amalek are victorious. It's a strange thing that we report today." All

right now, notice verse 12: *“But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands,”*—that is, “held up his hands”—*“the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek...”*—that’s just a fancy way of saying, “He whooped him”—*“Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword”* (Exodus 17:8–13).

Now I want to talk to you about four principles of victory, and I want to talk about some Canaan conquest. Now you might right now say, “Well, I’ve come out of Egypt, but I surely haven’t gone into Canaan. I have been dunked in the desert.” Well, let me tell you how you can change your life sincerely now—sincerely—from the monotonous to the momentous, from failure to victory; and before you get to heaven, you can bring heaven to earth. I’m talking to you about absolute truth: truth that the Bible teaches, and that I have experienced in my own life. There are four things I want to lay on your heart. And I’ve got to do it very quickly; and so you listen in a hurry.

I. Receive a Gracious Provision: Salvation

Number one: You need to receive a gracious provision—receive a gracious provision—and that provision is salvation. Now, go back, if you will, to the first verse of this chapter: *“And all the congregation of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the LORD, and pitched”*—that is, they “set up their tents”—*“in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses,”*—they scolded him—*“and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do you tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst?”* Friend, I’ve been there, to this place. You talk about a barren, desolate place: it is indeed a barren and a desolate and a dry place. *“And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go.”* Now Moses had a rod that was a miraculous rod; we’re going to say more about it later on. *“Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel”* (Exodus 17:1–6).

Now I want you to get the picture. They’re out there in the barren land. They’re dying of thirst. And then Moses says, “God, what shall I do?” God says, “You take the elders of Israel, and you take a rock; you take a rod, and you go to this rock, and you with that

rod smite that rock; and when you do, water will come from the rock.” Did you ever try to get water from a rock? “Water will come from that rock.”

Now, what is all of this about? Well, I’m not being fanciful when I tell you this is a glorious illustration; though it literally happened, it’s a glorious illustration of our salvation. Put in your margin—put in your margin—1 Corinthians 10 and verse 4. Now, remember, I told you, in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 11, the Bible says, “*All these things happened for examples.*” Remember? “*All these things happened for examples*” (1 Corinthians 10:11). First Corinthians 10, verse 4—the Bible says, “*And [they] did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ*” (1 Corinthians 10:4). That rock pictures the Lord Jesus Christ: the Rock of ages, smitten for us. Isaiah 53, verse 4, says, “*We did esteem him stricken, smitten of God*” (Isaiah 53:4). You see, Jesus, the Rock of ages, was smitten for us; and because Jesus was smitten for us, out of His riven side, came forth water. And that water represents the Holy Spirit, which is the water of life. And because the rock was smitten so long ago, when Jesus hung in agony and blood upon that cross, and He died—our Rock died for us—out of His side has come that refreshment, that Holy Spirit that is in me right now—in you right now. Thank God for the blessed, precious Holy Spirit.

I want to ask you a question, my friend. If you’re here today, and you’ve never received Jesus, are you thirsty? Do you know—do you know—that there’s something missing in your life? If not something, it is someone. What you’re thirsting for is Jesus: I can tell you that. You’ll never be satisfied, you’ll never feel contentment, until you know the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have an evangelist friend of mine who was on an airplane one time, Brother Mark—and, you know, it just aggravates me when these stewardesses come along and try to sell us booze on those airplanes. But that’s part of their job. And this gal came to my friend Mike and said, “Sir, would you like a drink?” He said, “No ma’am.” He said, “I had a drink about twenty years ago that satisfied me completely.” She said, “You did? Must have been some kind of drink!” He said, “It was.” She said, “Tell me about it.” He said, “You serve everybody else, come, and I’ll tell you about it.” She served everybody that booze, then came, buckled herself alongside this brother, Mike, and said, “Tell me about it.” And, friend, he did. He told her about that drink, that Rock of ages, that out of His side has come forth that water of life, and Jesus said, “If you’re thirsty—if you’re thirsty—come to me and drink” (John 7:37).

I wonder, are you thirsty today? Are you thirsty? You say, “God knows I’m empty.” I didn’t ask you that. My car’s been empty many times. It’s never once been thirsty. Are you thirsty? Do you want more? Thank God for the smitten Rock.

II. Realize a Grand Purpose

So, the first thing, if you want to live a life of victory—number one—you must receive a gracious provision, which is salvation. Number two: You must realize a grand purpose, because being saved is wonderful, but God has more—much more—for you. You see, God’s plan for His people was not merely that they come out of Egypt and go into the wilderness of Sinai; God’s plan for His people was that they go into the land of Canaan. I’m not talking about pie in the sky; I’m talking about victory right now. God brought them out, that He might bring them in.

Now you’re in Exodus chapter 17. Turn to Exodus chapter 13. Just go back just a couple of chapters, and look with me in verse 3: *“And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt...”*—just underscore that phrase—*“ye came out from Egypt,”*—underscore that—*“out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out”*—underscore that—*“from this place: there shall no leavened bread be eaten. This day came ye out in the month Abib. And it shall be when the LORD shall bring thee into...”*—underscore that now: *“bring thee into.”* Notice He brought you out, that He might bring you in—*“bring thee into the land of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee,”*—now, watch it—*“a land flowing with milk and honey, that thou shalt keep this service in this month. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast to the LORD. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days; and there shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters. And thou shalt shew thy son in that day,”*—notice *“in that day”*—*“saying, This is done because of that which the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt”* (Exodus 13:3–8).

Now, what’s all this saying? God says, “Look, I brought you out, that I might bring you in.” Now God says, “When you get into the land,”—notice, the land flowing with milk and honey—“then I want you to celebrate; then I want you to keep the feast of the Passover. I want you to keep the feast of unleavened bread. I want you to celebrate. And when you celebrate the feast, your son’s going to come to you, and your son’s going to say, ‘Dad, what does all this mean?’ And you can tell your son, ‘Son, we are celebrating what God did for us when God brought us out of Egypt and God brought us into this land.’”

I want to ask you a question. Why is it that the devil is getting the kids of the best families in our churches today? I’m talking about people who are faithful, Brother Mark: people who sing in the choir, people who take up the offering, people who teach Sunday School, people who love God, people who are saved, people who are tithing, people who live clean lives; and yet their kids, many times, are into drugs, won’t come to church, are running with the wrong crowd—maybe sleeping around. How does that

happen? Well, I think it's a complicated thing, and we can't put everybody in one category. But I'll tell you, one reason that a lot of it happens is this—and you listen to me: There are people—and some of them sitting in this congregation, this morning; most Baptists that I know—who have come out of Egypt, but they've never gone into Canaan—they've never gone into Canaan.

Now you know what they had in the wilderness to eat? Do you know what they ate in the wilderness? Manna. Do you know how long they ate it? Forty years. Now manna was not meant to satisfy them; it was only meant to sustain them until they got into the land that flowed with milk and honey, oil and corn, and figs and pomegranates. It was only meant as a temporary food. They were only to spend a little time in the wilderness. They were to come out of Egypt, and they were to go to Canaan. But because of their unbelief, they're going around and around and around in the desert, not believing God. They've come out of Egypt, but they've never gone into Canaan; but they're in the wilderness.

Now in that time—forty years—there were children born in that time. Let's imagine a kid: he's fourteen years of age; he's born in the wilderness; his parents have come out of Egypt, but he's a wilderness boy. He never says, "Mama, what's for breakfast?" He knows what's for breakfast: manna. He never says, "Mama, what's for lunch?" He knows what's for lunch: manna. He never says, "Mama, what's for supper?" He knows what's for supper: manna. He doesn't say, "Mama, what are we going to have tomorrow?" He knows what we're going to have tomorrow: manna, manna, manna, manna, manna! Manna in the evening! Manna at suppertime! Manna all the time! Just manna, manna, manna: that's all the kid gets. Now, suppose they've decided they're going to celebrate there in the wilderness. Now, remember, God says, in this passage, "You celebrate; you celebrate in the land, not in the wilderness. You don't have a lot to celebrate in the wilderness."

Now, suppose, there they are: the father sitting on a hot rock, the son sitting on a cactus, and the father says, "We're going to have the feast of Passover." The son says, "Well, Dad, what are we doing?" He says, "We're celebrating, son." Now, remember, this kid has heard sermons about Canaan. That's all he's heard: just sermons about Canaan. He's never seen Canaan. He might have heard Pastor Rogers preach about Canaan, but he's not seen Canaan. His parents are not living in Canaan; his parents are not living the victorious Spirit-filled life; they're not living in victory. All his parents are saying—they've come out of Egypt, but they've never come into Canaan—and they say, "Now, son, we're celebrating." He looks around. He says, "We're what?" A rattlesnake goes by. "What?" Sun is broiling. The tumbleweed is coming along. "What are we doing, Dad?" "Oh, son, we're celebrating what God has done for us." He said, "Dad, don't you think it's about time we got back to Egypt; I mean, where there was fish, and garlic, and

leeks, and melons, and fun? All we're doing out here is being dumped in the desert."

I'm going to tell you, that's why the devil's getting a lot of our kids of good people. They have come out, but they've never gone in. They have never learned how to live in victory before their children. And their children know that their parents somehow are sincere, but they feel like they have just simply missed it.

Now, friend, God brought us out that God might bring us in; and if you have been one of those simply dumped in the desert, you have to understand, not only must you receive a gracious provision—salvation—but you must realize a grand purpose, which is victory that God has for you.

III. Respect a Grievous Problem: the Flesh

Now, here's the third thing: You must respect a grievous problem. There is a grievous problem. And what is that problem? Look, if you will again—go back to our text now in Exodus 17, and look, if you will, in verse 8: "*Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel*" (Exodus 17:8). What is Amalek? Who is Amalek? Amalek was a king, but he was the grandson of Esau. And who was Esau? Well, Esau, you remember, was the man who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. I don't have time to get into it, but Esau was a profane man. Esau sold his spiritual things for a bowl of stew; and then he was more interested in the present than in the future, the material than the eternal, the things of the flesh, not the things of the Spirit. And, therefore, the Bible calls Esau, in Hebrews chapter 12, "*a profane person...who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright*" (Hebrews 12:16).

And the Bible teaches, in Malachi, that God has a perpetual warfare declared upon Esau. Listen to this scripture—Malachi 1, verses 1 through 4: "*The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever*" (Malachi 1:1–4).

Now, what's God talking about? God, here, is not talking about little baby Esau when He says, "I hate Esau." He's talking about a whole nation. He's talking about the Edomites. And He's not just talking about people of the flesh, and people in physical bodies. He's talking about a principle—and that principle is the flesh. Now it gets a little complicated here, so pay attention. Amalek is the grandson of Esau. He is a part of that category of persons that God says, "I have a perpetual war with." What does Amalek represent? Amalek represents what all of us have in us—and it is the flesh. Say that

word *flesh*—“flesh.” Say, “my flesh”: that’s your enemy.

Remember I said I had a church member I have a lot of difficulty with? Friend, there’s an Amalek in you: he’s the grandson of Esau, and you have this. Put down in your Bibles Romans chapter 8, verses 6 and 7: *“To be carnally minded”—that word carnally means, “fleshly minded”—“is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Romans 8:6–7). And then Galatians 5, verse 17: *“The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh”* (Galatians 5:17). There is that principle that will come against you: the flesh. You say, “Well, I’m over here in Egypt. I’m going to give my heart to Jesus Christ today. I’m going to get saved. I believe on Christ.” And you give your heart to Jesus; and, as soon as you drink of that water, as soon as that Rock is smitten for you, as soon as that water comes to refresh you, then the Bible says, *“Then came Amalek”* (Exodus 17:8). Immediately, when you come out of Egypt, the flesh comes—Amalek comes—to say, “You are going no further. You are not going to get into Canaan.” *“Then came Amalek.”* Deuteronomy says, “He smote the hindmost of thee, when you were weak and faint” (Deuteronomy 25:17–18). God will test us in our strongest point. The flesh will attack us in our weakest point to keep us from entering into Canaan.

IV. Remember a Glorious Principle: the Victory Is God-Given

Now, how are we going to have victory, not over the world, not over the devil, but that internal enemy, the flesh? We all have that enemy with us day by day. All right, I’ve got to fast-forward here. Here’s the next thing I want you to notice; and, very quickly, if you would, you must remember a glorious—a glorious—principle. What is the principle? Look, if you will again, beginning in verse 9 of this chapter: *“And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun”* (Exodus 17:9–12).

What is the glorious principle? Here’s the glorious principle: the victory is God-given. How am I going to overcome the old Adrian, that church member that I have the most difficulty with—how am I going to overcome him? By rededicating my life? By struggling? No! There is a perpetual warfare. That flesh is in me, in you; and when you get saved, the flesh is not eradicated. But, thank God, you can have victory, and the

victory is God-given.

God said, “Moses, you take that rod.” Now, remember, it was the rod of God; it represents the power of God. It was that rod that opened up the Red Sea. It was that rod that smote the rock and sent forth water, and the rod that led them out of bondage. The rod that led them out of barrenness now is the rod that is going to lead them in battle. He says, “Take that rod; go up to the mountaintop; hold that rod up; and when you hold that rod up, Amalek will be defeated.”

Listen. The victory—the victory over Amalek, over your flesh—is a God-given victory. The Bible says, “Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of your flesh” (Galatians 5:16). If I’ve learned one thing in all of my Christian life, it is this, precious friend: that holiness *is not the way to* Christ; *Christ is the way to holiness*. Now I’m not just playing with words. Listen. He does not say, “If you will not walk in the flesh, then you can walk in the Spirit.” He doesn’t say that. He says, “Walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

I’m telling you that the victory over your flesh is a God-given victory: that’s the only way that you’re going to come out of Egypt, through the wilderness, into Canaan, because there’s an Amalek within you that stands against you to try to keep you from living in victory. But, thank God! Hallelujah! Praise God there is a victory when you take the rod of God, which is the Word of God, the power of God, the Spirit of God, and you hold that high. Now that’s the reason we need to pray one for another and help one another.

Now I come back to what the whole morning is about. Friend, we need to hold up one another’s hands, because the victory is God-given. The victory is won on the mountain, is realized in the valley. Oh, there’s a battle! You can’t just roll over and not get in the battle. But the battle is the Lord’s.

Having said all that, I want to say this. I thank God for this dear man right here, Bob Sorrell, who has helped me to hold my hands up high. The victories that we’ve had at Bellevue Baptist Church: do you think we strut, when I tell you what’s happened since 1979? Do you think we say, “Look what we did”? I tell you, we’d be sheer fools—any of us, all of us. That’s God! That’s God: the God who has given us the victories individually. It is a God thing. He is the One who’s had His hand upon Bellevue Baptist Church. And may we ever hold high the rod of God, the power of God, and understand that this church will continue to move on as we hold it high.

You know what Aaron was? He was a priest. He represents prayer. Hur, who held up the hands of Moses, his name means, “whiteness” or “purity.” Purity and prayer—that’s it: holding up the hands of a people of God. The victory is God-given.

Conclusion

You know what we're going to do next Sunday? Well, tonight, we're going to celebrate this man who's been holding my hands for twenty years. We're going to do that. I'll tell you what we're going to do next Sunday. Next Sunday night, God willing, we're going to break ground on our Fellowship Building. Do you know why? Because when we came out here, we called this our Canaan: "claiming our Canaan." Well, we had a lot of work to do, but when you get into Canaan, friend, that's the time for the fellowship. That's the time—not that you lay down the sword and pick up a fork, oh no! Some of the sweetest times that Jesus ever had with His disciples were times when they fellowshiped together. And we're going to enjoy the victory that God has given us; we're going to break ground on the Fellowship Building. This building we call the Praise Building. The other building behind us, the activities building, is the Grace Building. The building we put our little children in over here is the Love Building. And we're going to build, starting next Sunday, the Fellowship Building. Won't that be wonderful? Amen! Glory to God! Amen! Glory to God!

Friend, you receive that provision, that salvation. You remember God's purpose: that is Canaan. You recognize a problem: that's the flesh. But then, you believe a principle: and that is, if we walk in the Spirit, we'll not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Going on to Victory

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 17:8–16

Outline

Introduction

- I. Israelites Come Out of Egypt
- II. Israelites Enter the Land of Canaan
 - A. Three Enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil
- III. Israelites are Victorious

Conclusion

Introduction

We are going to think tonight about “Going on through to Victory.” And I really didn’t even have a title for this message, and I think that’s just what I’ll use. By the way, what’s the title of that song? “I Made up My Mind.” Good, I made up my mind that it ought to be “I’m Going on to Victory.” And that’s what we’re going to be preaching about and speaking about tonight: “Going on to Victory in Christ.” I believe, if there’s anything we need, its victory—victory as Christians. I believe there ought to be something about our lives that would cause those who see our lives to want to be like us, to say, “I want what that individual has.” And I wonder, is there anything about you that would make your neighbor want to know the Jesus that you know?

Now, open your Bibles, please, in the Old Testament to Exodus chapter 17. Now we’re going to do some study tonight, and it might be good, if you have a pen or pencil, to take a few notes. We’re going to be preaching a little bit about the wilderness, and I’m certain, when we’re finished, that we’ll leave some in the wilderness. But I hope that others will get the message tonight. I’m going to take a calculated risk and preach a message that will be a little bit more involved than normal, but I believe that many of you will be interested, and I believe that many of you will get a blessing.

I. Israelites Come Out of Egypt

Now the scripture that we’re about to read takes place in the life of the Hebrew children, the Israelites, when they have just come out of Egypt and they’re going on to victory, on to the Promised Land. Now, if you listened to me preach very much, you know that in the Old Testament, in the life of these Israelites, God gives us a wonderful picture of the Christian life. The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians the tenth chapter, that all

these things happened unto them for examples unto us (1 Corinthians 10:11). And we can see a parallel in the Christian's life in the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites.

When the Israelites were in Egypt, they represented and pictured and symbolized the lost man away from God in the land of slavery. Pharaoh is a picture of the devil, a cruel, hard, ruthless taskmaster. They came out of Egypt and into the wilderness. The person that has come out of Egypt has been redeemed by blood. But when they came out of Egypt, they went into a barren land, the wilderness that lay between them and the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey. And when an individual is saved, frequently, all too many times, rather than going into Canaan, he goes into a wilderness experience. He's saved, he has come out of Egypt; but he's not yet all that God wants him to be. He has not yet entered into the Promised Land, the land of Canaan.

II. Israelites Enter the Land of Canaan

Now the land of Canaan is a picture of the Spirit-filled life. The Bible teaches that every believer ought to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It's not enough just to have the Holy Spirit abiding within us. *We need to be filled with the Spirit: not just to have Him as resident, but to have Him as president; not just have him to come in and abide, but have Him come in and preside.* And so Egypt is a picture of the lost man. The wilderness between Egypt and Canaan is a picture of the carnal Christian, the carnal man. And Canaan is a picture of the spiritual man or the Spirit-filled, victorious Christian.

Now these Israelites in the scripture that I'm about to read had come out of Egypt, but they had not yet gone into Canaan. With that in mind, we're starting in Exodus chapter 17 and reading verse 8: *"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."* God doesn't like Amalek. Listen to what He says in verse 15 and 16: *"And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: for he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation"* (Exodus 17:8–16).

Who in the world is Amalek? Amalek was a king who lived in the wilderness. And

this king came and withstood Israel, and stood in Israel's way, and tried to keep the Israelites from entering into Canaan. He is the symbol of the flesh that keeps us from being filled with the Spirit.

A. **Three Enemies: the world, the flesh and the devil**

Now you'll find out that in the Christian life you will have three enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. When you're unsaved, your enemy is the world. That's represented by Egypt. When you come out of Egypt, then your enemy is the flesh, when you're in the wilderness. What do I mean by *the flesh*? I don't mean my body. Oh, that's in a way involved. I don't mean my skin, my blood, my bones, my corpuscles. That's not what the Bible means when it uses the term *flesh*. Words in the Bible have a different meaning than they ordinarily have. There's a spiritual language that you can only learn by studying the Bible.

Now when I was in high school, I had to study Latin: "*amo, amas, amat.*" And then when I got into college, I had to study French: "Je suis un cours de français monsieur." And then, when I got out of college, I had to study Greek, and Hebrew, and some other things. And I can't say much in English, much less these other languages. I think kids today ought to study English. I think all teenagers ought to have a language other than their own. And we studied all of these languages. But how can you learn a language? There's only one way to really learn a language, and that's to get in it, and live in it, and to speak it.

Now Greek is hard—real hard. I understand where that saying came from, "It's all Greek to me," because Greek was all Greek to me. For every rule that you learn, there are about a dozen exceptions. And so we had to study to learn these things. But the amazing thing to me is this: and it's almost unbelievable, but did you know that over in Greece little four-year-old kids speak Greek? That's right! It's amazing! And here I was a college man, and I couldn't learn it. Little kids, and they just rattle it off. Well, how do they learn it? How do the little children learn Greek? They live with it. Now, how are you going to learn what terms in the Bible like *the flesh* and *the spirit* and other things mean? You're going to have to get into this Bible and live with it. There's no easy way to learn Greek. There's no easy way to learn the sweet, wonderful things of the Spirit, but as you live with the Word of God and you learn that these words have different meanings.

Now *the flesh* stands for the principle in us that is opposed to the spirit. Not just the blood, the bones, the corpuscles, but a fleshly principal. That means, "that which is over against the things of God." *The flesh, the old man, the old Adam, the old nature*: all of these things mean more or less the same.

Now this king, Amalek, is a symbol of the flesh. In the wilderness, your enemy is the

self or the flesh. Now if the devil cannot keep you from being saved, if he cannot keep you from coming out of Egypt, he wants to do everything he can do to keep you from going into Canaan. And the thing that hinders you from going into Canaan is the flesh, the desires, the lust of your flesh. The Bible says very plainly that “the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh” (Galatians 5:17).

Read in Galatians 5, verse 17, with me. Stay over there in Exodus 17, but open your Bibles to the Book of Galatians and get this verse in Galatians 5, verse 17: “*For the flesh...*”—not your body now, but this principle—“*the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*” (Galatians 5:17). If you’re failing in your Christian life, it’s because your flesh has lusted against your spirit so that you cannot do the things that you would. And Amalek is a picture of the flesh. I’m going to prove that in just a moment.

You say, “Brother Rogers, you say this means this, and that means that, and this means this. How do you know? Do you just grab these things out of the hat?” No, the Bible teaches that Amalek is a picture of the flesh. All of these things beautifully fit together. And when you find out that Amalek, who withstood Israel, was a type or picture of the flesh, then you’re going to also find out how to get victory over Amalek so you can go all the way into Canaan.

Now you need to be in Canaan; you need to get out of the desert. If you’re still in the desert, if you’re still in the wilderness, you’re on a desert dying. And what did they have to eat in the desert? Who can tell me? Manna. That’s right. They ate manna all the time. Look in Exodus 16, verse 15. We’re going to preach a missionary sermon tonight. We’re going to take a text and go everywhere preaching the gospel. So you turn right now to Exodus 16, verse 15: “*And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat*” (Exodus 16:15). At first it was exciting to them. It was thrilling to them to eat this manna. God gave the manna to sustain them, and it was thrilling and exciting. And the manna represents the Holy Spirit that only a believer can receive once he’s come out of Egypt. But the manna at first was exciting, and at first it was very sweet.

Notice Exodus 16, verse 31: “*And the house of Israel called the name thereof Manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey*” (Exodus 16:31). Boy, doesn’t that sound good? Wafers made with honey? And it was so exciting and it was so sweet they just giggled, and they laughed, and they stuffed themselves on manna, and they said, “Oh, manna is the best thing in the world.” But, dear friend, they got tired of it after a while. As a matter of fact, they got sick of it; they were bored with it. It became dull and tasteless, because it had in it the taste of

honey; but it was only meant to whet their appetite for the land that flowed with milk and honey.

Do you know that these people ate manna for forty years? Manna in the morning, manna in the evening, manna at suppertime—for forty years. A little boy could tell you what he's going to have fourteen years from now for breakfast: manna. No matter how mama fixed it, it was still manna. Manna, manna, manna! They were sick of it. They got tired of it. Notice Numbers 11, verse 6—here's what they said: *“But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes”* (Numbers 11:6). Yuck! Manna, nothing but manna. They were sick of it. You'd be sick of it too, if you ate it for forty years, three times a day.

But at first it was so sweet; at first it was so exciting. Now, what happens? When the individual first comes out of Egypt, and he starts feeding on that bread from heaven, it's thrilling. “Glory to God! I'm saved!” they say. “Wonderful! How sweet it is to know Jesus!” But they stay in the wilderness. They never are filled with the Spirit. They never do go all the way for Jesus and press on through to victory. The same thing, day in, day out, day in, day out, dumped in the desert on a desert diet; and they're sick of it. Do you know why there are so many dull and boring sermons? Don't you say *amen*. Because there are dull and boring preachers.

Do you know why there are so many dull and boring Sunday School lessons? Because there are so many bored Sunday School teachers. They've been eating manna, manna, manna; and they're sick of it. Their souls are dried up, and they don't have anything to give, because they don't have anything in their own hearts. Sunday School lessons and sermons are just, well, they're just bland; they're boring.

One man came to church, and they announced a meeting of the board. He came. He said, “There's nobody any more bored than I am.”

Well now, listen. Is this true in your life? Was there a time when it was exciting and thrilling and wonderful to be a Christian, and now you have just settled down; you're in the wilderness, and there's no excitement, there's no joy? You look at other people and they talk about, “Oh, isn't it sweet to know Jesus and wonderful?” and you say, “I'd wish they'd get that sick grin off their face and quit putting on; I know they're just as miserable as I am, and it couldn't be all that wonderful; and all these silly testimonies, I don't believe all that stuff,” because you're seeing things through your eyes, and you're not experiencing what some people are experiencing.

This manna sustained them. And God will sustain you in the wilderness. Once you've come out of Egypt, you're His. But it never really satisfied them. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 8, verses 2 and 3: *“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his*

commandments, or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deuteronomy 8:2–3).

God fed them, but they were never satisfied. They stayed hungry and ate all the time. This is true of the wilderness Christian. At first it’s exciting, at first it’s sweet; then it’s dull, then it’s boring, and there’s a hunger. If that’s true in your life, God is trying to tell you that you need to go on. You need to do exactly what this song says, and “press on through to victory.” They didn’t like to live with manna, but they couldn’t live without it. And they were just like so many who are in the world today who are saved, but they’re a carnal Christian.

Now Moses was pastoring this bunch. He was their pastor. And Moses made a mistake, the mistake that I don’t want to make. Moses knew how to lead them out of Egypt, but he didn’t know how to lead them into Canaan. Moses was a great evangelist, but he wasn’t much when it came to feeding the sheep and helping them to go into Canaan. He’s like many a pastor who knows how to get people out but he doesn’t know how to get them in. And so these people wandered around in the wilderness. They went around as Moses pastored this church for forty years; and at the end of forty years they were sick of him, and he was sick of them. They said, “Moses, yuck!” He said, “These people, wow!” And they were complaining and murmuring about him, and he was going to God about them. That’s a shame. But I’ll tell you I preach revival meetings in a lot of churches. I get in the church, and the people come, and they start telling me about “the pastor, the pastor, the pastor”; and I get with the pastor, and he starts telling me about “these people, these people, these people.” Well, that’s exactly the same as it was for Moses and these people.

Notice in Numbers the twentieth chapter, verses 2 through 5: *“And there was no water for the congregation: and they gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the LORD! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there? And wherefore have ye made us to come up out of Egypt, to bring us in unto this evil place? it is no place of seed, or of figs, or of vines, or of pomegranates; neither is there any water to drink” (Numbers 20:2–5).*

Now, notice he had pastored them for thirty-eight years, and they pointed the finger at him, and they said, “You brought us to an evil place.” That’s so much of a shame. What a heartbreak to pastor people for thirty-eight years and to have them sick of him and him to be sick of them! There’s many a pastor who’s left his congregation and gone to another church, they say, for fatigue and health. The people were sick and tired of

him. And I think there are plenty of men that have left because they were sick and tired of the people. That ought not to be. Churches ought not to be worshiping in the wilderness, feeding on dull and boring manna. They ought to be over in Canaan. They ought to be filled with the Spirit. They ought to be living the victorious life, feeding on milk and honey, and figs and pomegranates, and all that the Lord has promised for us who know the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what God wants for us, and this is what the devil does not want for us. And so the minute these Israelites came out of Egypt and headed toward Canaan, then came Amalek, the Bible says, and stood against them (Exodus 17:8).

Now, go back to Exodus 17 for just a moment. With that in mind, I think this will make a little bit more sense. Who was Amalek, anyway? And why do I know that Amalek is a picture of the flesh? And why did God say, why did God swear, that He'll have war with Amalek from generation to generation? God has a perpetual war with Amalek, an unending war with Amalek. What is there about Amalek that God doesn't like? Amalek stands for a principle that God hates; and that principle is the flesh, because the flesh wars against the Spirit, and God loves the Spirit, and God hates the flesh.

Now, who was this fellow Amalek? He was Esau's grandson. Well, who was Esau? You're going to find out that Esau is the progenitor of a whole family, a whole tribe, that God hates very much. Turn to Genesis 36, verse 12, for just a moment, and we'll find out who Esau was, because Amalek was his grandson. And the Bible says, *"And Timna was concubine to Eliphaz Esau's son; and she bare to Eliphaz Amalek: these were the sons of Adah Esau's wife"* (Genesis 36:12). And so that just simply makes Amalek Esau's grandson.

Well, who was Esau? And, what's so bad about Esau that Amalek has to be such a bad guy if he's Esau's grandson? Well, turn back to Genesis 25 and we'll see what God says about Esau. Genesis 25, verse 27—now I told you we'd lose you if you don't stay up with us: *"And the boys grew: and Esau was a cunning hunter, a man of the field; and Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents. And Isaac loved Esau, because he did eat of his venison: but Rebekah loved Jacob. And Jacob sod pottage:"*—that just simply means he cooked stew—*"and Esau came from the field, and he was faint:"*—that means he was hungry—*"and Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint: therefore was his name called Edom. And Jacob said, Sell me this day thy birthright. And Esau said, Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?"*—"I'm so hungry I'm about to die. I'm not interested in a birthright; give me a bowl of stew"—*"And Jacob said, Swear to me this day; and he sware unto him: and he sold his birthright unto Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau*

despised his birthright" (Genesis 25:27–34).

You're going to find out that Esau did something that God never forgave him for. Esau did something that caused God's displeasure upon him: not only His displeasure upon him, but His displeasure upon all of his descendants from generation to generation. And what was it? He despised his birthright. God says, "Jacob have I loved. Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13). Now, why did God despise Esau? It was because Esau despised spiritual things. You'd have to understand these two boys. Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau; they were twins, but Esau was born first and then Jacob. Esau, being the eldest son, should have had the spiritual birthright, the spiritual blessing, the prerogatives that went with it that were handed down. But Esau was a great big man's man. He loved to hunt, like Doyle Carlton, and he was just a great big man's man. But Jacob wasn't that way.

Jacob was a little ol' sissy. He was his mother's pet. Esau had muscles, and he was covered with hair all over; looked like almost like a full-grown baboon—no relation to Doyle. And then Jacob, he was smooth-skinned, just like a fresh peeled banana. And he was tied to his mother's apron strings. He stayed around in the kitchen and helped his mama cook. He didn't care about hunting. He didn't care about the woods. He didn't care about anything else. Really, if we were to look at him, most of us men would say, "I'd rather be Esau than Jacob." He was such a sissy that his mama didn't even let him date a girl till he was seventy years old. That's right. You read it in the Bible. He didn't even have a girlfriend till he was seventy. And his name, *Jacob*, means, "twister, cheat, conniver, supplanter." He was a terrible fellow. Everything ugly, everything sickly, everything weakly we think about in modern terms, this fellow Jake had it.

And Esau's a great big, hairy-chested, barrel-chested, muscular woodsman: the fellow who got out and did things for himself, a real go-getter. He's the kind that everybody would say, "Well, if there's anybody God could do something with, it would have to be a fellow like Esau. Boy, if we could just get Esau in our church, we'd really have something." But God looked at the two brothers, and God said, "One I love, and the other I hate." And we think that God perhaps has made a mistake, because He's picked out the unlovely one to love and the fine one to hate. But, you see, God saw something in Jacob that he didn't see in Esau.

What was the difference between Jacob and Esau? Esau was the proud, vain, self-sufficient man. Esau did not see his need of God. He was strong in his own right. He knew how to go out in the woods and get what he wanted. He was a practical man. He was a pragmatist. He did not need God. He didn't need the church. He didn't need Sunday School. That was kid stuff. That was for women and children and men like his little weakly, sickly brother, Jacob. "Sure you can have the birthright and all that goes with it. Give me a bowl of beans." When God saw that, when God saw this man's

arrogance, God said, "That's the principle that I'll hate right on down to the end the time."

"But," you say, "what did God love about Jacob? We can see why God hated Esau. But why did God love Jacob?" Friend, listen. God did not love Jacob for what he was; God loved Jacob for what he could be. God at least saw in Jacob a desire for spiritual things. Jacob was wrong, and you read in the Bible where he was a cheater; he did all kinds of things. You read how Jacob fooled his father Isaac by pretending he was Esau and covering his arms with hair; and he did all kinds of things. He was just a regular crook. And yet God loved him, because, even though Jacob was a despicable person, there was no one who despised Jacob more than Jacob himself. Jacob knew what he was. He wanted to change. He just didn't seem to know how. But at least one thing he realized: there was some value in something spiritual. And he, even though he went about to get it the wrong way, at least he wanted it. He said, "God, I want that birthright." And God didn't love Jacob for what he was but because of what he could make out of him. God looked at Saul, and He saw Paul. And we see ol' Jacob wrestling with God at Penuel.

Now I've often heard sermons of Jacob wrestling with the Lord. You've heard sermons about Jacob, you know, that night when Esau was coming after Jacob. Finally Esau had found out that Jacob had put one over on him. Esau didn't want the birthright nearly so bad as he wanted to get even. He's going to mop up on that little twerp, and he was coming after Jacob. Now Jacob, he was scared to death, because here comes Esau with an army of people; and Jacob knows he's about ready to meet him. It was that night that Jacob spent the night in prayer and he wrestled with God. The Angel of the Lord wrestled with Jacob. Jacob, whose mind was always working, he was a conniver; he was a typical Israelite.

This is what he did. He said, "Now Esau's coming after me. Let me figure this thing out." He said, "Well, in the first place, I want to get all my goods together," so he divided everything up. He said, "You take some camels and go over here; and you take something and go over here; and you take some clothes over here. Spread everything out. Don't put all our eggs in one basket. If he hits here, we'll get away with this." Then he said, "We'll soften him up." So he got some gifts, and he started sending them on ahead, and said, "You run out and meet him, and give him this gift; and you run out and meet him, and give him this gift." And then, after he did all of that, he said, "Now it's time to pray." You see, he took care of everything else, and then he went and got with the Lord to pray. That was the night that the Angel of the Lord came and wrestled with him.

Now, like I say, we've heard a lot of messages about Jacob wrestling with God, but not many about God wrestling with Jacob. God was trying to do something with Jacob; and He wrestled all night with Jacob, and He could not prevail. And Jacob knew that

Esau was coming. He knew he needed help with God, but, you see, ol' Jake was smart; he had a secret weapon that he was relying on. He hadn't told anybody about his secret weapon. If everything else failed, he still had a secret weapon. And so, about the time of the breaking of the day, the Lord said to Himself, "Oh, I hate to do this to Jacob; but I've got to do it. I've got to teach him a lesson. I love him so much." And God reached down to the hull of his thigh and touched the hull of his thigh and crippled him. That was his secret weapon. If everything else failed, at least he could pick 'em up and put 'em down. He could run. And if Esau came, brother, at least he had those strong shepherd legs. He could run. And now he couldn't even run. And here comes Esau—and he's limping. Oh, now there's just one thing for him to do. That's just to completely trust God. God's been wanting him to do this for a long time. Now there's nothing else he can do. So then he grabs hold and says, "I'll not let you go, unless you bless me" (Genesis 32:26).

You see, God's been wanting to bring many of us to the end of ourselves for a long time. We'll stop depending upon self and start depending upon Him; and sometimes He has to cripple us in order to do it. And so God says to him, "All right, what is your name?" And he says, "My name is Jacob." Now, do you think God wanted to know what his name was? God already knew what his name was. God just wanted him to know it. The word *Jacob* means, "cheat, conniver, twister, supplanter." He said, "That's right, Jake. I just wanted to hear you say it: 'My name is Jacob.' All right, you finally admitted it. From now on, your name will be Israel, prince with God; for you've prevailed." And God gave him a new name. God made something out of him. That night he was changed. And he became a prince with God. No longer a cheat, no longer a conniver, no longer a crook; but he finally came to the place where he depended completely upon God, and said, "I'll not let you go, unless you bless me." That's why God loved Jacob: not for what he was, but God saw what He could make out of him.

And why did God hate Esau? Because Esau was a man who despised spiritual things: Sunday School stuff, kid's stuff, women's stuff, children's stuff: "Not me, brother. I don't need to go down to any church and listen to any preacher preach; and I don't need to read any Bible or anything else." That kind of arrogance God hates. This stands for the flesh: the principle that is a war against God, that does not depend upon God.

Now Amalek was Esau's grandson, and therefore he's a perfect principle of the flesh that came to stand against Israel when they came out of Egypt. And just as you come out of Egypt, just as you get saved, and you start to go on toward Canaan, the flesh will stand against you. Esau, Amalek, and all of the little grandchildren will come and stand against you to keep you from entering into Canaan.

III. Israelites are Victorious

Now, how was victory over Amalek won? Let me show you how victory over Amalek

was won. Would you turn to Exodus 17, where we started—I'm reading verses 8 through 10: *"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill"* (Exodus 17:8–10).

Now here, everyone else is going down the valley, and Moses is going up on the mountain. I can hear someone say, "Moses, Moses, wait a minute! Come back down! There's a time to pray, and there's a time to fight. Now this is the time to fight! Don't you go sneaking up off the hill on the excuse you're going to prayer meeting! We've got a fight on our hands! Now you come on back down here and help us! We need you to fight." I could hear Moses as he says, "Friend, I am fighting."

And let me tell you something, my dear friend. The real battle is won in the place of prayer. And you never forget it. Oh, we think the battle is won here in the auditorium when we preach. It's not. We just simply come here on Sunday to pick up the victories that we've won on our knees before we ever get here. The battle against the flesh is not won the battlefield; it's won on the mountaintop. This Bible says, as long as Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; but when Moses' hands went down, Amalek prevailed. What is God teaching? God is teaching that the victory over the flesh is not won by striving, but it is won by faith in Almighty God.

Would you like to overcome your flesh? Would you like to overcome your carnality? Would you like to overcome the smoking and the cursing and the jealousy and the bitterness and the hatred and the coldness and the indifference and the shallowness and the dryness and the fruitlessness in your life? Would you like to overcome it? Let me tell you how you'll overcome it: not by trying; not by saying, "I'm going to do better"; not by clinching your fist, and gritting your teeth, and making some great big resolutions to Almighty God. You'll never defeat Amalek that way. The only way that you'll have victory over the flesh is in the place of prayer by faith. As long as Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed. *"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith"* (1 John 5:4).

Listen. We don't pray for the victory; we pray from the victory. The victory is already ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. And the victory is never won; it's always received. "Thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). You'll never go out to win a victory over the flesh. You can't do it. You just simply receive the victory by faith. Now that may make sense to you. It may not. But if you want to live the Spirit-filled life, if you want to get out of the wilderness and into Canaan, if you want to overcome Amalek, then, my dear brother, you quit trying and start trusting. You remember, as long as Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed.

You remember that victory over Amalek is never won; it is always received by faith. The way to enter into Canaan is not by striving, not by trying, not by warring, but by trusting and receiving what the Lord has done for us.

I hope that I'm not just saying something that's bouncing off you, because I know for a long time I heard this, and it never meant a thing in the world to me. But I saw it. And I wish someone had preached it to me a long time ago. And I would be gratified tonight if just ten or fifteen or twenty in the congregation could understand how to enter into Canaan—not by trying; not by working up a lather; not by making new resolutions; not by getting out and saying, "I'm going to whip the flesh"—you can't do it—but by saying to God, just like old Jacob said, "Lord, I can't do it; Lord, I'll not let you go except thou dost bless me; I'm crippled; I'm weak; I can't." And then God will say, "Very good, my child. I've been wanting you to come to that place for a long time. Now that you realize you can't, realize that I can; and let me do through you and in you what you could never do for yourself."

I must close, but I just want to show you one other thing. I want to show you how this principle runs all the way through the Bible. Would you open to 1 Samuel the fifteenth chapter—and I'm reading verses 1 to 3: "*Samuel also said unto Saul, The LORD sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I remember that which Amalek did to Israel...*"—now this scripture is tied into that other scripture—"*I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass*" (1 Samuel 15:1–3).

God said to Saul, "Saul, I want you to utterly, utterly, destroy the Amalekites." Now, evidently, Israel didn't do it. And they had trouble with them ever since. There are many church members who don't deal with the flesh, and constantly they have problems with the flesh. Now, what does God want done with the flesh? He wants it slain. He wants it crucified. He wants it dead. He wants us to die to self and be alive to God. He wants us to be like the Apostle Paul, who said, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I,*"—not the flesh—"*but Christ liveth in me*" (Galatians 2:20). Therefore God said, "Utterly destroy the Amalekites."

What did Saul do? Saul went to battle against the Amalekites; and, instead of destroying them, he took Agag, the king, and he spared him. He took some of the best sheep, and he spared them. He took some of the oxen, and he spared them. Now Samuel comes to Saul, and he says, "Saul, have you done what I told you to do?" And Saul looks very pious: "Oh," he says, "it's done just exactly as you told me to do it." About then, some sheep says, "*baa*." And he said, "Yes? Then what meaneth the

bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen that I hear in my ear?” “Oh,” he says, “you mean them?” “Yes, them. What are all these things?” And do you know what Saul said? “Well,” he said, “now, hold on just a minute. I have an excuse for this. I saved these things to sacrifice to the Lord” (1 Samuel 15:4–15).

Now, listen very carefully. What was Saul going to sacrifice to God? The very best. The very best of what? The very best of what God hated. He took the best of what God hated, and was going to give it to God. Now, where’s the application? Every now and then God will give a man a good larynx, and He’ll give him a good mind, and he’ll give him a facile tongue. And so the man says, “Well, I believe I could be a good speaker; and so I’m going to dedicate my speaking ability to God. I’m going to save it and sacrifice it to the Lord.” Friend, God doesn’t want it. Someone says, “I’ve got wonderful fingers. I can tickle the ivory, all eighty-eight keys, up and down. I’m going to take these wonderful fingers, and I’m going to give them to God. Isn’t God lucky?” God doesn’t want them. Somebody says, “I have a beautiful voice, and I can make all the girls swoon when I sing. And I can make all of the men jealous of my great ability to sing. So I’m going to take my voice, and I’m going to give it to God to sing.” God doesn’t want it. He’s sick of it. “Oh,” you say, “I have a great ability to look things up in dictionaries and to study maps and to do all kinds of things. I’m going to give my ability to God. I’m going to be a great Bible teacher.” God doesn’t want your ability. God wants those things dead. He hates them. It’s the flesh. God doesn’t want you to do things for Him. You can’t. God wants you to be crucified so that Jesus can live His life through you. Learn that lesson. Don’t try to offer to God the very best of what God hates.

Saul said, “Yes, they’re such wonderful sheep. It’s a shame to kill them.” I have such a great personality. Why, if I were to live the crucified life, what would it do to my personality? Let me tell you something, friend. God will take the same personality, the same fingers, the same voice, the same musical ability, the same intellect; He’ll take it all. And everybody else will think it’s the same person. But you’ll have a secret. You’ll know Jesus is doing it now. And there’s a big difference: to be crucified with Christ. *“Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* And when our church learns that secret, and when we start doing things, not in the strength of our flesh, but in the power of the Spirit; when we utterly slay Amalek, and King Agag, and all of the rest, then we’ll have victory.

Now, when time came for ol’ King Agag, who was the king of the Amalekites—when it came time to dispatch him, ol’ Agag pled eloquently for his life. “Oh,” he said, “you don’t want to kill me. Why, I’m a wonderful fellow.” But you know what Samuel did? The Bible says Samuel took his sword and hacked him in pieces; made pigeon food out of him; cut him in little pieces. Oh, that’s bloody; that’s brutal.

Conclusion

Listen, friend. That's all in the Bible. And it's there for a purpose. You think that God loves the flesh; but God says, "Jacob have I loved; Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:13); "I have a perpetual warfare with Amalek throughout all his generations" (Exodus 17:16); "*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh*" (Galatians 5:17). Die to self; let Jesus take over. Quit trying, and start trusting. Move on out of the wilderness and the desert diet. Move on into Canaan, the land that flows with milk and honey. Then you won't be sick of your pastor; and he won't be sick of you.

Victory over the Flesh

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 26, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 17:8–16

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Certainty of Our Fight
- II. The Strategy of Our Foe
 - A. He Attacked Unexpectedly
 - B. He Attacked Indirectly
 - C. He Attacked Viciously
 - D. He Attacked Arrogantly
- III. The Victory of Our Faith

Conclusion

Introduction

The book of Exodus chapter 17, beginning in verse 8: *“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side: and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi: for he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation”* (Exodus 17:8–16)

Now you have in your life three major enemies: the world, the flesh, and the devil. You know, we’ve already given those three enemies some name. The world we call “the external foe.” The flesh we call “the internal foe.” The devil we call “the infernal foe.” The world, the flesh, and the devil. I’m going to talk tonight about the flesh, and talk to you tonight about “Victory over the Flesh.”

Now, what do we mean when we say “the flesh”? The Bible says, in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 17, “The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these two are contrary one to the other.” (Galatians 5:17) What are we talking about when we talk about the flesh? We’re not talking about man’s physical, material body. Never get the idea that, when God uses the flesh in this sense, He’s talking about your skin and your bones, your hide and your hair, your tooth and your toenails. He’s not talking about that. There is nothing wrong, evil, or sinful about your physical, material body. You’d better learn that. If you don’t learn it, if you don’t understand that your body is not evil, it’s going to get you off into false doctrine. Your body is the creation of God. It is not evil. And when the Bible mentions the flesh, it is not talking about your skin and bones. As a matter of fact, God desires your body to be the temple of His Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 6:19) And we’re to present our bodies a living sacrifice. (Romans 12:1)

So, what is the flesh? When the Bible uses this word *flesh* in the sense that we’re using it tonight, it speaks of that carnal, evil desire that is within all of us. It is that desire, that propensity to do evil. It is the lower part of our nature. Actually, it’s the enemy within the fort. And that’s the reason why I call the flesh “the internal enemy.”

You remember what Pogo said? I don’t know whether you read Pogo or not; but if you don’t read Pogo, you’re behind in your education. You know what Pogo said? Pogo said, “We have met the enemy, and he is us.” Now that’s what I’m talking about tonight. I’m talking about us, folks: that enemy on the inside that the Bible calls “the flesh.”

Now this is illustrated in the Old Testament. You see, the story that I read to you tonight is more than ancient history. It is given there by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to be illustrative to us of spiritual life, for the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, “All of these things happened to them for examples to us.” (1 Corinthians 10:11) And so you can read these Old Testament stories and gain some tremendous, wonderful truths.

Now I hope that you know your typology enough to know that the three enemies of the Christian are illustrated by the Jews as they’re coming out of Egypt and going into Canaan. You see the enemies again: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Egypt represents the world. That’s where we were before we got saved: in Egypt. When they came out of Egypt, they were saved out of the world. They came out of the world. Pharaoh represents the devil. Pharaoh, who was the ruler of Egypt, who was so sinister and so strong and so subtle, is a picture of the devil. Our enemy: sinister, subtle, and strong. But what is representing the flesh? This scripture that I just read to you about a man named Amalek represents the flesh.

Go back and look, if you will now, in chapter 17 and verse 8: “*Then came Amalek.*” (Exodus 17:8) Now, who is Amalek? Well, Amalek was a king. But he was more than a king. He was a special king, a certain king. He was the grandson of Esau.

Now you say, “Well, what’s important about that?” Well, Esau stands, in the Bible, and has always stood, in the Bible, for a principle that God hates: the principle of the flesh. Do you remember when Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a mess of pottage? You remember that story—don’t you?—that Esau, the hairy, red hunter, had been out in the hills, and he’d been hunting, and he came in. He was sort of a man’s man. And he was absolutely famished. And Jacob had been cooking a stew all day long. And when Esau came in, and the savory smell of that stew made its way to his nostrils, he was just so hungry. He said to Jacob, “Give me that mess of pottage.” And Jacob, who was very cunning and very sly, said, “Sure.” He said, “I’ll give it to you, but,” he said, “it will be a trade. If you want this pot full of stew, if you want this mess of pottage, you may have it. But what I want is the spiritual blessing that belongs to you. I want the birthright in exchange for this pot of stew.”

Now only a fool would have made a trade like that. But Esau was that kind of a fool, and he traded the eternal for the temporal. He traded the spiritual for the material. And Esau from that time forward has been illustrative and a type of the flesh rather than the spirit.

And let me tell you how God feels about Esau. Now you’re in the book of Exodus. Just stay there. Put a bookmark there and turn to the book of Malachi. That’s easy to find, because it’s the last book in the Old Testament. And turn to the book of Malachi, and let me show you how God feels about this man Esau and the principle of the flesh that I’m talking about. In Malachi chapter 1, let’s begin reading in verse 1: *“The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel for Malachi. I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob.”* (Malachi 1:1–2) Now, why on earth would God love Jacob? He was a twister, a cheat, a conniver, a schemer; but God loved him. God didn’t love Jacob for what he was, but God loved Jacob for what He could make out of him. For, in spite of all his weaknesses, Jacob wanted God. That’s the reason he wanted the birthright. Jacob had a spiritual heart. Oh, he was a rascal, but in his heart of hearts he wanted God. And the Lord says, “I have loved Jacob.”

But now, look in verse 3: *“And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom”—*now, watch this next phrase— *“the LORD hath indignation for ever”—“for ever.”* (Malachi 1:3–4) God has perpetual warfare with Esau. Forever! God has indignation with Esau because Esau stands for the flesh. Esau stands for the carnal mind. And the Bible says the carnal mind is enmity with God. It is warfare with God! It cannot be subject to the law of God, neither indeed will be. (Romans 8:7)

And there is a perpetual, never-ending war with Esau.

Now, remember that Esau stands for the flesh. And Amalek was the grandson of Esau. Now God says that He had war with Esau and his kinfolks forever. And so Amalek here represents the flesh. Now, are you getting the typology? Egypt represents the world. Pharaoh represents the devil. And Amalek represents the flesh. And so we're going to see now in this battle in the Old Testament, which was an illustration for us, we're going to see how we can have victory over our Amalek, which is the flesh that's in us.

Three things I want us to notice tonight. First of all, number one, I want us to notice the certainty of our fight. Secondly, I want us to notice the strategy of our foe. And, thirdly, I want us to notice the victory of our faith. Now that's a simple outline. We ought to be able to follow it together.

I. The Certainty of Our Fight

First of all, I want you to notice the certainty of our fight. Notice again in chapter 17 and verse 8: *"Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim."* (Exodus 17:8) There was a battle, and Israel had to face it. And in like manner, all Christians are going to face the foe called the flesh. There is no way that you can escape it.

Now I want you to notice exactly when Amalek appeared. When did Amalek appear? Well, just back up a little bit to verse 5. And we're in verse 8, and it says, *"Then came Amalek."* Well, what happened just before that? And you're going to pick up on the typology here. This is Exodus chapter 17, verse 5: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel."* (Exodus 17:5–6)

Now, what does this represent? The people were thirsty. They were murmuring. They needed water. God said to Moses, "Moses, you go to Horeb. There is a particular rock there. And I want you to take the rod of God, and I want you to smite that rock, and out of that rock will come forth water."

You say, "Brother Rogers, what does that represent?" We don't have to guess about it. We know beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure what that represents. And I want you to see it with your own eyes. So turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 4, and I want you to see the beauty of the typology here. The Bible speaks of the children of Israel in this same context, and it says here in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 4, *"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was"*—now you tell me what— *"Christ."* (1 Corinthians

10:4) Christ!

Now, do you see how there were examples in the Old Testament? Who was smitten of God and afflicted for our sins? The Lord Jesus, the Rock of Ages. And when Moses smote that rock, it was a picture, a prophecy, a type, an illustration of Christ, the smitten Rock. And out of that smitten rock, just as there came out of the side of the Lord Jesus water and blood, there flowed a fountain from that riven rock. And from that smitten rock all of the people came and drank and were satisfied.

If the rock is Christ, what was the water? The water is the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus said, *“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink...and out of his [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive.”* (John 7:37–39) Dear friend, that rock was Christ, and that water is illustrative of the Holy Spirit of God.

Now I want you to get the picture. Here is Christ, smitten for our sins. Here are the people drinking of the Holy Spirit of God. And then comes Amalek. Then come Amalek. When do you come in conflict with the flesh? Not when you're an unsaved person. The unsaved person knows nothing of the battle of what I'm talking about tonight. And what I'm talking about tonight will go right over his head if he's unsaved. And, you know, these Christians, they're talking about, “Man, that terrible striving, that battle, that civil war I feel within me.” They say, “Man, I never feel that.” Do you know why? You've never been to that rock. You've never drunk of that rock. But when you receive the Spirit, when you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, when you drink deeply of Him, you're going to find out that then comes Amalek. Galatians chapter 5, verse 17: *“The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these two are contrary one to the other.”* (Galatians 5:17)

I've known of some people who thought they were not saved, because they felt this battle going on. Friend, that doesn't mean you're not saved. That means you are saved. That means you are saved. You feel that battle. You feel that struggle that's going in. And I want to tell you it is a never-ending battle.

Now you're never going to eradicate the flesh. You can have victory over the flesh, but you're going to face and fight the flesh to the very gates of heaven. I want you to look, if you will, please, in verse 12. The Bible says that the battle got started. And look, if you will, in verse 12: *“But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun.”* (Exodus 17:12) It was a daylong battle. But I want you to go on down to verse 16. *“For he said, Because the LORD hath sworn that the LORD here will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”* (Exodus 17:16) Not only was it a daylong battle; it was an age-long battle: *“from generation to generation.”* You, my dear

friend—every Christian—is going to face his foe called the flesh, that enemy within the fortress.

Do you remember Sidlow Baxter? Sidlow Baxter had so many delightful tales to tell, stories. The one that he told me privately, and I'm not sure whether he told it from this pulpit or not, but he loved to talk about Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who preachers believe was the greatest preacher that ever lived—Charles Haddon Spurgeon of London, England. And Spurgeon had a preachers' school. It was called—his college for preachers—Spurgeon's College. And many young embryonic theologues would come there to train. And there was a time when these preachers, after they'd had their training, would have to give a message in the school chapel. And all of the faculty would be there, and all of the learned men would be there listening to these young preachers preach.

And Sidlow Baxter said there was one young preacher who was especially gifted. He had a fine mind, and he was a real polished orator. And it was his time to speak. And Sidlow said they were sitting there, and Spurgeon was sitting there, the great preacher, and this young man was preaching on putting on the whole armor of God. (Ephesians 6:11–17) And Sidlow said that he had done such a masterful job that, as he was placing each piece of armor in place, he said, you could almost hear it clink as it fell in place. He just put the armor on masterfully. And then he said, “And we take the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” very dramatically. The armor is all in place. And he said the young man, with a gesture, pretended to draw a sword, and said, “And now, where is the enemy?” And Spurgeon, who they called the Governor, cupped his hand with a stage whisper, and he said, “He's inside the armor!”

Oh, we'd better learn that. We'd better learn that. There is within us an enemy called the flesh. And this warfare is a perpetual warfare. And I want you to learn, first of all, the certainty of our fight. No true Christian will ever escape this battle. As soon as they drank of that rock, then came Amalek.

II. The Strategy of Our Foe

The second thing I want you to notice is the strategy of our foe. I want you to see what Amalek did, because when you see what Amalek did, you're going to find a picture in the Old Testament of what the flesh wants to do to you today.

What was the strategy of our foe, Amalek?

A. He Attacked Unexpectedly

Number one: Amalek attacked them suddenly and unexpectedly. There was no warning. Just like that. And it was such a strange time for him to attack, because they had just come through marvelous victory. If you'll just back up and go back to chapter

15, in chapter 15 you'll find out that they've come through the Red Sea where, as I was reading it today, God caused the waters to congeal. He just turned them all to Jell-O. And they just went right through. The waters just congealed and just stood up on one side and the other. What a marvelous victory as they came through! And they sang the song of Moses and the Lamb. And then, right after that, God had fed them with manna, bread from heaven. And right after that, they had drunk of that riven rock, and that rock was Christ. Miracle after miracle! God had led them with a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. What marvelous experiences they had! You wouldn't think that Amalek would attack right then. But I told you about three months ago—and I want to remind you again—that some of the biggest battles that you'll have with your flesh will be after some of your greatest spiritual blessings. The flesh will sneak up on you and attack you unexpectedly.

Now, why was this? You know, the Bible says this happened at Rephidim. Do you know what the name *Rephidim* means? It means "rest." It means "rest." Here they were saying, "Boy, we've got it made now! We've got the seas opening up before us! We've got the bread from heaven! We've got water to drink! We've got it made!" And that's just the place the devil likes to maneuver you: when you are "*at ease in Zion*." (Amos 6:1) Do you know what Peter said? "Be alert, be alert. Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter 5:8) Do you know what Jesus said concerning the flesh? "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38) And, oh, when you let down, when you're not expecting it, when you say, "Boy, I'm doing pretty good spiritually," then comes Amalek.

B. He Attacked Indirectly

But I want you to notice something else about the strategy of our foe. Not only did he attack unexpectedly, but I want you to see that he attacked indirectly. Now, let's leave Exodus chapter 17, and turn to Deuteronomy 25. It's very important that you turn to this verse—Deuteronomy 25 and verse 17. Now, evidently, there was a great lesson here, because God never wanted them to forget it. And He says, in Deuteronomy chapter 25, verse 17, "*Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee.*" (Deuteronomy 25:17–18) Now, what does that mean? It means that he attacked from the rear. Amalek was very cunning. He was very subtle. He did not meet Israel head-on, but his attack, not only was it an unexpected attack, but it was an indirect attack. It was a sneak attack from behind.

Do you know what you're going to learn about the flesh? You're going to learn that the flesh will sneak up on you. Now it will. You know, you're going to be amazed. Have

you ever said this? I want to ask you a question. Have you ever said this: “Man, I’m surprised at myself”? How many of you ever said that? Let me see your hand? It was a surprise attack, wasn’t it? You did something. You said something. You acted like a donkey, and you say, “Man, I’m surprised at myself.” The old flesh just came right around from behind.

Have you ever said, “You know, I don’t know what made me do that? What made me say that?” The flesh is there. Amalek, lurking behind the shadows, lurking behind the rock, is ready.

C. He Attacked Viciously

He attacks unexpectedly. He attacks indirectly. He attacks viciously. Continue to read here now in Deuteronomy 25, verse 18: *“How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.”* (Deuteronomy 25:18) Oh, he attacked viciously. He didn’t attack Israel at her strong point. He attacked these people that were weak, these people that were sickly, these people that were wounded and weary and weak, the ones on the periphery. These were the ones that Amalek attacked. And what does that tell us? It tells us that the flesh knows our weakness, and it’s going to capitalize on it.

Do you know the difference between a test of God and an attack of Satan? God will always test you at your strongest point. The devil will attack you at your weakest point. And the flesh will make merchandise of the weakest point.

For example, what was Abraham’s strongest point? His faith. Now God did test Abraham, saying, “Offer up Isaac.” (Genesis 22:2) And it was a test of faith, because God had made promises in Isaac. God will test you at your strongest point; but the devil and the flesh will tempt you at your weakest point.

And why were they weak? They were weak, I believe, because they were not feeding on the manna, and they were not drinking of the water, and they were not walking in the Lord. And, dear friend, anytime you fail to feed yourself upon God’s manna, anytime that you fail to take the provisions that God has given you, you’re going to grow spiritually anemic. You’re going to become rundown spiritually, and you’re going to be ready for any microbe of the flesh that wants to debilitate you and make you spiritually sick. You see, it was the place of weakness where the flesh attacked.

D. He Attacked Arrogantly

Now, not only does Amalek attack suddenly and unexpectedly; not only does he attack indirectly; not only does he attack viciously at the point of weakness; but he attacks arrogantly. Look again, if you will, please, in the Scripture, in verse 18. And the Bible says, *“And he feared not God.”* (Deuteronomy 25:18)

Now your flesh has no respect for God. That old nature has no respect for God. The

Bible says that, *“The carnal mind is enmity against God...it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”* (Romans 8:7) You cannot improve the flesh. *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh.”* (John 3:6) You cannot eradicate it. You can overcome it. But I want you to understand that for you to try to pamper and dress up and modify the flesh is a waste of time. It is set against God. *“It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”*

III. The Victory of Our Faith

Now I want you to notice, thirdly and finally, not only the certainty of our fight, and the strategy of our foe, but I want you to notice the victory of our faith. Go back, if you will, please, to Exodus chapter 17, and look again now at the victory that God gave Israel, because, remember, it's a pattern for our victory. Don't you want victory over the flesh? Wouldn't you like to live in victory? Well, all of these things happened unto them for examples unto us. Are we wise enough to read and learn?

All right, begin now in Exodus chapter 17, verse 8: *“Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek; to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.”* (Exodus 17:8–13) There is the victory of our faith.

Now Moses says to Joshua, “There's going to be a battle. But, Joshua, I'm going up to the top of this hill. I'm going up here to the mountain with the rod of God in my hand.” Moses was a very wise person, because he knew that the secret of victory was not in the valley but on the mountain. What happened on that mountain? Well, just simply this: that, when Moses held up in his hand the rod of God, as long as he stretched it forth and held it up before the Lord, Joshua, leading the armies of Israel, prevailed; but when Moses' hands got tired, and when he got weary, and when the rod of God began to sag and his arms were let down, Amalek prevailed.

You say, “Brother Rogers, what does that mean?” Well, the secret is tied up in the rod of God. What does that rod of God stand for? What does it picture? What does it typify? It typifies the supernatural power of God.

I want you to see how that rod of Moses turned to the rod of God. Just put your bookmark there now in chapter 17, and turn to Exodus chapter 4 for a moment. Let's

study a little bit about that rod of God. Now Moses has been called to be God's commander-in-chief. And Moses remonstrates with the Lord and gives Him all kinds of arguments and excuses. But then, notice in verse 1: *"And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice: for they will say, The LORD hath not appeared unto thee. And the LORD said unto him, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod."* (Exodus 4:1–2)

Now, remember Moses has spent the last forty years on the backside of the desert. Somebody said Moses spent the first forty years of his life learning to be somebody. Remember, he was raised in Pharaoh's court. Then he spent the next forty years of his life learning to be nobody. He was out in the wilderness. Then he spent the last forty years of his life learning what God could do with somebody who learned the first two lessons. All right now, he's here, and he's been spending forty years on the backside of the desert, and about all he has to show for it is one rod. He's taken a stick. He's fashioned it. It has become like a companion to him. With it he defends himself. With it he guides the sheep. He stays on it. He leans on it. If he goes up and down the rocky coast, it is sort of a companion to him, something that has endeared itself to him. And it's all that he has.

"And the Lord said, "What is that in your hand?" And he says, "A rod." *"And he said, Cast it on the ground."* Now, again, Moses might have said, "Lord, after all, that's all I've got. You've stripped me of everything else. Don't take that." "Throw it down, Moses." *"And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it."* (Exodus 4:3) He's running now from the rod. He never dreamed that there was a serpent in it. It seemed like such a harmless thing. *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail."* "What's that, Lord? My hearing's not what it used to be." "Pick it up, Moses; and pick it up by the tail." Now any country boy knows, if you catch a snake, and if he's a poisonous one, you sure don't pick him up by the tail. That leaves the business end loose. Now you know that. Moses knew that. God didn't just say, "Pick It up." He said, "Moses, pick it up by the tail." And every word that Moses spoke from this moment on was right out of his heart, because his heart was in his throat. And Moses said, "All right, Lord." *"And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand."* (Exodus 4:4)

Now that's a very interesting lesson here. And I believe that God the Holy Spirit wants us to learn it: that these so-called gifts and these so-called abilities that we have, whether it is an ability to sing as Jerry can sing, whether it is a business ability like Bob Sorrell has, whether it is a gift to preach, whether it is a money-making gift, whether it is your health, your physical appearance, whatever it is, whatever you have in your hand that you have by your natural accumulation, has a serpent in it. And do you know what you're going to have to do with that gift? You know, one reason I believe this brother

sings with the anointing is, God made him throw it down. God let him be mute for six months, just let him throw it down. And then God said, “Now, Jerry, take it up again. Take it up again. Cast it at my feet. There’s a serpent in it, and I want that serpent taken out.”

You know, with so many of us, we think that we’re prize packages, and God’s lucky to get us. Listen, friend. He doesn’t need you, and He doesn’t need me. We need Him. And we need to take whatever we have, and cast it at His feet, and let Him take the serpent out of it, and then let Him give it back. And, from this time on, it’s never called Moses’ rod. From this time on, it’s called the rod of God. Oh, when God takes those abilities of yours, when God takes those gifts of yours, when God takes those possessions of yours, and baptizes them and anoints them with His power, then it is no longer I, but Christ that liveth in me. (Galatians 2:20) And that’s the secret of victory over the flesh.

And if you’ll notice this rod of God now represents the power of God. And Moses took it and stretched it forth over the Red Sea, and the Red Sea opened up in a forty-eight-lane superhighway. It went right through that Red Sea, and it led them out of bondage. And then, when they were thirsty, he smote the rock, and it led them out of barrenness. And now, when they’re in a fight, it’s going to lead them out of battle. It is now the rod of God, and it stands for the supernatural power of God.

You see, the victory over the flesh is a God-given victory. That’s what I’m trying to say. The victory over the flesh is not given by striving. It is not given by your own fleshly images. It is a supernatural, God-given victory.

Now, get back again, now that we’ve discussed this rod of God, and look, and it will make a little more sense, I believe. Look and see what happened. The Bible says in verse 11, “*And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand,*”—and remember, in his hand is that rod—“*that Israel prevailed.*”—that is, when Moses is depending, not on his own strength, but when Moses is depending upon that supernatural power of God, Israel prevailed—“*and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.*” And then, notice: “*But Moses hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side.*” (Exodus 17:11–12) They’re holding up his hands: one of the most beautiful pictures in all of the Bible.

You know, do you ever get to thinking that sometimes God’s preachers get weary? Do you ever think about that? God’s workers, they get weary. You know, there’s a sub thing here, but I just don’t want to pass it while I’m here. It’s not really the point that I’m preaching on. But I want you to learn to hold up the hands of your pastor and your staff. Will you do that? You see, we don’t get weary of the work; but sometimes we can get weary in the work. And, you see, look. You’d better hold up my hands, because if I fail,

you might fail, you see. So you'd better hold up my hands. I'm so grateful for a Hur and an Aaron that were there to hold up the hands of a Moses. But that's just for free. That was just for me. But now, look. That's not the main message.

Who was holding up the hands of Moses? Aaron and Hur. Well, who was Aaron? Aaron was the priest. And what is the job of the priest? To intercede and to pray. How is the power of God released? Number one, through prayer. And who was Hur? Hur was the grandfather of Bezaleel, the artificer who formed and did all of the artifacts for the tabernacle. (Exodus 31:2–5) But what does the name *Hur* mean? It means “whiteness.” It means “purity.” And Hur, as we find him in the Bible, he is always associated with the holiness of God. Now, how is the power of God, the rod of God, the supernatural power of God over the flesh, how is it released? Through prayer and through purity. That's it: prayer and purity!

Do you want victory over Amalek? What is God showing us? It will be done by the power of God. And how is the power of God released? By Aaron: a life of prayer; by Hur: a life of purity, as we, by prayer and purity, hold up the power of God against all of the power of the flesh. That's what the Bible calls “*lifting up holy hands*” (1 Timothy 2:8) in prayer: holy hands lifted to God in prayer. That's the victory over Amalek. That's the victory over the flesh.

Now, had you been there that day, if you'd not been careful, you would have thought that Joshua won the battle. But Joshua didn't win the battle. The battle was not won in the valley. The battle was won on the mountaintop. And I can imagine—if they had television back in that day—Walter Cronkite is there, and he's doing a story on the battle, and he's up there in his glass-enclosed booth, air-conditioned, and he's watching the battle. And he says, “You know, it's a strange battle. And that's the way it is.” He says, “Look, this side prevails. Look, Israel is up. No, wait a minute. Amalek is winning. No, wait a minute, Israel. No, wait a minute.” He says, “I can't understand it, folks. The battle is going back and forth. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. We've just received a report from one of our correspondents. He has a late-breaking word for us. He has noticed that there is an old man on the hill. And, whenever the old man lifts his hand, Israel prevails. And, folks, we don't know what to make of this, but we'll bring you a report as soon as it comes through. When the old man on the hill lifts up his hands, Israel prevails.”

Now the world may never really be able to understand how you and I live victoriously over the flesh, but I want to tell you, dear friend, as we lift holy hands to God in prayer, as the life of the priest and the life of the pure man hold up the power of God, then Israel will prevail and Amalek will be discomfited. Now there is a perpetual warfare. But the Bible says, in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 16, “But walk in the Spirit, and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.” (Galatians 5:16)

Conclusion

Let's bow together in prayer. Father in heaven, we're so grateful that we don't have to pray for the victory, but from the victory, and that the victory has already been won. And as we, dear Lord, appeal to the power of God in a life of prayer and a life of purity, we know, dear Lord, that you'll give us victory over the flesh. Lord, I just pray tonight that our church—all of us: our staff, our deacons, our teachers, our choir—might walk in the Spirit so that they will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh, and that the flesh that is warfare against God will not be singing and preaching and teaching and leading, but that the Spirit of God will prevail in our church. In Jesus' name. Amen.

God's Remedy for Worn-Out Preachers

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 8, 1982

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 18:13–26

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Limits That Must Be Sensed
 - A. The Limit of Time
 1. He Was Neglecting His Family
 2. He Was Neglecting His Quiet Time
 - B. The Limit of Physical Strength
 - C. The Limit of Emotional Strength
- II. The Loads That Must Be Shared
 - A. The Size of the Task
 - B. The Sharing of the Task
- III. The Lives That Might Be Saved
 - A. Moses' Ministry Would Be Saved
 - B. The Lives of Many Others Would Be Saved

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you tonight to turn to Exodus chapter 18. And the title of my message is a long one: "God's Remedy for Worn-Out Preachers." That's really what I'm going to be preaching about tonight, but it's going to apply to you. And I'm trying to preach a message that will really touch about three areas. I hope that you're going to learn something that will keep you from being a worn-out person, whether you're a preacher, a pastor, or whatever you might be, but also that you'll keep from wearing me out, and we'll find what God's plan is for us to get His work done here.

So I want to begin reading here in Exodus chapter 18, and let's begin in verse 13: *"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people?"*—notice he doesn't say, "what you do for them," but "what you do to them"—*"why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God: when they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another,*

and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away..."—now you see where I got my title, "How Not to Wear Out the Preacher"—"Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Harken now unto my voice, and I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: and let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure,"—that is, "you won't be worn out"—"and all this people shall also go to their place in peace. So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said. And Moses chose able men out of Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves." (Exodus 18:13–26)

Now, let me say, at the outset of this message, that I'm not feeling sorry for myself. And let me say that, lest some of the dear little ladies who love me—and I'm so grateful for their love—feel that I am run down, I am not. I feel terrific. And I want to set this in proper context. I just want to stay feeling terrific. And let me tell you that God has a wonderful, wonderful plan for Bellevue Church. He doesn't want our church to stop being blessed. He doesn't want our church to stop growing. And so we need to learn how we can continue to grow without somehow wearing away the pastor and without discouraging the staff.

Now what happened here was that God was blessing His people in a tremendous way. And with the blessings came some problems. Now blessings sometimes bring problems. Look at the blessing that they had. Look in chapter 18, verse 1. The Bible says, "*When Jethro, the priest of Midian, Moses' father in law, heard of all that God had done for Moses, and for Israel his people, and that the LORD had brought Israel out of Egypt...*" (Exodus 18:1) "All that God had done for His people": that's a beautiful, beautiful verse.

And I just think of all that God has done for us. I tell you, folks, God just keeps on pouring it on, doesn't He? I mean, blessing after blessing. You'd think that after a while He's going to run out of blessings.

I've been to see Niagara Falls, as some of you have, and you see that water coming over the falls, and you say, "Well, it's going to run out after a while. I mean, it just can't keep pouring over the falls like that." But it just keeps coming, and it just keeps coming, and just keeps coming. That's the way the grace of God is. Out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth again. And so God just keeps pouring it on.

And then, look, if you will, in verse 9: *"And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the LORD had done to Israel, whom he had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians."* (Exodus 18:9) How good God had been! And then, look in verse 10: *"And Jethro said, Blessed be the LORD, who hath delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the LORD is greater than all gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them."* (Exodus 18:10–11)

Indeed, God was blessing His people. However, in the midst of this blessing, Moses, that I'm going to liken unto the pastor and compare with the pastor, had taken more responsibility upon his shoulders than he really ought to have taken. And Moses had started to counsel the people. And he was dealing with the people from sunrise to sunset, from *can* to *can't*.

Look, if you will, please, in verses 13 through 17, and you'll get that thought again: *"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening."* Now he just had a list of people outside his office. They were coming to see him. *"And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people?"* I always laugh at that a little bit. He doesn't say, "What is this you're doing for the people." Moses, if you'd have asked him, he would have said, "Oh, I'm doing something wonderful for them." Jethro said, "It looks to me like you're doing something to them." And he said, *"What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?"* "You're just making them wait here. They're trying to see you, and you're trying to settle this thing all by yourself." And then verse 17: *"And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good."* (Exodus 18:13–17)

And there are a lot of preachers sometimes, I suppose, who have an exaggerated sense of their importance. They think, if they suddenly cease to try and do it all, that somehow it will all cave in right on their heads. And so Jethro, who was Moses' father-in-law, was used of God to give this man some great wisdom and some great advice so that the work of God could continue.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, the work of God is going to continue here at Bellevue. We have not even yet begun to see what God wants to do through His people called Bellevue Baptist Church.

And so, with that in mind, I want you to notice several things.

I. The Limits That Must Be Sensed

First of all, I want you to notice the limits that must be sensed—the limits that must be sensed. Look in verse 18. Jethro said to Moses, *“Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee.”* (Exodus 18:18) “It’s not just you, Moses, that’s going to decay. It’s not just you that’s going to wear out. You’re going to find that, the people that you’re trying to lead, you’re not going to be able to lead them. You are going to wear out, and you’re going to wear your people out.” You see, what Jethro was wise enough to know is there’s a limit to what any one man can do, even if he’s a Moses.

Now, really, it doesn’t take much sense to understand that the man who does the work of ten men is not nearly as good a man and great a man and wise a man as the man who can get ten men to work. That man is a better man and a wiser man and a smarter man—not the man who can do the work of ten men, but the man who can get ten men to work.

A. The Limit of Time

You see, first of all, there’s a limit of time. Look in verse 13: *“And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.”* (Exodus 18:13) There was the limit of time. And because Moses was getting up early in the morning, going to the office, sitting down, and starting with the first one, and then the second, and then the third, then the fourth, all day long he went from sunrise to sunset, sunrise to sunset. Well, what was so bad about that?

1. He Was Neglecting His Family

Well, number one: He started neglecting his family. You say, “How do you know he was neglecting his family?” Go back to verses 5 and 6 and look at it: *“And Jethro, Moses’ father in law, came with his sons and his wife unto Moses into the wilderness, where he encamped at the mount of God: and he said unto Moses, I thy father in law Jethro am come unto thee, and thy wife, and her two sons with her.”* (Exodus 18:5–6) “Hey, buddy, you recognize these kids? You know who they are? Have you ever seen them before? And, this lady, you happen to be married to her, Moses.” And so here comes Jethro bringing the preacher’s family out to him.

I remember when our church was growing so fast down at Merritt Island, I think Joyce said to me one time she was going to come forward in a service and make a decision so she could talk with me for a few moments, you know: “Honey, the kids need some new shoes.” And here was this situation. Here was a man who had been neglecting his family. And any man, any preacher, any businessman, anybody else who neglects his family is too busy. They’re your first responsibility.

We often talk about the problem of preacher's kids who don't love God, and preacher's kids who are hellions, and preacher's kids out of fellowship with God. Why is it? Here is a modern-day Moses who's going down from sunrise to sunset taking care of everybody else's problems and not taking care of his own family. The Bible says, *"If a man know not how to [take care of] his own house, how shall he take care of the house of God?"* (1 Timothy 3:5)

2. He Was Neglecting His Quiet Time

And so there are the limits of time. He didn't have enough time with his children, with his family. But not only had he been neglecting his family, I'll tell you something else he'd been neglecting. He'd been neglecting his quiet time. He'd not been alone with the Lord. You say, "How do you know that?" Well, look at verse 19. Here's what Jethro said. He said, *"Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God."* (Exodus 18:19)

He said, "Now, Moses, you've been speaking to the people about God, but you've been failing to speak to God about the people." That's exactly what he's saying. Look at it: *"Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward."* Now he says, "Moses, you really want to help your people? Then you need to get alone. You need to be quiet before God."

I want to tell you something, friend, and I mean this with all of my heart. *The greatest service that a man of God will ever perform for his people is not when he is standing before them speaking to them about God, but when he is before God speaking to God about them.* And, oh, we need more ministers and people of God and men of God who will know how to get alone with God. You see, there is the limit of time. And every man of God needs time to be alone with God.

Now, don't just apply that to Adrian Rogers, friend. If you're too busy for your family, you're too busy. Mr. Businessman, if you're too busy with your business, you're too busy. If you're too busy, madam, with your affairs to spend time with God, and time with your husband, and time with your children, you, too, are too busy. And you are going to wear out rather than last out. And so there is a limit of time. *The man, the preacher, who is always available isn't worth a whole lot when he is available.* He needs some time somehow to be alone with God, and so do you.

B. The Limit of Physical Strength

But not only is there the limit of time, verses 13 and 14, there's also the limit of physical strength. Look in verses 17 and 18: *"And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it*

thyself alone.” (Exodus 18:17–18)

You know, I’m getting to the age now—well, I guess it pains me to use this phrase—but middle age. As a matter of fact, I might be past middle age. I don’t think I’ll last to be a hundred. But anyway, I’m in that period of time known as middle age. And I have a lot of my buddies, my preacher friends, guys I went to college with, and guys I went to seminary with, who are already wearing away. I mean, they are already getting on the scrap heap, and the junk pile, and so forth. I see many of my compatriots and many of my peers who at the tender age that I’m at are already burned out in the ministry. You see, dear friend, it’s not a sin, it’s a crime, to not take care of yourself physically.

And it was Jesus Christ Himself who said to His disciples, “Come ye apart and rest a while.” (Mark 6:31) And you know Dr. Vance Havner’s classic statement on that passage. Vance Havner said, “We’d better come apart, or we will come apart.” And that’s good. “Come ye apart and rest a while.” That’s what the Lord Jesus said. And I want to tell you something, friend. If you do not understand that God put you in a physical frame, and God gave you a body which is the temple of His Holy Spirit, and if you do not recognize the limits of your time, and the limits of your strength, if you’re running around knocking things over, and calling it serving God, you’re not really serving God; you’re dissipating your body. You can move too fast. You can do too much. And it’s a lot of wasted motion.

I was reading. I actually read this. It sounds humorous, and it sounds like it didn’t happen, but it literally happened. A fighter plane was moving so fast that it fired its cannon, overtook the shell, and shot itself down. And I thought, “You know, I’ve known some people who’ve done that same thing. I’ve known some preachers who’ve shot themselves down just moving too fast. I’ve known some Christian businessmen who have not known what it is to come apart and rest.”

And somebody has described a football game, a football stadium, as something like this: Twenty-two men on the field desperately in need of rest; 50,000 people in the stands desperately in need of exercise. And that’s what the average church is like. I mean, you’ve got the people who are trying to do it all. And then there are people who are sitting there not doing anything.

And so Jethro says, “Moses, you’re not wise. The thing that you’re doing is not good. You have not recognized the limits of time. You’ve not recognized the limits of strength. You’re neglecting your family. You’re neglecting your quiet time. You are neglecting your physical health.”

C. The Limit of Emotional Strength

But not only was there the limit of time, and not only was there the limit of physical strength; there was also the limit of emotional strength. Now every one of these people

that Moses talked to were taking a little out of him, if he was a good counselor. Nobody can counsel, and nobody can minister, without giving. It costs. It costs to preach. Do you know what preaching is? It's standing up here and dying a little bit. That's what it is. It is giving of yourself. Do you know what counseling is? If you don't give of yourself, mister, you don't counsel. I just came out of a counseling session before I came up here, where I got on my knees and wept. You cannot counsel, you cannot serve, without paying a price.

It was said of John the Baptist, he was a burning and a shining light. And, friend, there will be no shining without burning. And when you burn, you're consumed—you're consumed. John the Baptist was a burning and a shining light. And emotional strength goes out of you when you serve. Jesus said, when that woman touched Him, "Virtue has gone out of me." He meant by that, strength was gone out of Him.

And these people had been coming to Moses. And I'll tell you, it cost Moses. Go back to chapter 17 and look in verse 2. You're in chapter 18. *"Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the LORD? And the people thirsted there for water; and the people murmured against Moses"* (Exodus 17:2–3)

Do you like that word *murmur*? *Mur-mur, mur-mur, mur-mur, mur-mur.* it's an ugly word, isn't it? The people murmured. Now, you know, a murmuring is the worst kind of thing. You know, if you have just a red-hot argument, maybe you can deal with that—if you have an intellectual confrontation. But it's the murmurers, you know. The people, they were just picking at Moses.

I think you heard about the man who said he didn't mind being swallowed by a whale; he just hated to be nibbled to death by minnows. And that's what they were doing to Moses. They were nibbling at him and nibbling at him and nibbling at him. And it's like being stoned to death with popcorn. No one hurts, but it all just keeps coming and coming and coming.

And here was Moses, from morning to evening, morning to evening, morning to evening, morning to evening, the same thing. And it was taking a toll on him, not only physically, but emotionally. And I'm not just talking about being in the ministry. It can be the same thing if you're a physician, if you're a lawyer, if you're a mechanic, if you're a secretary. It doesn't matter what you are.

II. The Loads That Must Be Shared

You see, there's only so much time that you have. There's only so much physical strength that you have. There's so only so much emotional strength that you can give. And, dear friend, there are some limits that must be sensed. Secondly, there are some loads that must be shared because of the limits that must be sensed. Look, if you will, in

verse 18. Here's what Jethro said. Here was the God-given advice that Jethro gave to his son-in-law: *"Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone. Harken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws."* (Exodus 18:18–20)

A. The Size of the Task

Now, listen. There was the size of the task. It was an immense task. Moses had a congregation of three million Old Testament Baptists, and he was trying to lead them in a big program. And it was something that one man was not able to do.

Now, very frankly, pastoring a big church like this is easier than pastoring a small church, because I have some helpers. I don't think a church ever had a better staff than we have. And I'm not saying that because it sounds good. I thank God for our staff. I believe that God has brought our staff together. I wish you could sit in some of our staff meetings and sense the camaraderie, the love, the fellowship, and the spiritual ingenuity that these people have. You would have a greater appreciation for our staff. I'll tell you what. We've got a staff that skunked the deacons playing volleyball Friday night. That's the kind of staff we've got. Those deacons, however, are not much. And we have a tremendous staff—a tremendous staff. And so, therefore, my work is a little easier, perhaps, than the work of a pastor of a smaller church that does not have the staff that I have.

But let me tell you what a modern minister has to do. He has to win the lost. He has to deal with the despondent. He has to instruct children. He has to guide you. He has to strengthen the old people. He has to visit the sick. He has to comfort the bereaved. He has to plan programs. He has to conduct services. He has to prepare sermons. He has to perform weddings. He has to conduct funerals. He has to administrate the business. He has to watch for the lonely and the widowed. He has to handle correspondence. He has to do denominational work and duties. He has to administrate his staff. It's no wonder that many of them go under. It's no wonder that many of them come apart.

They remind me of a stevedore who was unloading a ship down in New Orleans, and as he was walking off the ship, the gangplank broke, and he sank into the Mississippi. He went down once, and came up and yelled for help. He went down the second time, and came up and yelled for help. He went down the third time, and came up, and he said, "If somebody doesn't come help me, I'm going to have to drop one of these anvils that I'm carrying."

Now there are pastors who are carrying such a load that they're about to go under for the third time and sink. And I'm preaching to some of you seminarians now. You

need to listen. You see, dear friend, the size of the task means that no one person can do it alone. Now there are some people who say, “Well then, what we need to do is just stop growing, and what we need to do is stop being blessed, and what we need to do is stop the work of God.” No! We just need to get more people working. I mean, anytime we stop growing, we start dying. We’ll grow and glow, or we’ll dry and die. We will evangelize or we’ll fossilize. But, dear friend, we won’t just stand still, I’ll guarantee you that.

B. The Sharing of the Task

But, you see, there’s a task, and that task needs a sharing. So the size of the task speaks of the sharing of the task. And what is the sharing of the task? Look in verse 21: *“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people”—that’s you, folks. Now, listen—“able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.”* (Exodus 18:21) Now, let me just pause right here. You know, sometimes it’s said of a church, “Well, you know, you just can’t break into the inner circle in that church. I mean, there’s a little clique, a little group of people who run everything, do everything. I’m on the outside, and they’re on the inside, and they make all the decisions.” Hey, how would you like to get on the inside? All right, here it is. Listen to it again: *“Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men,”—are you able?—“such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.”* By the way, that means you’d be a tither, doesn’t it? Say *amen*. Be honest. It’s okay. I don’t care. All right: *“hating covetousness.”* What I’m trying to say is, you show me a man, a woman, a person that is right with God; I mean, able people who want to serve God, and they’ll be in the inner circle quicker than you can say *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*. They will be in that inner circle, dear friend. There’s no little clique of people around here.

God knows that we need a sharing of the task. And here’s what Jethro said. He said, *“Thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness.”* Now, notice what he says. And he says here that we are to place them over the people.

Now there’s an old saying in the country, but it’s a good saying: that “Many hands make light work.” You know that’s true. If we were to try and move that piano, if just a couple of us tried to move it, it would be a job. If we were to take this choir, and all of us get around it, we’d move it fairly easy. Old Ken would pick up the bench, if I know him, and we’d just move that piano real easy, because all of us could make a hard task an easy task. It’s amazing what can be done when people work together.

I told our Sunday School workers something that I discovered in a little thing I was reading about Canadian geese. The naturalists tried to understand and figure out why the geese, as they go south, or go north, always fly in a V-formation. You see them

going overhead in a V-formation. And one lead goose gets out there, and he flaps for a while and leads. And then, after a while, he wears out, and he falls back to the end of the line, and another one comes up. And that's the way they fly. And then they found out—the men, the specialists in aerodynamics, understood it. Two engineers calibrated in a wind tunnel what happens in a V-formation. And they found out that each goose, when he flaps his wings, creates an inward and an upward lift for the goose that follows. And all of the geese, when they do their part—listen to this—when they fly in formation, they have a seventy-one percent further range than if one goose were flying by itself. Isn't that amazing? Seventy-one percent further when they fly in formation.

And God knows that same thing would be true about our church. *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together.”* (Psalm 133:1) That's something to honk about, even if you're not a goose—as we work together.

Now, look. There were some things that only Moses could do. I believe, dear friend, that if I were a layman, knowing what I know about the pastors, I would say to my pastor, “Pastor, I don't want you to do anything that we can do, so that you can do everything we can't do.” That's what I'd do. I'd just try to figure it out that way. “Pastor, don't you do anything we can do, so that you can do those things.” You see, there were some things that Moses was supposed to do, and those were the things that God wanted him to do.

Look again in verses 19 and 20. Here's what Moses was to do: *“Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.”* (Exodus 18:19–20) Now what Jethro said: “Moses, you get in that study, and you get on your face before God, and you pray to God and intercede for these people. And then you get a message burning in your heart, and you stand before those people, and you tell them what God said. You tell them of God's laws. And you tell them of God's statutes. And you tell them of God's ordinances. What they need is a word from God. What they need is a man of God coming from his study with brimming eyes and bursting lips and burning hearts to preach the Word of God.”

I don't believe there's much wrong in America that could not be cured if we had a generation of preachers who'd stand on their hind feet every Sunday morning and preach a message freshly baked in heaven's oven, and let the people feast on it and feed on it: the Word of God. And so there are certain things that only Moses could do. And Jethro knew that Moses had that responsibility.

And the apostles knew the same thing. You remember that time when the early church was growing, and it was growing at a great rate. And, again, anything that moves makes friction. And there came a friction in the church, and some of the

Hellenistic widows, some of the Greek widows, felt that they were being neglected. And perhaps they felt that those who were administrating the church, who were primarily Jewish at that time, were a little prejudicial toward these Hellenistic widows. And, again, the murmuring started. And so, what did the apostles do? They said, “Choose ye out seven men full of the Holy Ghost and of good report whom we may set over this business, and we’ll...”—do what?—“we will give ourselves continually to the ministry of the Word and to prayer.” (Acts 6:3–4) And the Bible says, “And the Word of God grew mightily.” (Acts 6:7) The church grew mightily as those men of God were getting alone by themselves. And God said to that early church the same kind of advice that God gave to Moses through Jethro: “Get you some godly laymen. Get you some men, some women, some people, and put them to work, so that you can do those things that only you can do.”

Now I was interested, as I looked at this passage of Scripture, to find something of the ratio that God worked out. I don’t know that it is an absolutely divine ratio, but it’s a very interesting thing to me. As I studied this scripture, I tried to compare it to Bellevue Baptist Church. And, to tell you the truth, I felt kind of good about what I saw. Now, notice again in verse 21 the ratio that is here: *“Moreover thou shalt provide out of all of the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness;”*—now, watch this—*“and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands,”*—mark that down—*“and rulers of hundreds,”*—mark that down—*“rulers of fifties,”*—mark that down—*“and rulers of tens.”* (Exodus 18:21)

Now, let’s take our church. Let’s suppose that we’ve got 12,000 members, round figures. All right, so, if we had a ruler of thousands, that means that we’d have to have about twelve of these. And, friend, that’s what we have on the executive staff: this kind of men. Now, let’s go on. If we had rulers of hundreds, and we had 12,000, that means that we’d have to have 120. And that’s just about what we’ve got: 120 deacons. Isn’t that interesting? And if we had rulers of fifties, that means that we’d have to have about 240. And that’s what we’ve got: about 240 Sunday School teachers. And then, if we had to have rulers of ten, that means we’d have to have about 1,200. And that’s about how many we have in our total work and committee system, and so forth, at Bellevue. That’s pretty neat, isn’t it? That’s wonderful what God is doing here. And I just kind of backed into that. And I’m not trying to make it fit, and I’m not trying to prove anything, but it just made me kind of feel pretty smart. No, really, it didn’t, because that’s of God. I just praise the Lord for it, and bless the Lord.

But what I’m saying is, dear folks, look. There is a limit that must be sensed. And then, there’s a load that must be shared. And what I want to say to you is, I believe that our church can continue to grow and continue to be blessed as each one of you say, “Dear God, what do you want me to do? What do you want me to do? Where is my place

in this body called Bellevue Baptist Church?” The Bible says God has set every member in the body *“as it hath pleased him.”* (1 Corinthians 18:12) And, friend, there is family love to share, and there’s a family load to bear—and don’t you forget it. We’re all in the family. And there’s plenty of love in the family. And there’s plenty of work in the family. And, oh, if you would just say, “Dear God, I want my church to continue to grow,” only God knows what can be done through this church, if we don’t wear out the pastor, and if we don’t wear out the staff, and if we don’t wear out certain people, but if we would just simply use the common sense. We don’t need, on the one hand, to say, “Pastor, you do it all, or we’re not going to grow,” or, on the other hand, say, “Pastor, you can’t do it all, so we’ll stop growing.” We need to say, “Pastor, together we’ll work together, and we’ll never stop growing till Jesus comes.” That’s what we need to do—and just see to it that every need is met and that we’re reaching people for Jesus Christ.

III. The Lives That Might Be Saved

Now the third thing I want you to see—and time is running out—but, not only the limits that must be sensed, and not only the load that must be shared, but I want you to notice the lives that might be saved. Look, if you will, in verse 23. Here’s what Jethro said to Moses: *“If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so…”*—wasn’t that neat? Wasn’t he a good counselor? He said, “This is what I think, but you’d better check with God.” Isn’t that wonderful?—*“If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.”* (Exodus 18:23)

A. Moses’ Ministry Would Be Saved

Now, first of all, Moses’ ministry would be saved. Moses would endure. It’s too bad when many preachers are worn out rather than worked out. I hear preachers say sometimes, “Well, I’d rather burn out than rust out.” Well, friend, you don’t have to burn out or rust out. You can last out. Do what God would have you to do. And so many times what we call being burned out is just simply not resting in the Lord and abiding in His wisdom that He’s given us.

B. The Lives of Many Others Would Be Saved

And not only could Moses’ ministry be saved, but the lives of many others would be saved. Notice that Jethro said to Moses, “Moses,”—in verse 18—“thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee.” (Exodus 18:18) It’s not just, “Moses, I’m trying to take care of you.” “I’m not just trying to save you for the people. I’m also trying to save the people themselves.”

Conclusion

And, you see, if everybody gets involved, the work is going to be done, and nobody is going to be overlooked, and everybody is going to have something to do. You know what you need in order to be happy? Someone to love, something to believe in, and a cause to serve. That's a recipe for happiness: someone to love, something to believe in, and a cause to serve. Jesus is all of those. And you need, dear friend, to say, "Dear Lord, show me the place." Some of you could be nursery workers. We need them. We need some extended service workers. I tell you, you cannot believe the task that these people go through every week—every week—just to see to it that that nursery is clean, sanitary, safe, and happy—and it is. You can thank God for our nursery—finest in the land. But it is work! And I don't want Mary, our preschool director, to wear out. I want her to last out. And some of you dear ladies need to call Mary this week, because God the Holy Spirit is telling you to, and say, "Mary, if I'm qualified—check me out and see if I'm qualified—but if I am qualified, put me to work for Jesus."

We're trying to start two Sunday Schools. And, folks, listen. I mean, we're starting a whole brand new Sunday School. And in staff meeting they sit around and say, "Pastor, we've still got this many classes, and we don't have workers, and the time is coming." We're going to make do. We're going to do it. But I believe God the Holy Spirit is speaking to some of you. You need to be calling our children's director, Catherine Prewett, and say, "Catherine, I want to make myself available. If I need to be trained, train me. If I'm qualified, check me out and see if I'm qualified. If I'm not qualified, then I don't want to force myself on you. But if there's something I can do, put me to work." I don't want you to wear out. I want you to last out. I want the work to go on.

You say, "Well, I can't teach." Have you ever thought about coming down here and pulling weeds? Don't you think this ought to be the most beautiful place in the midtown? I do. It ought to sparkle like a diamond. Come down here and tell our house and grounds crew, "Put me to work. I can cut grass. I can pull weeds. I can do something." Friend, God is blessing our church. And we sit here, and we soak in this love. But you know that when there's the family love to share, there's the family load to bear. We're in it together, folks. Let's don't let up, back up, or shut up, until we're taken up. Let's make this, under God, the church that He wants it to be.

The First Commandment

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 5, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:1–3

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Declaration of the First Commandment
 - A. Nature Declares It
 - B. Conscience Declares It
 - C. The Scripture Declares It
 - D. Faith Declares It
- II. The Discrimination of the First Commandment
- III. The Demands of the First Commandment
- IV. The Discovery of the First Commandment
 - A. You Must Come to Him Submissively
 - B. You Must to Him Come Sincerely
 - C. You Must Come to Him Scripturally

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, if you will, to Exodus chapter 20—Exodus chapter 20. We begin today a brand new study of the Ten Commandments, and today we are thinking about the First Commandment. Exodus chapter 20 and verse 1: *“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me”* (Exodus 20:1–3).

The most amazing set of laws that this world knows anything about are the Ten Commandments. There are only 286 words in them, in English, and yet, think as you will, you could not write an eleventh commandment. How concise, how comprehensive, are these Ten Commandments! Now some people say that they are out of date, that they’ve gone out of style, and that we’ve left them behind. Friend, we’ve never left them behind; we’ve never caught up with them. They are still out ahead of us.

I heard of a man traveling at night one time, and he had a worker—a servant—who was driving the old buggy for him. And the man wanted to sleep, but the servant didn’t know the way, so the man pointed out the North Star and said, “You keep your eye on that North Star, and you just follow that star, and we’ll be headed in the right direction.” He went to sleep; but, after a while, the driver woke him up and said, “Sir, would you

give me another star? I went past that one.”

Well, you no more go past the Ten Commandments than you go past the North Star. These are God’s laws for living and God’s rules for achievement, and how we need to reiterate, in these last days, these wonderful Ten Commandments. The first one is this: *“I am the LORD thy God”* (Exodus 20:2). The most glorious fact in the universe is this: that God exists, and that you can know Him personally. But the saddest fact in the universe is this: that so many do not know God personally, and because they don’t know God personally, nothing works out.

The Bible says, in Acts chapter 17, and verse 28, speaking of God, that it is *“in him we live, and move, and have our being”* (Acts 17:28). That is, God is the element in which you’re supposed to operate and function properly. If you take a fish out of the sea and put him in a tree, then he’ll be an unhappy fish. Take a bird out of the air, and put him in the sea—he’s an unhappy bird. Oh, dear friend, he’s out of his element; he can’t function properly. You will be like a round peg in a square hole until you know the Lord. It is in Him that we move, live, and have our being.

A father was in a toy store buying a toy, and the clerk said, “Here’s an educational toy.” And the father said, “How does it work?” The clerk said, “No matter how he puts it together, he’s always wrong.” That’s the kind of education some people feel that they need in this world where nothing seems to work out right.

Well, I want to tell you, friend, that things are not supposed to work out right until you know the Lord. *“I am the LORD thy God”* (Exodus 20:2). I want you to notice four things about the First Commandment: *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”* (Exodus 20:3).

I. The Declaration of the First Commandment

The first thing that I want you to notice is the declaration of it: *“I am the LORD thy God.”* The declaration of it, the fact of it: God is. Now, how do we declare that so emphatically?

A. Nature Declares It

Well, I want to say, to begin with, that nature declares it. Romans 1:20: *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen”* (Romans 1:20). That is, we see the invisible God by the visible creation. Everything that you and I see bears this stamp: “made by God.” And even Aristotle said that the beauty, the order, the harmony of the universe is but an expression of the will of God.

You know, our scientists speak a lot about the laws of science, and they say “the laws of science,” but they never stop to ask whose laws those laws of science are. The scientist is no more capable of creating those laws than Columbus was capable of

creating North America. They discover those laws, they use those laws, and so many of them never stop and ask, “Whose laws are these?” As you look around, everything seems to declare the glory of God. You take even a tiny cell—that smallest unit of living matter, the cell—that Paul Doty of Harvard University said is as complicated as New York City. I hope that yours are in a lot better shape—all of yours are—but as complicated as New York City, and that’s getting more complicated every day. But even smaller than that cell is the atom, and a billion hydrogen atoms are no thicker than the page of paper there in this songbook or there in your Bible. And, even then, the atom is mostly nothing—mostly nothing. There’s more space, relatively, between the parts of the atom than there are the stars in the universe. Did you know that if you were to squeeze all of the nothingness out of everybody on earth, they could fit in a two-gallon pail? That’s right. You see, we’re just mostly nothing. We knew that already, didn’t we? We’re just mostly nothing, except for the fact that God made us, and He loves us.

But we think that we leave the smallness and the complexity of our universe, and then we think of the vastness of our universe with light traveling at the rate of 286,000 miles per second. That’s past the moon, just like that—almost lost my watch. Listen. That’s past the moon, just like that. In two seconds you’re past the moon, and yet you wouldn’t reach the nearest star until four years later. And ten billion years later you wouldn’t be to the edge of the known universe—ten billion years later, traveling at 286,000 plus miles per second.

Think of the vastness of this universe and the minuteness of it. You tell me all that just happened? that it formed itself, that it runs itself, and that it orders itself? See a watch like this one? I say, “There must be a watchmaker.” What about the precise atomic clocks of the universe? When I see a house, I say, there must be an architect. What about our bodies that are fearfully and wonderfully made? “Oh,” the evolutionist says, “that just happened. Give it enough time, and anything can happen. You put some monkeys in a room, blindfold them, and sit them down at some typewriters and let them peck away, and, given enough time, they’ll come up with a Shakespearean sonnet.” That’s the theory. That’s the reason why I tell folks that *it takes more faith to believe the monkey story than it does to believe the Word of God*. Brother, that’s what they want you to believe: that, given enough time, frogs will turn into princes—just somehow, just through evolution—and no one will even have to kiss them. “It just takes time,” they say.

B. Conscience Declares It

Well, I want to tell you something, friend. Creation declares, “I am the LORD thy God.” But not only does creation declare it; conscience also declares it. Did you know that, if you go back as far back as you can go in history, then you will find that men have always wanted to worship? And did you know that if you go, today, across the great vast

reaches of this earth, no matter where you go—into the deepest, darkest parts of the jungle, or wherever, to the frozen polar caps—you will find there is an innate God-consciousness, where man wants to worship? And *for every universal hunger there is a universal fulfillment*. Man hungers for food, and so there is milk, grain, bread, and meat for him to eat. Man thirsts for water, and so God put springs and rivers, and wills that there's water. Man longs for companionship, and so there are friends in other people. I'm saying that for every universal hunger there is a universal fulfillment. How do you explain the fact that all men everywhere hunger for God? I'll tell you why. The Scripture says, "God hath set eternity in their hearts" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). King David said, "*As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God*" (Psalm 42:1). That is, there's a hunger, a universal hunger for God.

C. The Scripture Declares It

But not only does conscience declare it; the Scripture also declares it. You know, the Bible never argues the fact of God; it just says something like, "*I am the LORD thy God*" (Exodus 20:2), "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1)—no philosophy about it, no rationale about it, and no defense of it—just the pure, simple, profound statement of it: "*I am the LORD thy God.*" The Bible does not argue the fact of atheism; it just simply gives one-half of one verse, in Psalm 53, verse 1: "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psalm 53:1). *Now a man who denies facts is a fool, and a man who denies the supreme fact must be the supreme fool.* "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*"

D. Faith Declares It

But not only does Scripture declare it; faith also declares it. Sometimes, those people who want to be scientific and pseudo-philosophical, they say, "Well, you Christians just simply believe, by faith, that there is a God—just by blind faith." Well, you're right in the first part, and you're wrong in the second part. We believe, by faith, that there is a God—but not by blind faith. Learn this about faith this morning—write it in your heart: faith is rooted in evidence. Now I've just given you some of the evidences, but faith goes beyond evidence. It has to, in order to be faith. And then faith becomes its own best evidence. It is rooted in evidence, it goes beyond evidence, and it becomes its own best evidence: "I believe, because I believe." You see, God so made me, and God so made you, that you would respond to Him in faith. You are created and made to respond with your spirit to God, just as your eye is to respond to light, and your ear is to respond to sound. The spirit is so made—so created—that you would respond to God by faith. It is not blind faith; it is reasonable faith.

"But," he says, "nonetheless, it is faith." "Prove that there is a God," he says. I look at him, smile, and say, "Prove there is no God." Amen? Oh, he thinks he can go into the

laboratory and prove things. To try to find God in the laboratory would be like me tearing that piano apart to try and find the note. You know, you're going about it the wrong way, you see. He says, "Well, you Christians, you just *believe* there's a God." I say, "You atheists *believe* that there is no God." Amen? It's all faith. I have faith in God; he has faith that there is no God. He cannot prove it; he just simply believes that there is no God by faith. All people are believers: I have chosen to believe in God; he chooses not to believe in God. But why? Not because there is no evidence there. His problem is not intellectual; never is his problem intellectual.

Psalm 53, verse 1, says: "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psalm 53:1), and the word for "fool" is the Hebrew word *nabal*, and it doesn't speak of intellectual deficiency—it speaks of moral deficiency. The word *nabal*, translated "fool," speaks of moral perversity. Notice what it says: "*The fool hath said*"—the immoral man hath said—"*in his heart, There is no God.*" The problem is not in his head; the problem is in his heart. Now, actually, in the Hebrew it says: "The fool hath said in his heart, 'No God.'" The words *there is* are simply supplied by the translator; but it literally reads, "The fool hath said, 'No God.'" It's very similar to when you'd be sitting down to a table for a meal, and the dessert is passed, and you say, "No dessert": not "there is no dessert," just "no dessert—I don't want any." You see, the reason that people don't know God is that they don't want God. "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*"—but really, "No God, please"—that is, "No God for me." The declaration of it: "*I am the LORD thy God*" (Exodus 20:2).

II. The Discrimination of the First Commandment

Secondly, I want you to notice the discrimination of it—the discrimination of it: "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" (Exodus 20:3). Not only will God not allow a denial, but God also will not allow a rival. You see, some don't believe in God, others believe in the wrong god, and some believe in too many gods. The Greeks had 30,000 gods, and today, in India, people may starve, while sacred cows that are looked upon as divine may roam the streets, and so forth.

You can make a god of anything. You know, we Americans pride ourselves on the fact that we're not idolaters; but, friend, we may be idolaters. The Bible spoke of some who were "*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*" (2 Timothy 3:4). Pleasure can become your God. The Bible speaks of some "*whose God is their belly*" (Philippians 3:19). The Bible says that covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). Some love the almighty dollar more than they love the Almighty God.

Let me give you a test for idolatry. If there's anything that you fear more than God, then you're an idolater. Secondly, if there's anything that you trust more than God, then you're an idolater. Thirdly, if there's anything that you love more than God, then you're

an idolater. Anything that you fear more than God, anything that you trust more than God, anything that you love more than God—that’s the meaning of the phrase before me. God is saying, “I don’t want anything first. I demand preeminence”: the discrimination of it; and discrimination is not always bad. You’d better learn the difference between good and bad, and cleave to the good, and refuse the evil. *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”*

The Bible, in the Old Testament, spoke of some fisherman who, after they caught their fish, turned around and worshiped the net—that is, they worshiped their business. I know some men like that. You speak to a man, and you say, “How do you support yourself?” he says, “My business supports me”: that’s idolatry.

A little boy brought a loaf of bread, and someone asked him, “Where did you get that bread?” “Oh,” he said, “I got it from the grocery.” He said, “Where did the grocer get it?” “Well,” he said, “the grocer got it from the baker.” He said, “Well, how did the baker get it?” He said, “Well, he made it out of flour.” “Well, where did he get that flour?” “He got it from the miller.” “Well, where did the miller get the flour?” “Well, he got it from the farmer.” “Well, where did the farmer get it?” “Well, he got it from God.” “Well, let me ask you another question, or the same question: Where did you get that loaf of bread?” This time, he smiled, and said, “From God.” Amen? You see, dear friend, don’t you say that your business takes care of you. It is God that takes care of you. It is God that sends the rain to make the grain grow. It is God that causes life.

God doesn’t have to take your life, dear friend. All He has to do is stop giving it. It is in Him that *“we live, and move, and have our being”* (Acts 17:28). And anything that you love more than God causes you to be an idolater. Anything that you hear more than God causes you to be an idolater. Anything that you trust more than God causes you to be an idolater. And God says, “I will not share my glory with another.” There is the discrimination of it.

III. The Demands of the First Commandment

Now the third thing I want you to notice: not only the declaration of it, and the discrimination of it; I want you to notice the demands of it—the demands of it. Listen: *“I am the LORD thy God”* (Exodus 20:2). *“The LORD thy God”*—this demands that He be absolutely, reputedly, your Master, your Lord, who reigns supremely in your life. If He is our Lord, our God, then that demands that we serve Him, and that we obey Him. Do you love Him? Then obey Him. Is He the Lord your God? I said that the supreme fool must be the man that denies the supreme fact. But perhaps there’s a bigger fool than that, and this is the fool that admits there is a God and then doesn’t live like it. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 1 and verse 21, *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations,*

and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans 1:21). I tell you, ladies and gentleman, it is not enough this morning for you to say, "Yes, God exists," because when you know God, then it is incumbent upon you—it is demanded of you—that you glorify God. Do you know what's wrong in America, today? We have a show of godliness, but we deny the power thereof—the authority thereof (2 Timothy 3:5). We admit that there is a God, and yet we do not obey God, and we heap judgment upon ourselves.

Somebody handed me this recently—it's a commentary written by Jenkins Lloyd Jones, who is a daily newspaper publisher in Tulsa, Oklahoma. And this talented editor and writer has written something that I want to read to you. Jones says that, "The old theory that crime was the handmaiden of poverty is proving false with the increasing percentage of young lawbreakers with fat wallets. Another reason for increasing crime is moral illiteracy—the fault of parents who themselves were the overindulged post-WWII generation, or the decay of religion, and an increasingly valueless education system." And Jones thinks that the time is late, and that America must do something if it is not to become a jungle. And then, he says—and I quote—"In city after city the old are hunted in the streets. And even the physically able barricade themselves in their homes after dark, self-jailed for no crime, offering some solutions..." Jones goes on to say, "We must react to anti-social behavior. We must end the zany period during which the courts strained at gnats in the process of punishing the plainly guilty, while the learned justices were safely delivered by a limousine and body guards, and innocent people dropped all around them. Punishment must start early. The school vandal must wash the school windows. The park vandal must hoe the park bushes. The juvenile thief and burglar must do time, even if it's two weekends in a detention barracks on the municipal potato farm. Forgiveness hasn't worked. It is time for the short SWAT and the swift kick. Otherwise, there will be no *America the Beautiful*. Our lovely country could go. The enormous land power of offended citizens must be awakened and that creeping jungle slashed back. If the plea is made that the prisons are full, well, pine boards and barbed wire are cheap. The sentimentalists have given us chaos, and, at the moment, decent Americans are to rise up and say, 'We will no longer take it,' and the moment they do that," he says, "national salvation will begin."

Now I don't think that's the only answer, but I'm saying, dear friend, that we have come to a day and an age in which there is no fear of God, and some people have the idea that God is a soft, namby-pamby granddaddy sitting up on a throne who says, "You naughty children!" The God of heaven and earth is a flaming fire. "*Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord*" (Romans 12:19). The Bible says, "Obey every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake" (1 Peter 2:13). This is the demands of it—the demands of it: "*I am the LORD thy God.*" He is thrice the Holy Jehovah of heaven, whom we must obey, if we would survive.

IV. The Discovery of the First Commandment

But now I want you to notice, not only the demands of it, but I'd like for you to notice, finally, the discovery of it. Notice the wording of this first commandment: *"I am the LORD thy God"* (Exodus 20:2). It's not enough for you to admit that there is a God. You must discover Him and know Him personally. He is to become the Lord your God.

Here are some ladies around a baby carriage. They're looking at a baby. One of them says, "My, what a healthy baby!" The other one says, "My, what a beautiful baby!" And the other one says, "What a chubby baby!" But one woman steps up and says, "That's my baby!" It makes a difference, doesn't it?

Oh, you see, "the Lord is my shepherd"—not "the Lord is a shepherd," not even "the Lord is a good shepherd": *"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want"* (Psalm 23:1). It is not until you can say, "I am His, and He is mine," that you can say, "I shall not want." Have you discovered Him personally? Is He the Lord your God, or is He simply the Lord a God? I said that the greatest fact that I know is this: that God exists, that you can know Him personally, that, dear friend, you can bring your life into harmony with the One who made the world—that you can know Him personally.

A. You Must Come to Him Submissively

Now, let me tell you how to discover Him this morning—how you can know Him personally. How must you come? Number one: You must come to Him submissively—submissively. Listen to this scripture—the words of Jesus—Matthew chapter 11 and verse 25: *"At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O father, Lord of heaven and of earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"* (Matthew 11:25). Are you listening? Jesus said, "Father, I thank you for the way you've done it. Lord, you haven't said that a man that has a high IQ has a head start toward you. As a matter of fact, when a man comes in intellectual pride, you hide yourself from him." *"Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes"* (Matthew 11:25).

How do you know God? You don't know God, dear friend, because you go into your laboratory and discern God. You put your intellectual pride in the dust, you lay aside your theorems and your philosophies, you lay aside your formulas and your measurements and your scales and your calculations, and you come to God like a little child, and God will reveal Himself to you. God has revealed these things unto babes. You see what is He talking about? A child is humble and teachable. God will teach you if you want to know, but I can't prove God to you. You can't disprove God to me. But I'm telling you this: God will reveal Himself to you. God will reveal Himself to you. *"Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."*

The only thing that you know about God you know by revelation, as God, through His Word, with the Holy Spirit, speaks to your heart.

B. You Must to Him Come Sincerely

Now if you would discover God, you must come, number one, submissively, like a little child. Secondly, you must come sincerely—sincerely—on this last Sunday. You're to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. You're to want God; you're to hunger and thirst after God. Jeremiah 29, verse 13: *“And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart”* (Jeremiah 29:13). You can come to church Sunday after Sunday half-hearted, and go away empty. But when you come with a heart wanting to know God, longing to know God, saying, “My poor soul, it must be fed,” God will speak to your heart. God will. *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”* (Matthew 5:6).

C. You Must Come to Him Scripturally

But not only must you come, dear friend, submissively, and not only must you come sincerely, but also you must come scripturally—scripturally. You see, God has revealed Himself in this book. This is the one book that God has given to make Himself known to you. God will never contradict this book, and if you want to know God, then you're going to know Him through the revelation of this book. The Bible says, *“Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17). And what does the Word of God tell us? The Word of God tells us that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and that no one comes to the Father but by Him (John 14:6). And so to know the Lord our God—to know Him, for Him to be your God—Jesus Christ must be your Savior.

Jesus said, *“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). If you want God to be real to you, then receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Even the name of Jesus means, *“Jehovah saves.”* *“I am Jehovah, thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me”* (Exodus 20:2-3). And the way to come to Jehovah is through Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “I am the way.” That means, “Without me there is no going.” Jesus said, “I am the truth.” That means, “Without me there is no knowing.” Jesus said, “I am the life.” That means, “Without me there is no living.” *“I am the way, the truth, and life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). But if you want God to be real to you—if you want Him to be the Lord your God—then receive Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord. It's only then that you can know Him.

Conclusion

Some weeks ago, I preached at the dedicatory services at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, and I told those students a story. Back in the pioneer days of our country, when the railroads were being built, men dreamed of a railroad that would link

the East and the West. They called it the transcontinental railroad. The plans were schemed, and they began the work, and the ribbons of steel crept closer and closer till finally they met somewhere out in the West, near the borders of New Mexico and Colorado. And they planned a great occasion, a great celebration. They brought steam engines there to blow their whistles, and the governors of both states were there. And they took a silver hammer to drive the spike, and they took a golden spike. And that last spike was the cause of great celebration as they drove that golden spike down. And when the spike was driven in, the people gave a great shout, and they said, "It's finished! It's finished! East and West are now connected!"

When I think of that story, I think of Calvary, because there were some spikes there too, but not a golden spike; not a silver hammer, but an iron hammer. And rusty spikes were driven into the quivering flesh of the Son of God. The only gold that was there that day was the gold of His blood; the only silver, the silver of His tears. They drove those spikes into His hands and His feet. But when they did, Jesus bowed His head, and He said, "It is finished," for He took with one hand Holy God, and He took with the other hand sinful man, and in the blood of His cross He reconciled God and man.

You see, dear friend, if you know God, then you'll not know Him by the ladder of logic, and you'll not come to Him by the rocket of reason; the way you'll come to God is by the railroad of redemption—the old *T and O*:

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

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

Now I wonder today, friend, are you willing to do that? Are you willing to say, "O God, I want to know you; God, I don't want to be like a fish in a tree; God, I don't want to be like a bird beneath the water; God, I want my life to have meaning; I want you to be the Lord, my God; I want to know that my sins are forgiven; I want to know that when I die I'm going to heaven; and when I live, I want a cause to serve, a song to sing, and something to believe in"?

Friend, do you have that today? Do you know the One who said, "I am the LORD thy God...Thou shalt have no others gods before me?" You can know Him today. You can know Him personally if you will receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. God will come into your heart and give you a new nature and make you a child of God. If I could do it for you, then I would, but I cannot. If I could walk this way for you, then I would. If I could pray and receive Christ for you, then I would. If I knew in my heart, then I'd give my right arm up here to see you saved—if that was the only way.

But, dear friend, Jesus already died for you. There's nothing I can do to make you any more savable. Jesus died that you might be saved. The Scripture says: "*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*" (John 6:37). And I promise you, on the authority

of this book that I preach from this morning, that if you will come sincerely, submissively, and scripturally, and say, “O Lord God, I believe that Christ died for my sins, and today, as my act of faith, I repent of my sins, and I receive Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior,” then God will make you a new creature, just like that. Oh, you’ll have to grow. You won’t be perfect. You’re not going to sprout wings and get a halo—not right away—but you’ll be a new creature, and you’ll begin the first step of the most exciting adventure that a man could know. For it is in Him that “*we live, and move, and have our being*” (Acts 17:28).

The Second Commandment

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 22, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:4–6

Outline

Introduction

- I. A Proper Conception of God
- II. A Persuasive Communication of God
- III. A Prayerful Contemplation of God
 - A. God Desires Worship
 - B. God Deserves Worship
 - C. God Demands Worship

Conclusion

Introduction

All right now, would you take God's Word, please, and turn to Exodus chapter 20—Exodus chapter 20. We're preaching through the Ten Commandments, and we've come now to the second of these ten. We read verses 4 through 6—Exodus 20:4–6: *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments"* (Exodus 20:4–6).

Now I don't know everything about you, but I know one thing about you: you have an instinctive desire to worship God. It is true of all men everywhere. Man worships instinctively almost as instinctively as he breathes. Now you say, "What about an atheist?" Well, a man is not born an atheist; he only becomes an atheist when he commits moral suicide. People have an instinctive desire to worship God. Man was created to worship, and if he does not worship the true God, then he will worship a false God. And if he does not worship the true God the right way, then he will worship in the wrong way. The First Commandment tells us who to worship: *"I am the LORD thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me"* (Exodus 20:2–3). The Second Commandment tells us how to worship. The First Commandment forbids false gods. The Second Commandment forbids false worship.

I. A Proper Conception of God

I want us to look at this Second Commandment under three simple headings, the first of which is this: In order to keep this commandment, we must have, number one, a proper conception of God—a proper conception of God. This is the reason that the Lord has so emphatically forbidden the making of a graven image, because it misrepresents God. No God, who is a spiritual God, as our God is, could be represented by any material, physical, or visible image. You see, the Bible tells us, in John chapter 4 and verse 24, that God is a Spirit: *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* (John 4:24)

I guess most of us have heard about the little girl who is said to have been drawing a picture of God, and someone asked her what she was drawing. She said, “I’m drawing a picture of God.” And they said, “Well, honey, you can’t do that.” She said, “Why not?” And they said, “Well, no one knows what God looks like.” She said, “They will when I am finished.” Well, not so—not so. You can take your paints and your oils and your tools of sculpturing, and you can take your pens and your pencils, and you can take all of that, but you will never ever with these visible, material things be able to represent the great, immortal, invisible, eternal, spiritual God.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24) That’s the reason why Isaiah said, in Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 25, speaking for the Lord, *“To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal?”*—shall I be equal?—*“saith the Holy One.”* (Isaiah 40:25) Now, you see, the worst thing about an image is that is supposed to represent God, but it just doesn’t do it; it’s a bad picture.

No one likes to have a bad picture of himself in circulation. Yesterday, I went with some of our young men, we went on a canoeing trip, a father and son thing. And when we were finished canoeing, one of the men in the group said, “Pastor, I want to take your picture.” He had a Polaroid camera, and so I stepped back, and he took my picture. And when I looked at it, he had taken the top of my head off. Now that was a terrible thing for him to do to me—just took my head off. When we have our picture made, we’re very careful to look at it to see if it looks like us; we want it to at least look like us; and, really, we’d like for it to look a little better, wouldn’t we? We really like those photographers who say, “Where there’s beauty, I take it; where there’s none, I make it.” Those are the kinds of photographers we really want. But, you see, nobody wants a misrepresentation of himself.

What is wrong with an image? It degrades God; it misrepresents God. You see, it distorts the idea of God. Romans speaks about it—Romans chapter 1 and verses 22 and 23 speaks of those who want to make graven images. The Bible says: *“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts,*

and creeping things.” (Romans 1:22–23) Can you see how that would degrade God? Another reason that God is against the use of images is that really what a man is doing when he worships an image is that he’s worshipping the work of his own hands. That is a form of self-worship. When a man worships the work of his own hands, then he’s really worshipping himself. You see, image-worship humanizes God, and it defiles man.

But somebody says, “Well, Brother Rogers, those of us who use statues and images and so forth in our worship, we’re not really worshipping the image; when we have a graven image, that is an aid to worship. We’ve got enough sense to know that’s not really God; it just reminds us of God.” Well, that sounds pretty good, but I want to ask you ladies a question. Suppose that you suddenly opened the door and there in a room was your husband with his arms around another woman, had her drawn up real close, and he’s embracing her and kissing her. You say to him, “What are you doing?” “Oh,” he says, “now I know that this looks bad. But let me tell you, she reminded me so much of you that really I was just thinking of you. I had you on my mind the whole time. She just simply was representing you.” Now, lady, would you buy that? I don’t think that you would.

And I think that you can understand the next part of this verse, when it says, “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image... Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them:*”—for what?—“*for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God*” (Exodus 20:4–5)—“*a jealous God.*” Now sometimes we don’t understand that, because we think in human terms, and we say, “What right does God have to be jealous? Isn’t jealousy a bad attribute?” Not necessarily so. It may be a very good attribute.

You see, there’s a good kind of jealousy, and there’s a bad kind of jealousy. Now, what is the wrong kind of jealousy? You see, there are certain times when it is very wrong to be jealous. For example, one athlete never has a right to be jealous of another athlete, because he doesn’t own athletics. There’s room for more than one athlete in the world. One musician never has the right to be jealous of another musician, because he doesn’t own music. One minister never has the right to be jealous of another minister, because he doesn’t own the ministry, and so forth. One artist never has the right to be jealous of another artist, because there is more than one artist. But, you see, a husband does have a right to be jealous of his wife, because he is to be the only husband that she has. A wife does have the right—in the true sense of the word. I’m not talking about suspicion now; I’m talking about a person who says, “This is my wife. She belongs to me; she was given to me in marriage.” How much more so does God—the thrice-holy God of Israel—have a right to be a jealous God! That means there is no other.

There may be more than one artist. There may be more than one athlete. There may be more than one musician. But, folks, there’s only one God, and His name is Jehovah. “*I am the LORD thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me*” (Exodus 20:2–3).

That means no rebuttal. That means no refusal. That means no rival. *“I the LORD thy God am a jealous God”* (Exodus 20:5).

Well, let me help you understand it. Suppose that you were God. Suppose that you created the heavens and the earth. And then suppose that you upheld them with all your power, and then your creatures were worshipping a beetle, or a frog, or a stick, or a statue, or a denomination, or a church, or anything else—when you’re the Lord God who made it all. You see, as we said last week when we were talking about the eternity and the centrality of God, God will not be a part-time God. He will not be a moonlighting God. He’ll not share His throne with another. His palace cannot be a duplex. *“I am the LORD thy God.”*

II. A Persuasive Communication of God

You see, this is the reason why the Bible says, *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image”* (Exodus 20:4), because it is not a proper conception of God. In order to keep this commandment, there must be, number one, a proper conception of God. Number two: In order to keep this commandment, there must be a persuasive communication of God—a persuasive communication of God. You see, the way that we worship communicates what God is like. We teach when we worship, and, if we worship wrongly, then we’re teaching wrong lessons about God. If I worship an image, then I am teaching those that watch me that God is like that image, when God really is not like that image. We teach our children by the way we worship.

Many have not understood this part of the passage, and so, let’s read it again. Listen to it. God says, in verse 5, *“Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”* (Exodus 20:5) Now some people haven’t understood that. They say, “Brother Rogers, that doesn’t seem right, that children should have to suffer for the sins of their fathers.” Well, whether it seems right to you or not, it is so. We even know it to be so in the natural realm. Little children suffer if their daddy is an alcoholic, don’t they? Sure they do. They suffer for the sins of their parents. We see it in the natural realm. Notice here, God does not say that the children are going to be held guilty for the sins of their parents. The children are never held guilty for the sins of their parents. That’s not what He’s saying. He is saying that they suffer as the result of the sins of the parents. And what is the sin that God is talking about? Well, in order to understand the Scripture, you must see it in its context. Any text taken out of its context is but a pretext.

Now, what is God saying here? He says, don’t worship an idol: *“For I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children up to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.”* (Exodus 20:5) What God is saying is

this: that wrong worship will cause your children, your grandchildren, and your great-grandchildren to suffer. You say, “How is that, Brother Rogers?”

Well, let me show you something. Turn, if you will, please, to 2 Chronicles chapter 26—and it’s important that you turn, because we’ll be there for a moment—2 Chronicles chapter 26, we begin reading in verse 16. I want you to see the story as it unfolds and as it illustrates what we’re talking about. We’re saying, dear friend, that we’re not to worship images, because in order to keep this commandment there must be not only a proper conception of God, but also a persuasive communication. Now, beginning in verse 16—we’re talking about Uzziah the king; when it says “he,” it’s talking about Uzziah: *“But when he was strong,”—Uzziah—“his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense...”—Uzziah the king sinned. How did he sin? Did he steal? No. Did he get drunk? No. Did he commit adultery? No. How did he sin? He sinned by worshipping. He worshiped the right God in the wrong way. Now, watch it: “[He] went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. Then Uzziah was wroth...”—He thought, “I have a right to worship God any way that I like; worship is a private thing.” I suppose that he thought, “I’m the king, and I’ll do it any way that I like”—“Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censor in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hasted to go out, because the LORD had smitten him” (2 Chronicles 26:19–20).*

Now up to this point, he has abused worship, and his sin has found him out. And here is a father suffering for his own sin. That’s so far, but I want you to continue to read. He had a son, and his son was a wonderful young man, twenty-five years of age when Uzziah died. And I want you to read here in 2 Chronicles chapter 27 and verse 1: *“Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.”* Skip to verse 2: *“And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did.”—must have been a fine young man—“did that which was right in the sight of the LORD.”* But watch it now, there’s a flaw in his life—*“howbeit...”—notice how the Bible puts that word howbeit to show you that there’s something wrong here—“howbeit he entered not into the temple of the*

LORD” (2 Chronicles 27:2).

Now he was a good man. He believed God, but he refused to go to the house of worship. And why did he refuse to go to the house of worship? His father had been hurt. There was a church fuss, and, no doubt, he had heard about some of the details of it. And so he was one, like so many young people today, who say, “Yeah, I believe in God, but I’m kind of turned off by the church.” You see, here’s a father who worshiped in a wrong way, and here’s a son now who is picking up on what his father did. And so he wouldn’t go to the house of the Lord. His feelings had been hurt, or something was wrong. And the Bible says: *“howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD”* (2 Chronicles 27:2).

Is the story finished yet? No. All right, let’s go on down, and I want you to notice that Jotham now had a son who would have been Uzziah’s grandson. And begin reading here in chapter 27 and verse 9: *“And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead”* (2 Chronicles 27:9). Now, what was Ahaz like? We said that Jotham was a good man; he just refused to go to church. But what was Ahaz like? Ahaz was an enthusiastic servant of Satan. What did he do? Look, beginning in chapter 28, verse 1: *“Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images”—idol worship—“for Baalim. Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire”* (2 Chronicles 28:1–3). He offered his babies to a pagan God as a sacrifice—a burnt offering with his own children. This is the grandson of Uzziah, who worshiped in the wrong way. Oh, it’s such a sad story!

Look again in verse 24 of this same chapter—chapter 28 and verse 24: *“And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD”* (2 Chronicles 28:24). Here was a man who nailed the house of God shut—the doors were shut.

Now I want you to see this circumstance, this series of events. First of all, Uzziah was a father with misguided worship. Jotham was a son with neglected worship. Ahaz was a grandson with corruptive worship. And the great grandchildren were sacrificed to idols. *“I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me”* (Exodus 20:5). I want to tell you something. There are some of you who are sitting here, who, if you’re not careful, your great grandchildren will suffer spiritual ruin, because you failed to worship God in the right way, because you did not understand the importance of worship.

We communicate truth by the way that we worship, and if we worship the Lord our God in a wrong way, then we are saying something to those who watch us. And the

heart is so easily diverted from spiritual worship to carnal worship, which does not represent God at all.

III. A Prayerful Contemplation of God

Why does the Lord say that we're to worship Him without graven images? Number one: because there must be a proper conception of God—God is a Spirit. Number two: because there must be a persuasive communication of God—we teach by the way we worship. When God told the Israelites how to worship, He told them to do it in a very special way. He said, “When your children shall say, ‘What does this mean?’ then, you’ll be able to answer them.” What are your children learning about you and the way that you worship God? Now the third and final thing that I want you to notice in this passage this morning is, not only must there be a proper conception of God, not only must there be a persuasive communication of God, but this text also teaches us that there must be a prayerful contemplation of God—a prayerful contemplation of God. You see, it’s not all negative: “*Thou shalt not...*” You cannot have a negative without a positive. Look in verse 6, and there you’ll see the positive.

Go back now to Exodus chapter 20, where we started, and look in verse 6. So many people don’t see the whole commandment. The Bible says that He showed “*mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments*” (Exodus 20:6). You see, that’s positive; that’s not negative. If you fail to worship a graven image, then you’re not keeping this commandment. If that’s all that you’re doing, friend, you’re not keeping this commandment. Until you love God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, with all of your mind, and with all of your strength, you’ve not kept this commandment. We are to love the Lord our God. You see, with every negative commandment there’s a positive commandment. For example, if you’re outside, and I say, “Don’t stay outside”—that’s negative. What does that mean? “Come inside.” That’s positive, you see. You can’t have a negative without a positive. When the Bible tells us, “Don’t worship wrongly,” it also says, “Worship rightly”—“Worship rightly.”

Not only does this commandment teach us that we must have a proper conception of God, that God is a Spirit; not only does it teach that there must be a persuasive communication of God, so our children will worship rightly; but it tells us also that we’re to love the Lord. There is to be a prayerful contemplation of God. That is what worship is. Dear friend, worship is loving God, worship is adoring God, worship is praising God, and worship is reverencing God. Do you do that? If not, then you’re breaking this commandment.

A. God Desires Worship

Why is worship so important? There is absolutely nothing more important than

worship. Let me say that again. There is nothing more important than worship. Why is worship so important? Number one: God desires it—God desires it. The Bible says, in John chapter 4 and verse 23, “*The Father seeketh such to worship him*” (John 4:23). You see, that’s really all God wants from you. If you gave God your intellect, then He wouldn’t be any smarter; if you gave God your money, then He wouldn’t be any richer; and if you gave God your strength, then He wouldn’t be any stronger. The thing that God seeks from you is your worship: “*The Father seeketh such to worship him*” (John 4:23).

Why did God make you? Somebody may say, “Well, God made us to serve Him.” Friend, if He wanted servants, then He could create a billion angels—just like that—that would serve Him a lot better than we would, who would never once say *no*, and would carry everything out to perfection. No, God wants something out of you that He can get from no one else, and that is your worship. Angels can worship; but God wants the peculiar kind of worship that only a human can give—the worship that a redeemed child of God can give. “*The Father seeketh such to worship him.*” That’s what it’s all about.

And listen. Let me tell you something that ought to excite you. We were talking about being envious of different people, and being jealous, and how foolish that is. You know, there are some people who can sing better than you, and some people who may give more than you. There may be some people who can study better than you. There may be someone who can preach or teach better than you. But did you know that, when it comes to worship, we’re all equal? Did you know that? No one can worship God better than you, if you want to. Isn’t that great? Isn’t that grand? Oh, listen. That’s something that we can all do equally alike, and that is of supreme importance. That pleases the Father more than anything else: worshipping Him.

B. God Deserves Worship

We’re asking the question, Why should there be a prayerful contemplation of God? Number one: God desires it. Number two: God deserves it. Do you know what the word *worship* means? It actually comes from the word, or the words *worth ship*. It shows what we think God is worth. You see, we worship Him because He is worthy of worship. Let me tell you something. You show me the way you worship, and I’ll tell you what you think of God. How much God is worth to you will be shown in the way that you worship. The reason that you worship so poorly is that you have such a low estimation of God. Worthy is the Lamb. Worthy is the Lamb to receive honor and glory and power and majesty and dominion forever and ever and ever. He alone is worthy. That’s why we ought to worship Him. Who else, what else, is worthy of our time, but to worship Jehovah God? This scripture tells us that we’re to love Him.

C. God Demands Worship

Not only should there be this prayerful contemplation, because God desires it, and because God deserves it, but also, my dear friend, God demands it—God demands it. When Satan wanted Jesus to worship him, Jesus quoted that scripture and said to Satan, *“It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve”* (Luke 4:8). *“It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God.”* God demands it. I’m so glad that He puts it this way: *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”* Did you notice the order: first, worship, and then, service? *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”* It will be a great day in Christendom when Christians learn that worship comes before work. I don’t care how much you serve the Lord: if you’re not worshipping, then your service is empty, vain, and worthless. Worship must come before work. Somebody said that the first duty of the church is to spread the gospel. It is not. The first duty of the church is to worship the Lord. The same Lord that said, *“Go ye…”* (Matthew 28:18) said, *“Tarry ye…”* (Luke 24:49).

“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Luke 4:8). Our first duty is to be worthy to serve the Lord, through worthy worship of the Lord. *“Lord, come into us, infuse us, and fill us.”* Do you worship the Lord? I say, do you worship the Lord? Your body is to be a temple, and out of that temple the incense of praise is to be going up continually—out of your heart, and out of your mouth. That’s what this is all about.

We’re mighty busy, some of us Baptists. Somebody said that before you join a Baptist church you ought to have a physical examination. Somebody else said that, if Baptists had a patron saint, he’d be Saint Busy. We’re all busy, and there’s nothing wrong with busyness, but I want to tell you that God’s order is, *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”* Work is second; worship is first.

Conclusion

Why should we worship? I tell you, friend: God desires it, God deserves it, and God demands it. And it is not enough for you to fail to bow down before a graven image. Out of your heart continually must come up genuine praise to the Lord. *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). How do you keep this commandment? A proper conception of God, a persuasive communication of God, and a prayerful contemplation of God.

Fritz Kreisler was a great violinist. He played on a Stradivarius violin. He had not always owned that violin. He wanted it, but it belonged to a very wealthy Britisher. Fritz Kreisler offered to buy it, but the Britisher said that it was not for sale at any price. Fritz said, *“Can I come and play the instrument?”* And the old man let him in his house.

Tenderly, he picked up that old violin and caressed it. And then he took the bow and began to draw that bow across the strings. When he did, it seemed that the angels in heaven were singing, and the old man just sat there and he wept. Kreisler, again, tried to buy the violin, but the old man said, "No, it is not for sale, but it is yours to keep forever, for you are the master; you alone are worthy of it."

I want to tell you, ladies and gentleman: God made you to serve Him, and that's music in His ears. And He alone is worthy. He alone is worthy. He alone is worthy. There is nothing else that you can give your life to that's going to matter. Before long, folks, it's going to be all over! He alone is worthy! He alone is worthy! Your life belongs to Him. Have you given it to Him?

The Third Commandment

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 29, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:7

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Abuse of the Name
 - A. Profanity
 - 1. Contempt for God
 - 2. Rebellion Against God
 - 3. A Rotten Character
 - 4. A Complete Lack of Understanding
 - 5. Hatred for One's Fellow Man
 - 6. A Warped Concept of God
 - B. Frivolity
 - 1. Humor
 - 2. Vain Repetition
 - C. Hypocrisy
- II. The Use of the Name
 - A. Be Saved by the Name of Jesus
 - B. Serve in the Name of Jesus
 - 1. With His Authority
 - 2. For His Approval
 - C. Be Secure in the Name of Jesus

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn to Exodus chapter 20, and we'll take up our reading in the first verse, and we'll read the verses leading to our text by way of review and recapitulation. All right, Exodus chapter 20, verse 1: *"And God spake all of these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my*

commandments.” And now the text for today: “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:1–7).

For emphasis, may we read it one more time: *“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).* Would you join me one more time in prayer? Our Heavenly Father, we pray today, in the name of Jesus, for an anointing as we teach your Word. And, Father, we pray that the Holy Spirit will impart truth to hungry hearts and warning to sinful hearts. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Someone has well said that speech is an indication of character. Jesus also said, *“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34).* And so you can tell what a man is by what a man says. Socrates, when he first met a man, said, “Speak, that I may see you,” for, you see, it’s what’s on the inside that comes out, and our speech simply reveals our character.

In the country, they say, “What’s down in the well comes up in the bucket.” Now this is particularly true in the way that we talk about God. You show me how you use the name of God, and I’ll tell you some very true things about your character. Here this particular scripture deals with the misuse—the misuse and abuse—of the name of God. And so our message this morning will come under two headings: first of all, the abuse of the name—taking the name in vanity; and then, secondly, the use of the name—taking the name in victory. And everybody, when they take the name of God, either takes the name of God in vanity or they take the name of God in victory.

I. The Abuse of the Name

Now, how do we take the name of God in vanity? How do we abuse the holy name of God? May I mention this morning three ways?

A. Profanity

First of all, we abuse the name of God by profanity—by profanity. And I suppose this is done more than any other type of abusing the name of God. All sins are terrible, but how terrible is the sin of profanity, for the sin of profanity shows, at the same time, an empty head and a wicked heart! And it is a sin that God will surely judge, for the Bible says God *“will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).*

Now, what does profanity show about a man? When a man curses, what does it show about him? May I mention several things that it shows about that man, or that woman, as the case may be?

1. Contempt for God

Number one: It shows an utter contempt for God—a contempt for God—that a man

can take the precious name of Jesus, or the name of the thrice-holy God of Israel, and mix that name in the muck and the mire and the slime of the sewer taken upon his lips. Some vile oath shows that he has utter contempt for God.

Sometimes, when you rebuke a man about his profanity, he will say, “Oh, I didn’t mean anything by it.” Now, listen—listen. He has taken the name that is above every name, the name of Jehovah God, the name by which the blind were given sight, the name by which deaf ears were made to hear, the name by which the dead are raised, the name by which we’re saved—*“Neither is there salvation in any other [name]: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved,”* (Acts 4:12) than the name of Jesus—he takes that name, and says, “Oh, I didn’t mean anything by it.” And he is condemned in his own court. What he is saying is that “God is meaningless to me—meaningless to me. Why, I can take His name and not even mean anything by it.” God means no more to him than a mangy dog, that he could take the name of God and not mean anything by it. That’s what the word *vain* means; it means, “emptiness”; it means, “worthlessness”; it means, “vanity”; and it means, “of no use.”

2. Rebellion Against God

What does it show about a man? Number one: It shows utter contempt for God. Ah, but, number two, it shows his rebellion against God. Not only does he hold God in contempt, but here he stands in rebellion against God. Why rebellion against God? Because Exodus chapter 20, verse 7, says, *“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain”* (Exodus 20:7). There it is: black print, white paper. It doesn’t need interpretation. It is plain for all to see, for all to know, and for all to read. What a rebellious nature, when a man says, “God, I know what you said, but I’m going to do it anyway.” He shakes his puny fist in the face of deity. He spits in the face of God with his profanity. It not only shows that he has a contempt for God, but it shows he has an arrogant, rebellious spirit against God.

3. A Rotten Character

I’ll tell you something else it shows about him. It shows that his character is rotten, rotten, rotten, rotten, when a man takes the name of God in vain. Sam Jones used to say—an old evangelist of yesteryear—“When I hear a man curse and swear, I lay hold of my pocketbook, for any man who will swear may steal also.” Now, you see, it just shows that a man has a rotten character. He doesn’t care for the laws of God. There’s something very bad on the inside of it.

I was speaking to a man one day, trying to lead that man to Jesus Christ, and he was sort of a self-righteous man. And he said, “Oh, I do curse a little.” I said, “You might as well say, ‘All I do is steal a little. All I do is commit adultery a little. All I do is kill a little,’ for the same Scripture that says, ‘Thou shalt not do the one,’ says, ‘Thou shalt not

do the other.” “Oh,” you say, “it’s far worse to kill a man than it is to curse his Maker.” That’s what you say. That’s what you say. It just shows that you say that the man is of more value than the God who made the man.

“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for [God] will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). It shows a rotten character.

4. A Complete Lack of Understanding

It also shows a complete lack of understanding. You see, someone has described profanity as “the attempt of a feeble mind to express itself forcibly.” I like that: “Profanity is the attempt of a feeble mind to express itself forcibly.” And, by the way, and parenthetically, sometimes Christians fall into this trap.

Oh, we would never use the curse words of profanity, but we do second-handed cursing. We have little euphemistic statements, you know, like *golly*, and *gee whiz*, and *gosh darn*, and *darned*, and *heck*, and all of these things. These are all just simply ways of second-handed cursing. *Webster’s New International Dictionary* says *gee* is a form of *Jesus* used in minced oaths; *golly*—a euphemism for *God* used in minced oaths; *gosh*—a substitute for *God* used in minced oaths; *darn*, *darned*, and *darnation*—colloquial euphemisms for *damn*, *damned*, and *damnation*. Perhaps a person who says “gosh darn” would be amazed at what he’s saying by means of second-handed cursing. *“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for [God] will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain”* (Exodus 20:7). It shows a lack of understanding. It shows a lack of ability for a person to express himself in the way that he ought to express himself.

5. Hatred for One’s Fellow Man

Now, again, it shows hatred for one’s fellow man. We curse and damn our fellow men. We pray a wicked and a profane prayer when someone says, “Damn you.” What a wicked and a profane prayer is that! Sometimes we go to our football games over here, and we hear the crowd shout something like, “Go to hell, Ole Miss!” and everybody thinks that’s funny. That’s not funny. Jesus died in agony and blood upon the cross to save men from hell. What a wicked prayer it is, what a profane thought, that one man would tell another man to go to hell. It’s time that the Christians of this world stood up and told this world to go to heaven through the blood of Jesus. “Go to hell!”—that one man would have the unmitigated gall to look at another man and to pronounce such a curse upon him—that God would damn him, that God would consign him to hell—oh, what hatred, what a hatred it shows, that one man would have toward another man!

6. A Warped Concept of God

It also shows such a warped concept of God. When you ask God to damn someone, you’re asking God to do something He never has done, never will do. God has never

damned anyone. Men damn themselves. Jesus Christ came not into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world (John 3:17). If a man is damned, it is because that man has committed moral and spiritual suicide. He has turned his back on God; he's rebelled against God. And what it shows is a lack of understanding against Almighty God.

I want to tell you something, friend. Profanity is wicked and foolish. Now I'm not trying to justify sins, but when another—when a man sins in another realm—at least he gets something in return. I'm not justifying sin, but when a man steals, he gets what he steals; when a man commits adultery, he satiates his lust; and when a man commits murder, he may get revenge—or so he thinks. But what does a man get when he curses? Just one thing: the judgment of God—the judgment of God. It's the fool's sin. It is like a fish biting a hook with no bait on it. At least, when a fish bites a hook, he gets a mouthful of shrimp. But what if there's no bait on the hook? What particle of good has profanity ever done? How black and how wicked is the heart of a man who would profane his Maker for no reason under the sun, except that his heart is so wicked that *“out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh”* (Matthew 12:34)!

B. Frivolity

This is the misuse of the name of God: number one—through profanity; number two—through frivolity—frivolity. Now, how do we profane the name of God and abuse the name of God through frivolity? That is by making light of sacred and holy things.

1. Humor

Holy things, sacred things, glorious things, are sometimes the butt of foolish jokes and frivolous remarks. Music sometimes brings the gospel in, or at least alludes to the gospel. Jesus Christ sometimes is called a superstar. Sometimes gospel music finds its way even into the nightclub; sometimes little giddy, flippant things that take no thought of who the God is that they're singing about. I've heard preachers tell jokes with no point at all, except that somehow it involves the Deity; it involves God and some little humorous thing, but it involves God. We have become somehow a generation of backslapping, sanctified morons, cracking jokes about holy things, making puns about sacred things.

Now, don't misunderstand me. I believe in humor, though I'm not being very humorous at this moment. I believe that humor is one of the gracious gifts of our God, and I believe that *“a merry heart doeth good like a medicine”* (Proverbs 17:22), and I believe that many times humor has a point in a message—to illustrate a point. And humor is a figure of speech—a way of speaking, just like *pathos* or any other means of speaking. But I am talking about pointless, needless, inconvenient humor—frivolity, joking, laughing, singing, or whatever, about God, that is not done in the proper

reference for Deity.

In Matthew chapter 6, verse 7, Jesus Christ said, “*But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions*”—use not vain repetitions—“*as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking*” (Matthew 6:7). When you rattle off a prayer without thinking about the God to whom you’re praying, when you stand in some auditorium and someone says, “Let’s say the Lord’s Prayer,” and you stand up and rattle it off, that may be profanity. Listen, friend. We don’t say prayers; we are to *pray* prayers. Prayers are not to be said; it’s not something that we get some vain repetition, like we say so many things.

The Tibetans have what they call *prayer wheels*. They put a wheel on top of a stick. They write little prayers, and put in the wheel, and hold it up, and spin it around and around, just like that. They think they’re praying to God. I’ve seen Baptists just like that, only the wheels are in their head.

2. Vain Repetition

Vain repetition, vain repetition, vain repetition: “*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain*” (Exodus 20:7). Vain professions, vain prayers, and vain praises. You get in a worship service like this, and sometimes we sing while our minds are gathering wool, since music is a wonderful thing, but so many people stand with a hymnal in their hand and take God’s name in vain. Listen to what we sing sometimes:

*My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine;
For Thee all the follies of sin I resign.*

—WILLIAM R. FEATHERSTON

Do you mean that when you sing it? “I turn from everything I know to be wrong, because, Jesus, you’re more to me than anything else.” Do you mean that? If you don’t mean it, why do you sing it? You take His name in vain. We stand and sing,

*I surrender all.
All to Jesus I surrender.*

—JUDSON VAN DEVENTER

Then we go out and live for self and self alone, as though Christ had never lived. We sing,

*Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.*

—FRANCES R. HAVERGAL

And we hold it with all our might.

The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 4, “*Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not [fitting]: but rather the giving of thanks*” (Ephesians 5:4). Jesus taught us that we are to pray, “*Hallowed be thy name*” (Matthew 6:9). Do you hallow the name of Jesus? I say, do you hallow the name of Almighty God? If not, if

you use the name of God in a flippant way, in a careless way, in a sacrilegious way, though you may not have been guilty of the sin of profanity, you have been guilty of the sin of frivolity. You have taken the name of the Lord your God in vain.

C. Hypocrisy

I want to mention a third way: not only the sin of profanity, and not only the sin of frivolity, but the sin of hypocrisy. Hypocrisy takes the name of God in vain. Isaiah chapter 48 and verse 1: *“Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness”* (Isaiah 48:1). They swear by the name of God. They make mention of His name, but they do not do so in truth and in righteousness. Hypocrisy—and I’m talking about hypocritical professions—when a man professes to be a Christian and is not, he has taken the name of God in vain. You see, a Christian is someone who has taken the name of Christ—that’s why we call him a *Christian*—but if he’s not a true Christian, if he’s a counterfeit Christian, he has taken God’s name in vain as surely as though he had cursed and sworn—blasphemes. But not only vain professions, also vain prayers.

Taking His name in vain: how do we do it? Profanity. How do we do it? Frivolity. How do we do it? Hypocrisy: false professions, false prayers, false praises. *“In vain do they worship me”* (Matthew 15:9), our dear Lord says.

II. The Use of the Name

All right, there is the abuse of the name, the abuse of the name—taking the name in vanity. But now, let’s think about the use of the name—taking the name in victory—because, you see, as we’ve already said, every negative command is also positive, for there can be no negative without a positive. And so, for example, as we’ve said in the last weeks, if I say to you, “Don’t stay outside,” that means, “Go inside.” You see, the negative implies the positive. And so when the Bible says, “Don’t take the name of God in vanity,” it implies that, if you do not abuse the name, you ought to use the name, and you ought to use the name rightly.

And so, let’s think for just a moment about how to rightly use the name of the Lord.

A. Be Saved by the Name of Jesus

For example, you ought to use the name in victory, when you’re saved, in salvation. You use the name in victory when you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. You see, the angel announced to Mary, concerning Jesus, *“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21).

Now you use the name when you get saved. You see, Acts 4:12 says, *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven”*—none other

name under heaven—“*given among men, whereby we must be saved,*” than the name of Jesus. The Bible says, in Romans 10, verse 13, “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Romans 10:13). Why doesn’t it just say, “Whosoever shall call upon the Lord shall be saved.” Why does it say: “*Whosoever shall call upon **the name of the Lord shall be saved***”? I’ll tell you why. Because, dear friend, there are so many false gods—false Messiahs—around in the world today.

I tell you what. When I go in the airport and I see these Hare Krishna fellows giving out this literature and so forth, I just have a sweet joy. The first thing, I go just like a bee to a hive before they say a word, tap one of them on the shoulder, and when he turns around look him in the face and say, “I want to tell you Jesus Christ is Lord”—“Jesus Christ is Lord.”

Oh, you see, dear friends, it is not just the Lord you call upon; it is the Lord Jesus. “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*” (Romans 10:9). “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Romans 10:13). “*Thou shalt call his name JESUS*” (Matthew 1:21)—“*JESUS.*” Don’t you like that? It fits just right on my tongue. That is the last name for Deity given in the Bible. And in the simplest syllables God has compressed the sweetest, most powerful word that the human lips can utter: Jesus—Jesus; that “*whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*”

A client was sitting before a lawyer, and they were talking. And the client finally said to that lawyer, “Pardon me, there is something I’ve been wanting to ask you, but I’ve been afraid.” The lawyer said, “Don’t be afraid.” The client said, “All right, then. Sir, why are you not a Christian?” And the lawyer said, “Isn’t there something in the Bible that says ‘no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven’? You know my problem; you know what a slave to drink I am.” And this client said, “Sir, I didn’t ask you about your drink. I asked you, sir, why you’re not a Christian.” And that lawyer said, “Well, I don’t think I ever really even knew how to be a Christian, since you put it that way.” And that client opened the Bible and explained to this lawyer about calling on the name of Jesus. And this brilliant, erudite, well-trained man, when he understood the plan of salvation, knelt and prayed, and called upon the name of the Lord. Later on, as he was writing about that experience, that lawyer said, “Put it down straight, and put it down big: that day, Jesus Christ saved me, and the power of drink was instantly broken in my life.” That lawyer was Dr. C. I. Scofield, the editor of the Scofield Bible that I preach from. “Taking the name, taking the name in victory, victory, victory, I do.” He said, “I tickle my oyster till he opens the shell, and then I stick the knife in.” I like that.

B. Serve in the Name of Jesus

The Bible says, in the Book of Colossians, that whatever we do in word or deed, we're to do all in the name of Jesus, giving thanks unto the Father by Him (Colossians 3:17). Whatever we do, we are to do in the name of Jesus. Jesus said, in John chapter 16, "*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive*" (John 16:24). Oh, there's power in the name of Jesus! Do you believe that?

1. With His Authority

What does it mean to live in the name of Jesus? It means, dear friend, to preach, to teach, to walk, to love, to serve all in His authority. You see, name means authority. When you sign your name to a check, that means authority for money to be taken out of your account. When you put your name on a contract or whatever it is, you are placing your authority there. When we pray in the name of Jesus, that doesn't mean just simply to say, "In Jesus' name," at the end of a prayer—though it's fitting and proper we should do that. But that's not primarily what it means. Don't misunderstand me, because some people misunderstand what I'm saying here. They think I'm saying we're not to pray in Jesus' name. Of course we're to pray in Jesus' name. But it takes more than just simply saying it to make it in His name. This means a prayer that has His authority. You're acting as His power of attorney when you say, "In Jesus' name." Oh, there's service in the name of Jesus! We can pray in the name of Jesus.

2. For His Approval

Not only with His authority, but, oh, dear friend, for His approval. For not only does name mean authority; name stands for character—for character. You see, when you say Adrian Pierce Rogers, you're thinking of a character. You say *amen*—ha ha! You're thinking of a character, and so name stands for character. That's the reason the Bible says, "*A GOOD name is rather to be chosen than great riches*" (Proverbs 22:1).

Now when I live in the name of Jesus, that means that my life is to be in keeping with the character of Jesus, that everything I do Jesus could sign His name to it and say, "Yes, I am pleased with that; that is in keeping with my character." I am to serve in the name of Jesus. And what a joy it is to preach and teach in the name of Jesus! You see, I preach in the name of Jesus. I preach in the authority of Jesus.

Some people come to church on Sunday morning and they say, "Well, I'm going to listen to that fellow to see if I agree with him or not." Well, to tell you the truth, friend, I'm not the issue. I'm just simply the messenger boy. Now I want you to understand this. *If I'm not preaching the Bible all right, you come and argue with me. But if I'm preaching the Word of God, then you take it up with God—not with me.* It's not that you get yourself in a contest with me. It's not like you're coming here and saying, "Well, that's what he says; now, let me see what I think." You see, I'm not preaching in my authority.

I wouldn't stand up here and preach in my authority. I am here as an ambassador for Christ, preaching the Word of God in the authority of Christ. That's not arrogance; that's plain common sense. Jesus said, "You go and make disciples, and lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the earth" (Matthew 28:19–20). And He's given that authority to every believer.

We're to live—to serve—in the name of Jesus Christ. And we're to do it for His glory. That's what it means to use the name rightly. Do you know what I want more than any of these? *When people leave this place, I don't want them to say, "What a preacher!" I want them to say, "What a Savior! What a Savior! What a wonderful, wonderful Savior: Jesus!"* We are to live in the name—the authority—of Jesus.

*Take the name of Jesus with you,
Child of sorrow and of woe,
It will joy and comfort give you;
Take it then, where'er you go.*

—LYDIA O. BAXTER

See, we're to be saved by the name of Jesus. We're to serve in the name of Jesus. There's power in the name—power over demons. At the name of Jesus, the imps in hell cringe and tremble.

C. Be Secure in the Name of Jesus

Now, not only are we to serve in the name, but also, dear friend, we're secure in the name of Jesus. Saved by the name, serve through the name, secure in the name—in the name of Jesus: that's what it means to use the name rightly. Oh, you know, the Bible says, "*The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe*" (Proverbs 18:10). Oh, the security of the name! Isn't it wonderful to have the name of Jesus as a mantle to cover you? Oh, to be a bearer of the name, and to be secure in the name of Jesus! Oh, precious name, holy name!

*[When] temptations round you gather,
Breathe that holy Name in prayer.*

—LYDIA O. BAXTER

Oh, secure—secure—in the name of Jesus.

Conclusion

Are you using the name in vanity, or are you using the name in victory? Do you abuse the name, or do you use the name? Have you been saved? Have you trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord? Do you now, when you pray, pray with the authority of Jesus? When you serve, do you serve in the power of Jesus, through His name? And are you trusting—trusting in that precious name to keep you from all of the

evils from this world? *“The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe”* (Proverbs 18:10).

Mrs. William Booth, the wife of the founder of the Salvation Army, told a story about a man who was on his deathbed. This man was about to die, and a lawyer said, “There are some very important papers. If we can get him to sign these papers before he dies, it will save us so much legal work.” He was so feeble. He was a dear saint of God. He had lived with God, and for God, and in the power of Christ, through many years. And they brought those legal papers to him, and one of his children, or his wife, said something like, “Daddy, it would help us if you would just sign this for us right now; just sign.” The old man lifted the pen and signed. Later, when they looked at the paper, they were amazed to see that he had written, “Jesus.” And the only name that meant anything to him at that time was Jesus. The only thing on his heart, the name that was above every name, was Jesus. And I tell you, ladies and gentleman, when you come to die, and when your feet are touching those chilly waters of the rivers of death, legal papers are not going to mean much to you either.

There’s one name—one name, one name—that is above every name: *“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:10–11). Have you taken the name in vanity or in victory?

The Fourth Commandment

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 5, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:8–11

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Period
 - A. Reasons for Worshiping on the First Day of the Week
 - 1. Jesus Was Raised From the Dead on the First Day
 - 2. Jesus Met with His Disciples on the First Day
 - 3. Jesus Met with His Disciples, Imparted the Holy Spirit, Gave the Great Commission, and Ascended into Heaven on the First Day
 - 4. Pentecost Was on the First Day
 - 5. The Bible Was Completed on the First Day
 - 6. The Early Church Met for Worship on the First Day
 - 7. Collections Were Taken and Received on the First Day
 - B. Differences Between the Sabbath Day and the Lord's Day
 - II. The Principle
 - A. The Principle of Work
 - B. The Principle of Worship
 - 1. To Replenish Your Spirit
 - 2. To Refresh Your Soul
 - 3. To Rest Your Body
 - III. The Practice
 - A. Old Testament Practice
 - B. New Testament Practice
 - IV. The Prophecy
- Conclusion

Introduction

Now, take your Bibles, please, and turn to Exodus chapter 20, as we continue our sojourn through the Ten Commandments. I don't know about you, but my heart has been refreshed, and my heart has been challenged, as we have studied these Ten Commandments. And I will begin reading in chapter 20, verse 1. Read the commandments we've already studied, and then come to the Fourth Commandment, remembering the Sabbath day, which will be the commandment that we'll study this morning.

Exodus chapter 20: “*And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taken his name in vain.*” And then we come to our text for today: “*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day*” (Exodus 20:1–11).

The First Commandment—“*I am the LORD thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me*”—tells us who to worship (Exodus 20:2–3). The next three commandments tell us how to worship. And so we’re dealing with another commandment that deals with worship—remembering the Sabbath day.

The Chinese have a legend. They tell of the man who went to the marketplace one day, and he had a string of seven coins. He saw a beggar, and he gave the beggar six of those coins, and placed the seventh in his pocket. But the beggar, who was also a pickpocket, lifted the seventh coin and took that for himself also. I’m afraid that’s a parable of our modern day. Our Lord has given us six days to do our work, but so many are saying, “Yes, and I will steal the seventh also and use it for myself.”

Now there are three or four things I want you to see about the commandment that we have before us.

I. The Period

First of all, the period. What time are we talking about, when the Bible says, “*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy*” (Exodus 20:8)? Well, in the Old Testament, the Sabbath, the Old Testament history Jewish Sabbath, is the seventh day. Notice verse 10: “*But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God*” (Exodus 20:10). But I want to say clearly and plainly that as New Testament Christians we do not worship on the seventh day; we worship on the first day. The seventh day is Saturday; the first day is Sunday. The seventh day is given to the Jew and is Old Testament. The first day is the Lord’s Day and is Christian.

Now, let me say that the seventh-day Sabbath was given to Israel and to Israel alone. Look in Exodus chapter 31, verse 12, for a moment, and it will be worth turning to. Exodus 31 and verse 12, and I want you to see the Jewish character of the Old Testament Sabbath. Exodus 31, beginning in verse 12: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily, my sabbaths ye shall keep:”—*notice He’s speaking to the children of Israel—*“for it is a sign between me and you”—*who? the children of Israel—*“throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death...”—*those who want to live under the Old Testament Sabbath had better read and listen—*“every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death...”—*that means if you traveled over a Sabbath Day’s journey, which most of you did in order to get to Bellevue—*“every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days work may be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.”* Now, note and put a star by verse 17: *“It”—*the Sabbath—*“is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever”* (Exodus 31:12–17).

The Sabbath, therefore, is Jewish in character. I’m talking about the seventh day. We as New Testament Christians do not keep the seventh day; we keep the first day.

A. Reasons for Worshiping on the First Day of the Week

Now, why is this? Someone says, “What right do we have to change the day of worship?” We have no right whatever. But if God, He who is Lord of the Sabbath, has deemed us to do so, then He has all rights—all put together. Now, let me show you why we as God’s people—Christians, New Testament Christians—worship upon the first day of the week. I’m going to give you a list of facts. And I’m not going to read the scriptures to collaborate them, but I’m going to give you the scripture notation so that you can have this list of scriptures if you’re taking notes—and I trust many of you are. Let me give you a list of facts.

1. Jesus Was Raised From the Dead on the First Day

Fact number one: Jesus Christ was raised from the dead—praise His holy name—upon the first day of the week—Mark 16, verse 9 (Mark 16:9).

2. Jesus Met with His Disciples on the First Day

Secondly, Jesus Christ met with His disciples, first of all, upon the first day of the week after His resurrection—Mark 16:11.

3. Jesus Met with His Disciples, Imparted the Holy Spirit, Gave the Great

Commission, and Ascended into Heaven on the First Day

Thirdly, on the eighth day after His resurrection, upon the first day of the week, Jesus met with His disciples, again, eight days later—John 20, verses 19 and 20 (John 20:19–20). On the first day of the week, Jesus Christ imparted the Holy Spirit—John 20, verse 22 (John 20:22). Upon the first day of the week, Jesus gave the Great Commission—John 20, verse 21—where He commissioned His disciples to preach the gospel (John 20:21). And then, continuing in that same scripture, upon the first day of the week, Jesus ascended to the Father, and the Ascension was upon the first day of the week.

4. Pentecost Was on the First Day

Then, in Acts the second chapter, Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit upon the Church on the day of Pentecost, which was the first day of the week (Acts 2).

5. The Bible Was Completed on the First Day

The canon of Scripture, the Bible, was completed, and the Book of Revelation was given, inspired upon the first day of the week. Revelation chapter 1, verse 10, where John says, *“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day”*—a phrase that is never used for the Sabbath, as such, in the Old Testament (Revelation 1:10).

6. The Early Church Met for Worship on the First Day

The early Church met for worship upon the first day of the week—Acts chapter 20, verses 6 and 7 (Acts 20:6–7).

7. Collections Were Taken and Received on the First Day

Collections were taken and received for the work of the Lord and the comfort of the saints upon the first day of the week—1 Corinthians chapter 16 and verse 2 (1 Corinthians 16:2).

B. Differences Between the Sabbath Day and the Lord’s Day

So you can see that there has been a glorious transition from the Jewish Old Testament seventh day to the Christian New Testament Lord’s Day, which is upon the first day of the week. The first Old Testament day, the seventh day, celebrated and commemorated the finished work of creation; the Lord’s Day commemorates the finished a work of redemption. The Sabbath day, the seventh day, commemorated the beginning of natural life; the Lord’s Day celebrates the beginning of supernatural life. The first celebrates life in Adam; our day celebrates life in Christ. The Sabbath day celebrated the work of God’s hand, where God created the heavens and the earth, but the first day, the Lord’s Day, celebrates the work of God’s heart—where He sent His Son: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”* (John 3:16). The first Old Testament Sabbath was a display of God’s power, but the New Testament Lord’s Day is a display of God’s grace. And the Sabbath was given to Israel; the Lord’s

Day is given to the Church. And I'm so grateful for this wonderful day.

Now I know there are some among us today, Sabbatarians, who still insist that we should live by keeping the seventh day. In my estimation, these people are living on the wrong side of Calvary. I'm so grateful for the Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a new and a living day—not a legal day, but a loving day—the first day of the week. And in case somebody thinks that I'm taking liberty with the Word of God, turn to Colossians, please—Colossians the second chapter—and you need to mark it well. Colossians chapter 2, beginning in verse 14—the Bible speaks of Christ, who, by His death, blotted *“out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,”*—that is, the Old Testament ceremonial law—*“which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”* (Colossians 2:14). And then, verse 16: *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:”*—now, literally, “of a Sabbath day,” literally, is what the Greek says—“of a Sabbath day”—*“which are a shadow of things to come”* (Colossians 2:16–17). That Old Testament Jewish Sabbath was a shadow; the Sabbath day was a shadow of something to come. And thank God He has come—and His name is Jesus. And we celebrate a wonderful day. So the period: the first day of the week, the Lord's Day.

II. The Principle

Now the second thing I want you to notice is the principle. Go back, if you will, please, to Exodus chapter 20, and notice certain great eternal principles that are given in this commandment.

A. The Principle of Work

The first principle is the principle of work. Many people do not realize that the Lord has commanded work, and sometimes we see the commandment concerning the day of rest as simply telling us that we ought to rest. But there's more to it than that.

Look in Exodus 20, verse 9: *“Six days shalt thou labour”* (Exodus 20:9). Now that's a command: *“Six days shalt thou labour”* (Exodus 20:9). And so the same Bible that commands us to rest is the same Bible that commands us to work. And work is spiritual worship, and worship is spiritual work. And we need to understand that today, because, if we don't, we're going to think that the Bible somehow endorses idleness, indolence, and laziness—which it does not. There are two principles taught. One is the principle of work. The other is the principle of worship. And both of these are inculcated in this command. I want to tell you that the cottage of Jesus Christ, where He was born, was the cottage of a workingman. And Jesus knew what it was to labor with His hands. And whether Jesus Christ was healing broken plows or broken people, Jesus knew what it was to dignify and to sanctify work. And I want to tell you something. The Bible teaches

that the man or the woman who will not work is not worthy to live (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Now, listen. The person who refuses to work is not worthy to live. We're not talking about people who cannot work. The Bible says those who are strong are to support the weak. That's a command, too (Romans 15:1). We're talking about those who are able—well-bodied and able—who refuse to work. Now there are some do-gooders and some softheaded people who say, "Well, bless their little hearts. It's up to us to take care of them"—and they think that's Christian. But it's un-Christian. Did you know what the Bible says in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 10? It says, if a man will "*not work, neither should he eat*" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). See how long he'll live without eating. "*If [a man will] not work, neither should he eat.*" It is a sin to continue to feed a person who refuses to work. He ought not to eat. Brother, if he gets hungry enough, he'll start working.

People say, "Well, people don't want to work today." They will if they get hungry enough. You say, "That's hardhearted." No, that's Bible. "*Six days shalt thou labour.*" "*If [a man will] not work, neither should he eat.*" Now we're not talking about those who cannot work—don't misunderstand me. But I want to tell you something. *We as a country have gone insane. You cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating workers out of it. You cannot multiply wealth by dividing it. And the government cannot give to anybody that which it does not first of all take away from the people. And what man receives without working for, another man must work for without receiving. And nothing will kill the morale or the initiative of our country any more than for a people to get the idea that half of them need not work because the other half will feed them, and for the other half to get the idea that it does no good to work since somebody else receives the reward of their labor.*

I have something that I tore from a magazine that I want to share with you. When I was a little boy, they told me the story of a little red hen. Now there's a modern little red hen, and I want to tell you about that little red hen: "Once upon a time, there was a little red hen who scratched about in the barnyard until she discovered some grains of wheat. She called her neighbors and said, 'If we plant this wheat, we shall have bread to eat. Who will help me plant it?' 'Not I,' said the cow. 'Not I,' said the duck. 'Nor I,' said the pig. 'Not I,' said the goose. 'Then I will,' said the little red hen. And she did. The wheat grew tall and ripened into golden grain. 'Who will help me reap my wheat?' asked the little red hen? 'Not I,' said the duck. 'Out of my classification,' said the pig. 'I'd lose my seniority,' said the cow. 'I'd lose my unemployment compensation,' said the goose. 'Then I will,' said the little red hen. And she did. At last came time to bake the bread. 'Who will help me to bake the bread? Who will help me to bake the bread?' asked the little red hen? 'Oh, that would be overtime for me,' said the cow. 'I'd lose my welfare

benefits,' said the duck. 'I'm a dropout and never learned about it,' said the pig. 'If I'm to be the only helper, that's discrimination,' said the goose. 'Then I will,' said the little red hen. She baked five loaves and held them up for her neighbors to see. They all wanted some and in fact demanded a share. But the little red hen said, 'No, I can eat the five loaves myself.' 'Excess profits,' cried the cow. 'Capitalistic leech,' screamed the duck. 'I demand equal rights,' yelled the goose. And the pig just grunted. And they painted "*Unfair*" picket signs, and marched 'round and 'round the little red hen, shouting obscenities. When the government agent came, he said to the little red hen, 'You must not be greedy.' 'But I earned the bread,' said the little red hen. 'Exactly,' said the agent. 'That's the wonderful free enterprise system: Anybody in the barnyard can have as much as he wants. But under our modern government regulations, the productive workers must divide their product with the idle.' They continued to live, including the little red hen, who smiled and clucked. But her neighbors wondered why she never baked any more bread."

Something is happening in America that is very un-American. "*Six days shalt thou labour.*" And the Bible says that a man who will not work is not worthy, and if he will "*not work neither should he eat.*"

B. The Principle of Worship

Now there's a principle here. Number one: there's the principle of work. Number two: there's the principle of worship. "*Six days shalt thou labour...the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God*" (Exodus 20:9–10). Now, let's talk about the second principle, the principle of worship. Why has our Lord ordained that man should worship? It is because of the nature of man.

Man is a spiritual being, and there are three reasons that I want to give you for a day of rest in worship.

1. To Replenish Your Spirit

Number one: to replenish your spirit—to replenish your spirit. You see, you can run down spiritually, just like a battery can run down—even some of you diehards. You can run down spiritually, just like a battery can run down. And God has given us a day to recharge, to replenish, and to renew our spirits.

A man in Philadelphia was passing a coalmine in the ancient days, yesterdays, when they used the mules to pull the coal wagons through the mines, and he noticed that the man had his mules in the pasture on Sunday. And he talked with him about it, and the man said, "Yes." He said, "If I were to leave those mules in the mines seven days a week without bringing them up into the sunlight on Sunday, they would go blind. I know some people like that, who have stayed in the coalmines seven days a week, and are spiritually blind. We need to refresh our spirits, to reinvigorate our spirits, and to

replenish our spirit.

2. To Refresh Your Soul

But not only do we need to replenish our spirit; God has given us a special day that we might refresh our soul. You see, not only does man have a spirit that must commune with God, but he also has a soul, a psyche, a mind. And we can get the willy-nillies, the heebie jeebies; we can become nervous, high-strung, taut, tense. Americans last year consumed over four and a half million pounds of aspirin. They tell us in some zoos that the monkeys have to be given tranquilizers after they've watched the people—and that's a fact. Three words could characterize our generation: hurry, worry, and bury. That's the way we live. Oh, we are smart. We even have invented so many things. But when we analyze it, about all we've added is sound and noise and speed—that's all—noise and speed. We can get there faster, but we don't know where we're going. And God says we'd better slow down; we had better refresh our souls. Do you know what a fanatic is? A fanatic is someone who has lost sight of his aim, redoubles his effort—and faster and faster we go, and we get nowhere fast.

Some explorers went to Africa—American explorers. They hired some native guides. And as soon as they hired the guides, they plunged pell-mell into the bush country to explore—the first day, the second day, the third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, on and on, on and on, and on. But when they came to the seventh day, the guides refused to move. They sat down under a tree and would not budge. And when the explorers tried to move them on, this is what they said: “We no go today. We rest today, to let our souls catch up with our bodies.”

Have you done that? Have you learned to be still and know that God is God? Have you learned, in this neurotic, insane age, how to deal with fears and worries and nervous tensions by refreshing the soul?

3. To Rest Your Body

God, who made us, knows how we're to operate. We are, ladies and gentleman, to replenish our spirits; we are to refresh our souls; and then we are to rest our bodies. That's another reason that we are to worship: to rest. Worship is rest. After six days of work, a man needs to rest his body for the preservation of health and renewal of strength. *“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength”* (Isaiah 40:31). I tell you, there's something about coming to church and meeting with God's people that invigorates and renews you, if you worship right.

Now if you're tired after you worship, it's because you're worshipping wrongly. But, oh, dear friend, when you take God the Holy Spirit, bathe your soul, replenish your spirit, you're going to find out that also it will refresh and rest your body. And then we need to go home on Sunday afternoon and just kind of sit back and relax. Oh, you say, “Well, I've got a lot of things to do. I've got another little job. I can moonlight. I can do

this. I can do that.”

Talmadge said our bodies are seven-day clocks. They need to be wound up one day a week. And if we do not, they will run down into the grave—into the grave. *I am convinced that, if a man will tithe, he can do more with nine-tenths and God as a partner than he could do with ten-tenths of his money by himself.* Aren't you convinced of that? I am—that a man will tithe; he'll take nine-tenths, and God will make it go further. I'm also convinced that any man can get more done working six days and resting one day than he could by working seven days. I'm as convinced of that as I am that I stand here today. You're not wasting time when you stop to sharpen the axe.

III. The Practice

Now we've talked about the period: we as Christians worship the first day of the week. We've talked about the principle: there's the principle of work; there's the principle of worship—to replenish the spirit, to refresh the soul, and to rest the body. Now the third thing I want you to notice is the practice. How are we going to keep this day, the Lord's Day?

A. Old Testament Practice

We know how the Jews kept it in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the Jews kept the day as a day of realism. It was a day of gloom and not a day of glad news. They had listed fifteen ways that a man could break the Sabbath. They had their little rulebook out. You could not eat an egg that was laid on Saturday. If you got a tack in your shoe, you had to stop and take it out, lest you be accused of carrying a burden on the Sabbath. Now you could swallow vinegar, but if you had a toothache, you couldn't hold it in your mouth: that was healing on the Sabbath. If a flea happened to bite you, you had to let him gnaw, because there was no hunting on the Sabbath; and so you couldn't bother that flea. They just had laws and rules. No fire could be kindled on the Sabbath day, no matter how cold it was. Oh, they had it divided! Finally, if an ox fell in the ditch, you could get him out. But if a man fell in a ditch, you just had to leave him there.

B. New Testament Practice

Now, how are we going to keep the day? What is the practice? We don't read anything like that in the New Testament. How should we keep the day? It's to be a day of gladness, not a day of gloom. Jesus Christ is alive—alive! It's to be a day of love, not a day of legalism. It is to be a day of service, not a day of selfishness. But let me say, it is to be a holy day, and not a holiday. Do you know what's wrong with America? We have prostituted—prostituted—our spiritual heritage, and we have sacrificed the Lord's Day upon the twin altars of pleasure and profit. And we'll not get by with it—we'll not get

by with it. And no one will get by with refusing the principles that God has laid down in His Word of work and worship, of work and then refreshment, of work and then replenishment, of work and then rest. God, who made us, knows what He's doing. And so we are to keep the day, not with legalism, but with love.

Now I know what some of you would like to do. You would to say, "Now, Brother Rogers, you please tell me what's right and wrong to do on the Lord's Day? Can I go golfing, or can I go waterskiing? Would it be all right to listen to the radio? Can I watch professional football? Would it be all right to go visit someone? Can I go for a walk? Can we go for a drive? Shall we cook on Sunday? What about eating out?" You want me to make a list for you, don't you? And I'm not going to do it. And I'm not going to let you make a list for me, because, in the Bible—in the Bible—you're going to find out that God does not want this day to be a day of legal restriction. If so, He would have given them to us. The Bible is not a rulebook; it is a guidebook. And you can search the Bible through about what people ought to do on the Lord's Day, and you'll come back to two principles: first of all, the principle of work, six days; and then, the principle of worship.

Now, friend, you take your list to Jesus—to Jesus—and you let Him check it; and you find out if what you're doing on this day really corresponds with calling it the Lord's Day—the Lord's Day. Are you doing things on that day that would give glory to Him? Are you serving Him on that day? Are you truly resting your body? Are you truly replenishing your spirit? Are you? Are you? And if you have any doubts about it, you get that tape where we're preaching through Corinthians on "Positive Principles for Practical Practice," or something like that, and find out those principles that our Lord has given us over things that are not to be legalistic. All right, the practice.

IV. The Prophecy

The last thing I want us to notice is the prophecy of this day—the prophecy of this day—because, you see, the Old Testament Sabbath has all of the Old Testament as a prophecy of Jesus. Do you want me to tell you the one message of the Old Testament? Just the one message: Someone is coming. Do you want me to tell you the one message of the New Testament? Someone has come. That's it. *The Old Testament says that someone is coming; His name is Jesus. The New Testament says that someone has come; His name is Jesus. And the Revelation says that someone is coming again, and His name is Jesus.*

Now if you read the Bible and you don't find Jesus there, you'd better look again, because standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find Jesus. And the Bible tells us, in the Book of Colossians, in that scripture that we read in Colossians chapter 2, verses 16 and 17, that the Sabbath days are a shadow of Christ—a shadow of Christ (Colossians 2:16–17). That is a prophecy of Christ. How can the Sabbath be a shadow of Christ?

We can see how the sacrificial lamb could be a shadow of Christ. We can see how the temple can be a shadow of Christ. We can see how the Old Testament priest could be a shadow of Christ. But how can the Sabbath be a shadow of Christ? Are you listening? The word *sabbath* means, “rest.” And Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 11, “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28). And that word *rest* can be correctly translated: “I will give you *Sabbath*; come unto me.”

Oh listen, friend. Sometimes people say, “You New Testament Christians don’t keep the Sabbath.” I do. I believe in keeping all Ten Commandments, and I believe in keeping that commandment which says, “*Remember the sabbath day*” (Exodus 20:8). And let me tell you how I keep it. I keep it seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, by resting in Jesus Christ, who is my Sabbath. Jesus has fulfilled the law. I believe in Christ, and I’ve ceased from my own works, and I’m resting in the finished work of Calvary. When God created this world, the Bible says, “*God rested*” (Genesis 2:2). Oh, that was the first creation. When Jesus died upon the cross, He cried, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). That was the new creation. And now He is seated in glory, resting. And I’m seated with Him.

Conclusion

Friend, have you learned to rest in Jesus? Have you? Have you learned that you don’t have to try to be saved, that you’re not saved by trying, and that you’re saved by trusting? You see, in the Old Testament, there were six days of work and then a day of rest. You had to work before you could rest.

Now, let me show you what grace is. You see, the first day in the New Testament is the day of rest. We rest before we work. That means you come to Christ by faith, and you’re saved before you serve. You rest in Christ, and then you serve Christ. Your first day needs to be a day of rest. You’re not going to be saved by doing things. You’ll be saved just simply by resting in Jesus Christ. I hope you understand what I am saying. The Bible says, “*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*” (Romans 4:5). You go home and read Hebrews 4, and Hebrews 4 will tell you that “*there remaineth a rest to the people of God*” (Hebrews 4:9). That is, when we stop trying and start trusting, we rest in the finished work of Calvary.

I want to tell you something, friend. If, today, whoever you are, wherever you are, listening to me, if you’re not saved; if, today, you will understand that you cannot save yourself by your efforts; if, today, you would say, “Oh, God, oh, God, I’ve got such a burden, such a load, and there’s nothing I can do to undo it”; and then, if you would come to Jesus and say, “Lord, I rest in the finished work of Calvary,” Jesus would forgive your sins and come into your heart, and you would be born again. And, dear

friend, the new birth will become your Sabbath and the first day of the rest of your life. Oh, the first day of the rest of your life—the new birth—resting in Jesus!

A man told a parable about someone who came and knocked at the door of heaven, at the pearly gates. Inside, a voice said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” The man without said, “I’m a moral man.” The voice within said, “What is the password into heaven?” And the moral man said, “Honesty.” And the voice within said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you.” Another came and knocked at the pearly gate. The voice within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” This time the man said, “I am a humanitarian.” “What is the password?” He said, “The password is charity.” The voice within said, “Depart from me ye that work iniquity. I never knew you.” Another came—he knocked at the pearly gate. The voice said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” This man, with great pride, said, “I am a religious man.” “What is the password?” He said, “Ritual, religion, creeds.” And the voice within said, “Depart from me ye that work iniquity. I never knew you.” At last, one came and knocked at the pearly gate. The voice within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into heaven, and what is the password?” And the one outside the gate said, “I am just a poor, stumbling, faltering Christian—a born-again Christian.” The voice within said, “What is the password?” And the voice without said, “In my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling.” And the voice within said, “Open wide the gate and let him in, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Only a parable, but a great truth! Open wide the gate, open wide the gate, open wide the gate, because He came the blood-sprinkled way, the cross way, the finished work of Calvary!

Jesus is the believer’s rest. He is your Sabbath. And that Old Testament day was a prophecy of a wonderful, wonderful salvation. Is it yours? Can you say, “I know I’m going to heaven?” Can you say, “I know that my sins are forgiven?” If this were your last moment, where would you spend eternity?

The Fifth Commandment, Part 1

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 12, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20

Outline

Introduction

- I. By Obedience
- II. By Helpfulness and Care
 - A. By Being Helpful When We're Young
 - B. By Taking Care of Them When They're Old
- III. By Showing Them Respect
- IV. By Expressing Thanksgiving to Them
- V. By Heeding Their Counsel
- VI. By Living an Honorable Life
- VII. By Loving Them

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 20, and we'll begin reading in verse 1: *"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thou son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."* And then we come to our text for today, in verse 12: *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy*

days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.” (Exodus 20:1–12)

Now this commandment, in a very real sense, is a link; it is a pivotal commandment; it is a turning point, for you well know, or should know, that the Ten Commandments are in two sections: the first section deals with our relationship with God, and the last section deals with our relationship with man. And so, you see, we cannot be right with man until we're right with God. So we start with our relationship with God. We've got to get the vertical right before we can get the horizontal right. But in our relationship with man it's so important that we start with father and mother, because if you cannot respect and love your father and mother, how on earth are you going to love and respect a stranger? Because, you see, we cannot be right in society until we are right in our homes. When the home decays, the church decays. And when the church decays, society decays. And the religion that doesn't begin at home doesn't begin. And so, when the Lord is talking about relationship to man, it is significant He starts with this command: *“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”* And so we want to study this command.

Now, what does it mean to *honor*? Well, the Hebrew word *honor* means “to attach weight to.” Now that means that we're to pay attention to them; we are to give significance to them; we are to look upon them as weighty people, worthy of our consideration.

Don't be like the little boy who was out playing, and his mother called him once, twice, three times, and his little friend said, “You'd better go. Your mother is calling you.” “Oh,” he said, “I don't have to go yet. She's only called three times.”

Well, to honor your father, to honor your mother, means “to attach significance to” or “to give weight to what they say and, indeed, what they are.” And so, in this very simple message this morning, I want to tell you seven ways to better honor your parents. Not all of us have children, but all of us have parents: seven ways to better honor your parents.

I. By Obedience

Way number one is by obedience. Turn to Colossians chapter 3 and verse 20, will you, please, and mark this scripture, children of all ages. Colossians chapter 3 and verse 20: *“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”* (Colossians 3:20) Now, dear friend, you're not simply doing it to please Mom and Dad. You must obey your parents in order to please the Lord. And may I say, incidentally, if you displease the Lord, it doesn't matter who you please. And it is pleasing the Lord that you obey your mother and your father.

Now God says that, when we obey our parents, this is the way to live long; this is a way to be successful; this is a way to be prosperous.

You see, out in the Rockies there is what we call the Great Divide—that is, a place where the mountains reach their highest peak. And when a drop of water falls on the Continental Divide, if it falls just a little to one side of the Divide, that drop of water will continue to go and flow on toward the west until it goes out into the Pacific Ocean, but if it falls and turns to the other side of the Continental Divide, it will continue to flow until it reaches the Mississippi Valley, and out the Mississippi, and out into the Gulf of Mexico, and out into the Atlantic Ocean. Both seem to start so nearly in the same place, but they end up oceans apart.

And so it is with children: some have the same background, the same opportunities, the same genes and chromosomes, the same proclivities and abilities, and yet they end up miles apart. And I want to tell you, one of the key things that makes some turn out so well and makes some turn out so wrongly is that some have learned to honor father and mother, and others have not.

Dwight L. Moody said, “I have lived over sixty years, and I have learned one thing, if I have learned anything else: No man or woman who dishonors father or mother ever prospers.” Now, write that down. That’s what one of the greatest Christians who ever lived had to say. Dwight L. Moody: “No man or woman who dishonors father or mother ever prospers.”

Now, dear friend, for your own happiness, and for your own welfare, and to please the Lord, you need to obey your parents. I want to tell you something. And you listen to me. Disobedience is not mere weakness; it is wickedness. It is a horrible, black, terrible, heinous, wretched, foul, lascivious, horrible, wicked sin to disobey your parents.

I want to show you children something that today ought to frighten you stiff. You turn to Romans chapter 1, and I want you to see the classification that God puts disobedience to parents in. Notice in Romans chapter 1, and let’s begin reading in verse 28. And notice the catalogue of sins here: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not [seemly]; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, [strife], deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, [insolent], proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,”*—my soul! Did you see the list, the catalogue of sins, that God placed this in? *“Disobedient to parents”* along with fornicators, along with envious, along with murderers, along with blasphemers; those are disobedient to parents—*“without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection,”*—that means “perverted, homosexual”—*“implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death...”* (Romans 1:28–32) God says, for you to be disobedient to your parents is a crime worthy of death—worthy of death—worthy of death!

In the Old Testament, a reclusive, recalcitrant, rebellious child was stoned to death—stoned to death! Now we don't live under that Old Testament economy, but I want you to know there is such a thing as spiritual death and judgment of God, and I don't want anybody here to think for one moment—not for one moment—that disobedience to parents is a light sin. It is a black, horrible, heinous, wicked, hellish sin. It is one of the signs of the last days and the perils of the last day.

Turn to 2 Timothy—2 Timothy chapter 3—and I want to read now verses 1 through 5: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”* And may I say, ladies and gentleman, they have arrived. *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection,”*—again, that means “perversion, homosexuality”—*“trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, dispersers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”* (2 Timothy 3:1–5)

Now, what is God saying? God is saying, young people, it matters not how you go to Sunday School, it matters not how you go to church, it matters not whether you've been baptized, or how you take the Lord's Supper, or what you sing in Sunday School, if you are disobedient to your parents, you've got a form of godliness, but that's all. You don't have the real thing. Any so-called faith in God that doesn't make you obedient to your parents is bogus; it is stale. And God lists disobedience to parents as one of the marks of the perils of the last days. No nation can long endure when children have a rebellious spirit against their parents. What a warning! What a warning, I say. I believe that there ought to be a warning put on every when every little new child can read—as soon as he learns how to read: “Warning: Disobedience to your parents may be harmful to your health.”

Let me show you something. Turn, if you will, please, to 1 Samuel chapter 2, in the Bible—1 Samuel chapter 2—and let's look in verse 12. We're talking about the sons of Eli now, and the Bible says, *“Now the sons of Eli were [worthless men]...”*—actually, your King James may say *“sons of Belial,”* and that means they were “no-good skunks,” is what it means—*“Now the sons of Eli were [worthless men]; they knew not the LORD.”* (1 Samuel 2:12) And then we go on to notice, in chapter 3, verse 13, God speaks to Eli: *“For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not.”* (1 Samuel 3:13)

Well, what was that judgment? Go back to chapter 2, verse 31, and look: *“Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father's house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house. And thou shalt see an enemy in my habitation, in all the wealth which God shall give Israel: and there shall not be an old man in thine house for ever.”* (2 Samuel 2:31–32) That is, disobedient, vile sons die young. They die

young. That's the reason I said, dear friend, God's command for children, or how to live to a ripe old age: "*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*" (Exodus 20:12) We are to obey our parents.

You say, "Well, my parents are not always right." Friend, the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 1, "*Obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*" (Ephesians 6:1) It doesn't say, "when they're right." It says it is right to obey them. If they're wrong, they'll suffer with God for it. But it is your job, in God's chain of command, to obey your parents. You obey your parents. You obey your parents. You obey your parents. And if you want to honor your parents, you obey your parents. You'll live a long time.

Somebody asked a little boy, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" He said, "I want to be alive." Well, if you do, then you start obeying Mom and Dad.

II. By Helpfulness and Care

All right now, number one—I'm talking about seven ways to honor your mother and you dad—number one is by obedience. Number two—number two—is by helpfulness and care—by helpfulness and care.

A. By Being Helpful When We're Young

We should help them with the housework and with the other work when we're young. You see, Mom and Dad are not meant to be a maid and a butler and a money getter. They are people, human beings just like you, who need your help.

Now, you know, sometimes young people think today that, if they're made to work, that somehow is un-American. I heard about a young lady who came to her father, and she was, you know, *hip*, she was *with it* a little bit, and so she said, "Hey, Dad, can I have some *mon* to *hit the flick*?" Now what she wanted was some money to go to the show. But he answered. He said, "No, you can't have any *mon* to *hit the flick*, but," he said, "you can swish the dish, and spread the bed, and flop the mop."

Now I appreciate a father like that. And let me tell you, dear friend, that if you would honor your mom and your dad, you're going to help them when you're young. You know, the Bible says that a son "*that sleepeth in harvest*" is a shame to his father. (Proverbs 10:5) That is, if there's work to be done, and you don't help do it, you don't honor your father; you shame your father. Some of you young people who claim that you love the Lord Jesus Christ, and you don't do much work around the house—as a matter of fact, your bedroom could win the city dump look-alike contest—that is not honoring your mother and your father—I don't care how many choruses you sing at Sunday School.

B. By Taking Care of Them When They're Old

We honor them by being helpful when we're young. And then we honor them by taking care of them when they are old—by taking care of them when they are old. We face a serious problem in the United States of America—and that is, many old people, many infirm people, many precious and dear souls, have no one to take care of them. Now the Bible teaches that if you are a Christian, your responsibility to take care of your mother and father is greater than your responsibility to the church.

I want you to look, for example, in Matthew chapter 15 for a moment—Matthew chapter 15, beginning in verse 3. Jesus is speaking to the religious leaders of his day, and *“he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother; and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightiest be profited of me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites...”* (Matthew 15:3–7)

Now, what does that mean? Well, back in this day, there were those who went to the temple, they went to the church, they had an aged father, they had an aged mother, and that aged father, that aged mother, needed support. But they said, “Oh, I can't give you any support. I'm giving it all to the Lord. I'm giving it all to the temple. It's a gift to the temple.” And Jesus said, “You're an hypocrite. Your first duty is to your mother, to your father.” That's not saying that a man should take money that belongs to God and give it to his parents. But he's not to take money that belongs to his parents and invest it any place else except to those people and in their support—very clear, very plain.

I want to show you another scripture. Look in 1 Timothy chapter 5 for a moment—1 Timothy chapter 5. We're talking about honoring parents by caring for them. First Timothy chapter 5 and verse 4: *“But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home,”*—now again, it doesn't matter how religious you act in public, the place it must begin is at home. “Let them show piety at home”—*“and to requite their parents:”*—do you know what the word *requite* means? It means “to pay back”; it means “to recompense” their parents—*“for that is good and acceptable before God.”* (1 Timothy 5:4) God says, “If you want to be a good Christian, you show piety at home; you recompense, you pay back your parents.” And then I want you to notice the next verse in this scripture. If you will, please, just look on down just a few verses later. Look in verse 8: *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”* (1 Timothy 5:8)

Now we have used this verse sometimes to say that parents must provide for their children. But that's not what this verse says. This verse says that children are to provide for their aged parents. That's what it says: “And if a man provide not for his own,

especially those of his own house, he is worse than an infidel.” It is our job to help them when we’re young, to care for them when they are old. That’s the way to honor them. That is the way to honor your mother and your father.

III. By Showing Them Respect

Now, let me give you a third way: not only by obedience, not only by helpfulness and care, but the third way to honor your parents is to show them the proper respect—to show them respect. Leviticus chapter 19, verse 3, says, *“Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father”*—*“Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father.”* (Leviticus 19:3) Now the word here used, *fear*, is the same word that is used when it says that *“the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,”* (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10) and it does not mean that we quake in their presence, but it means that we give them respect, we give them reverence.

Again, in Leviticus chapter 20 and verse 9: *“For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death”*—*“everyone that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death.”* (Leviticus 20:9) And then, listen to Proverbs chapter 30, verse 17: *“The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.”* (Proverbs 30:17) Now God is using poetic language here to show the sure, the swift, the certain, the solemn judgment of God upon the young person who shows his mother or his father disrespect.

Now I’m sure that parents need to live so as to earn the respect from his children. A little boy was at the zoo, and they were looking at some little kittens there, and he asked his mother, “What kind of animals are those?” And she said, “They are little wildcats.” And he said, “Why are they little wildcats?” And the mother said, “Obviously, because their mom and dad are wildcats.”

Now, you know what a juvenile delinquent sometimes is? A child trying to act like his parents, amen? But I want to say something. Whether or not you deem your parents worthy of respect, the Bible still says—it doesn’t make any equivocation here—whether or not you think they’re worthy of respect, you ought to give them respect for the simple fact that they are your parents—period—and they deserve that respect. And if you do not respect them, God will judge you—God will judge you surely and swiftly and certainly. There are few, if any, greater than the sin of showing disrespect to your own mother or to your own father. And my children know—they’re not here; they’re at camp; they ought to be here; the little rascals, they’re at camp—but my children know—they know—that there are some things that Daddy may give a second chance on, and so forth, but they know that disrespect to father, and especially to mother, brings sure and swift retribution. They know that. I will not tolerate a disrespectful attitude in our home. It

is hellish—hellish.

Now, let me say, dear friend, that this matter of teaching respect is something that is long overdue. Did you know that? We honor our parents by showing respect and reverence for them. I like what Chester Swor had to say. He was the man who was preaching when I surrendered to the ministry. He said, “Young lady, if you ever call your mother “the old lady,” I hope a wart grows right on the end of your nose. We’d have to say *amen* to that.

IV. By Expressing Thanksgiving to Them

All right, number four. Another way that we can honor our parents is by expressing thanksgiving to them. Have you done that? Have you developed the attitude of gratitude? Have you realized what your parents have invested in you? Some of us were not born in wealthy homes. But I want to tell you that every mother has gone down into the very valley of the shadow of death to bring you into this world. They have suffered long. They have done much. They have nursed you. They kissed you. They educated you. They have placed all sorts of investment into you. And have you ever thought to be thankful—to be grateful, and to express that gratitude?

Shakespeare said, “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.” God help us: unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, disobedient to parents! Let us be thankful. Let us be holy. Let us be affectionate. And let us obey our mothers and our fathers.

Now, you say, “Well, my folks are always on to me. They’re always griping at me. They’re always telling me to do this and telling me to do that. It’s hard to be thankful for that.”

I want to read something to you, and I read it because that’s the best way to get it across to you. This was written by a housewife. She says: “I had the meanest mother in the world. While other kids ate candy for breakfast, I had to have cereal, eggs, and toast. While others had cokes and candy for lunch, I had to eat a sandwich. And, as you can guess, my supper was different from the other kids also. But at least I wasn’t alone in my sufferings. My sister and two brothers had the same mean mother as I did. My mother insisted upon knowing where we were at all times. You would think we were on a chain gang. She had to know who our friends were and what we were doing. She insisted. If we said we’d be gone an hour, that we’d be gone an hour or less, but one hour and one minute, I’m merely ashamed to admit it, but she actually struck us, not once, but each time we had a mind of our own and did as we pleased. That poor belt was used more on our seats than it was to hold up Daddy’s pants. Can you imagine someone actually hitting a child just because he disobeyed?”

“Now you can see how really mean she was. We had to wear clean clothes and take a bath. The other kids always wore their clothes for days. We reached the heights of insults because she made our clothes herself just to save money. Why, oh why, did we have to have a mother who made us feel different from our friends? The worst is yet to come. We had to be in bed by nine each night, and up at eight each morning. We couldn’t sleep till noon like our friends. So, while they slept, my mother actually had the nerve to break the child labor law. She made us work. We had to wash dishes, and make beds, learn to cook, and all sorts of cruel things. I believe she lay awake at night thinking of mean things to do to us. She always insisted upon our telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, even if it killed us. And it nearly did.

“By the time we were teenagers, she was much wiser, and our life became unbearable. None of this tooting the horn of a car for us to come running. She embarrassed us, no end, by making our dates and friends come to the door to get us. And if I spent the night with a girlfriend—can you imagine?—she checked on me to see if I was really there. I never had the chance to elope to Mexico—that is, if I’d had a boyfriend to elope with. I forgot to mention, while my friends were dating at the mature age of twelve and thirteen, my old-fashioned mother refused to let me date until the age of fifteen and sixteen—fifteen, that is, if you dated only to go to a school function, and that was maybe twice a year.

“Through the years, things didn’t improve a bit. We could not lie in bed sick like our friends did and miss school. When our friends had a toe ache, a hangnail or other serious ailment, they could stay home from school. Our marks in school had to be up to par. Our friends’ report cards had beautiful colors on them: black for passing and red for failing. My mother, being different as she was, would settle for nothing less than ugly black marks. As the years rolled by, first one, and then another, of us were put to shame. We were graduated from high school with our mother behind us talking, getting and demanding respect, none of us allowed the pleasure of being a dropout.

“My mother was a complete failure as a mother. Out of four children, a couple of us attained some higher education. None of us has ever been arrested, divorced, or beaten by his mate. Each of my brothers served his time in the service of this country. And whom do we blame for the terrible way we turned out? You’re right: our mean mother. Look at the things we missed. We never got to march in a protest parade, nor to take part in a riot, burn draft cards, or a million-and-one other things that our friends did. She forced us to grow up God-fearing, educated, honest adults.

“Using this as a background, I am trying to raise my three children. I stand a little taller and am filled with pride when my children call me mean, because, you see, I thank God he gave me the meanest mother in the world.”

Have you thanked God for your mean old mother? Have you thanked God for your

mean old daddy who loves you so much that they will risk your displeasure in order to say *no* when you want them to say *yes* in order to make you do certain things simply because they love you? Develop the attitude of gratitude. Learn to give thanks. Don't be unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, disobedient to parents.

V. By Heeding Their Counsel

Now I want to mention another way that you can honor your father and your mother. The fifth way is by heeding their counsel—by listening to their counsel. Would you turn, please, to Proverbs chapter 1, and I want to begin reading in Proverbs chapter 1 and verse 8: *“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.”* (Proverbs 1:8) God is saying that your parents love you so much that they can give you advice that you need to heed. And you honor them when you heed their counsel and listen to their advice.

Now I know that when you get to be about sixteen, you suspect that your parents have room to rent upstairs unfurnished. And then, at nineteen, you feel that you have surpassed them in all knowledge. At the age of twenty-two, you're just certain that your parents are out of it altogether. But when you get to be about thirty, then you get to remembering that they were right on a lot of things, after all. And when you get to be forty, you think of them as almost perfect people. The older you get, the smarter your parents get.

Your parents know a lot of things, friend. Now you think they don't know the new math, amen? And I'm glad there are a lot of things they don't know. But I want to tell you there are a lot of things they do know. And some of them are not learned in books.

Suppose you were taking a journey, and your family is going on a vacation to Los Angeles, and your parents started out ahead of you on this trip. And let's suppose you started in Florida, and you're in Birmingham, and your parents are in Phoenix, and your parents go to a phone booth and call a motel where you are staying. You know, they could give you a lot of advice. They could say, “Don't take this route. It's under construction.” And they could say, “And, by the way, we want you to see something very beautiful that we saw over here.” And they could say, “Let us tell you about a wonderful restaurant we saw. And let us warn you about something else. There's a motel. Don't stay there. Man, you make your own bed, and that means hammer and saw.” And, you know, they could tell you all kinds of things. Now, you see, why can they give you that advice? Very simple: they've just been down the road ahead of you. That's all. They've just traveled on that road longer than you have. That's all.

Oh, you see, David said, “Once I was young, and now I'm old.” (Psalm 37:25) You can't say that if you're a child. “Once I was young.” He knows what you're facing, but

you don't know what he knows, you see. And so what I'm saying is that you need to heed their counsel; you need to listen to them. You'd be surprised how many heartaches and how many problems you could solve in your life if you'd learn to listen to someone who loves you more than life itself and has some wonderful advice for you—by heeding their counsel.

VI. By Living an Honorable Life

Now, let me say that the sixth way that I want to mention that you can honor your mother and your father is by living an honorable life yourself—by living an honorable life. You see, you are but an extension of your parents. If you live so as to bring honor upon you, it brings honor upon them. If you live so as to bring shame upon you, it brings shame upon them. When you leave the house looking like an unmade bed, that brings shame upon your parents. When you make good marks in school, that brings honor upon your parents. You should so live so that you will never disgrace them. The Bible says, “A son left to himself brings shame to his mother.” (Proverbs 19:26)

I remember hearing Dr. Lee tell how when he as a young man he had to go to South or Central America in order to get some money—to work down there to get some money in order to finish college; that his dear mother called him—and I cannot tell it exactly in the words, and if Dr. Lee is listening, he can correct me on the details of this—but his mother said, in effect, “Bob, you're going down there away from home, and away from those of us who know you, and love you, and guide you. But I want you to keep yourself clean; I want you to keep yourself pure. And when you come home, I'm going to look you in your eye: and if you have dishonored God, or dishonored your mother, I will know it.”

Young Dr. Lee went down to work, stayed there among those vile people and companions and temptations and loneliness, and then came back, called his beloved mother, and said, “Mother, lay your hand upon my shoulders and look into my eyes. Mother, I never dishonored God. I never gambled a dollar. I never took a drink. I never touched a woman. I kept myself pure, Mother. I didn't dishonor you.” No wonder he's the great man that he is. Some people want to know what's the secret of Dr. Lee's long life and usefulness. It might be, among other things, right here: that he learned to honor his parents.

Have you done that? Have you learned to honor your parents that your days may be long? Thank God for the life that he's given this man, this servant of God. We love them by living honorably. We honor them by living lives of honor.

VII. By Loving Them

May I say, last of all—and I save it to the last, because it's the most important and the

best, and it's the sum total of all of the others—you honor your parents by loving them—by loving them; by showing love. Think what you owe to them. They gave us life. Their very blood flows through our veins. There is nothing closer to God's love for us than the love of parents for their children. And, oh, you need to love your parents. You say, "Well, they have some unlovely parts about them." Well, so do you—so do you. Only perfect children can demand perfect parents. But you need to love them. And I want to tell you something, friend. You need to express that love. You need to write that letter. You need to make that phone call. You need to send that gift. You need to purchase those flowers. You need to do that deed of helpfulness and fulfill that chore. You need, dear friend, to give that embrace. You need to give that hug. You need to plant that kiss. And you need to do it now. I mean, as soon as this service ends, you need to start. You only have so many days to show that love.

I know one of these days, at their funeral, you'll buy an awfully big floral arrangement, and you'll talk about what a good mother she was, what a good ol' dad he was. But someone has said, "Dead noses smell no roses." You've got a rose to give? Give it now. You've got a letter to write? Write it now. It may sound corny. It may sound sentimental. But I'll guarantee you, if you sit down and write your mom and dad a love letter, they'll tuck it away, keep it, get it out, weep over it, put it up, get it out, read it again, thank God for it. And, oh, dear friend, sometimes we show that love in the smallest yet the most significant ways.

Conclusion

May God help us to remember the command that says, "*Honour thy father and thy mother,*" and help us to do it right away!

The Fifth Commandment

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 29, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. Dedicate Your Children to Jesus Christ
- II. Pray Over Your Children
- III. Train Your Children, Using the Word of God
 - A. Industry
 - B. Honesty
 - C. Modesty
- IV. Set Limitations for Your Children
- V. Learn to Set an Example
- VI. Learn to Use Bible Discipline
- VII. Show Love

Conclusion

Introduction

Exodus chapter 20, as we continue our study in the Ten Commandments. We've enjoyed preaching in these commandments, and, delightfully, we come today to verse 12—Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12: *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee"* (Exodus 20:12).

And how fitting it is today that we can be preaching on this subject, because, of course, today is Father's Day, and today is the day that Rev. and Mrs. Tom Clayton have arrived. And, incidentally, they joined our church this morning in the eight o'clock service. Brother Clayton is going to be the director of our Family Life Enrichment Ministry, and we're so thrilled that they will be here. Tonight, we'll have a reception for them, and, as Dr. Lane has already said, a special service at 5:45, when we're going to present the Claytons to you; and you're going to hear a concert from the Musical Murks. And I want to say to our friends on television, you get here, because I will guarantee—underscore *guarantee*—a blessing to you. You've never heard anything quite like the Musical Murks; it is one of the finest, most lovely families I've ever seen—just a tribe of them—and they're all musical. And what a blessing it will be to hear these play the violins and the other instruments, and to sing and warm our hearts, and to give

testimonies concerning the Christian home! And then tonight, at the close of the service, we're going to have a reception for the Claytons. So tonight is going to be a wonderful night. It begins at 5:45, and again I say, how fitting that we should come to this one of the commandments. Now, really, it's taken us two Sundays to get through. Last Sunday, we talked about God's command for children. Today, we're going to be talking about God's plan for parents—God's plan for parents.

Now, last week, we talked about seven ways that you could honor your father and your mother. This week, we're going to talk about seven ways to be honorable fathers and mothers—because it's two-sided, isn't it, kids? We're going to be talking about how the Lord would have us live so as to be the kind of parents that our children could rise up and call us blessed (Proverbs 31:28). And so there's not a lot of fanfare in today's message—very simple, very much to the point.

But may I give you seven ways to be honorable parents.

I. Dedicate Your Children to Jesus Christ

Way number one: Dedicate your children to Jesus Christ. Now I'm just assuming that you already know the Lord, parents. Everything that I'm saying is underscored by the fact that I'm speaking to Christian parents. And if you don't know the Lord, the first step is to know the Lord. But, having assumed that, number one: Present your children to Jesus Christ; give them to the Lord. Take your hands off of them, and present them to the Lord.

1 Samuel chapter 1, verse 11—this was the prayer of Hannah: *“And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and forget not thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all of the days of his life”* (1 Samuel 1:11). Hannah said, “Lord, you give him to me, I will give him to thee.”

You see, our children first belong to the Lord. He simply loans them to us. And He says, “Take this child and raise it for me.” We are to give them back to the Lord. Have you presented your children to the Lord? You know, so many of us try to succeed through our children. And that, my friend, I believe, is a grave mistake. Some of us would like for our children to be the President of the United States, or we'd like for our children to be a congressman. We'd like for them to be a senator; we'd like for them to be a big businessman, a wealthy banker. We'd like for them to be a doctor or a lawyer, and we aspire for our children. And it's all right for us to aspire for our children to some degree. But let me say, “Lord, not my will, but thine, be done in the life of our children.”

Now the Bible says, “He who would save his life shall lose it” (Matthew 16:25). I would paraphrase that to say, “He who would save his child will lose him.” We are to give our children to the Lord. And if I know my heart, I don't care, really, whether my

children are wealthy or famous; I want them to serve Jesus. I mean that with all of my heart. The Bible says, in the Book of Psalms, “*As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth*” (Psalm 127:4). And what is an arrow used for? It’s used to shoot at the enemy. Well, you’re not the enemy. I’ll shoot this way—the youth—to shoot at the enemy. That’s what the arrow is for. You see, an arrow can go where a warrior cannot go. Our children can go where we cannot go, “*as arrows are in the hand of a mighty man*” (Psalm 127:4). Have you said, “Lord, you take my children; and, Lord, whether they live in fame or in shame, Lord, if they live for you, I’ll be happy?” Give them to Jesus, lock, stock, and barrel. Just give them to the Lord.

Now not only should you give them to the Lord even before they’re born, but, oh, friend, you need to bring them to Jesus. You need to see to it that your children are saved. You see, the Bible says, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 15—Paul was talking to Timothy, and he says “that from a child you have known the holy scriptures that are able to make you wise unto salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15). That is, his mother and his grandmother led him to Jesus. What a privilege, what a joy, to bring our children to Jesus Christ! Say, you ought to feel cheated, if somebody else has the joy of bringing your child to Christ. Oh, you ought to be happy, regardless of when it’s done; but there ought to be just a little tinge of disappointment if somebody else does the thing that God wants you to do—and that is to bring your children to Jesus Christ, present them to Christ. When should you start? Oh, dear friend, before they’re born, you ought to present them to the Lord, and then you ought to be praying and teaching and watching for that golden moment.

Dr. Ellis A. Fuller answered the question, “How old should the child be when he comes to the Lord Jesus Christ?” And he said, “When children can believe on parents and repent of wrong toward their parents, why cannot they meet the requirements for the blessing of salvation through grace?” When children can believe and trust in mom and dad, when they can repent toward wrong against mom and dad, they’re old enough to be saved.

All right, number one: If we would be honorable parents, present our children to Jesus Christ. Bring them to Jesus Christ: pray for them, yearn over them, and watch over them until they know Christ, until they are filled with the Spirit, and until their lives are dedicated to His service, whatever it may be. If God wants them to be a businessman, fine and wonderful! But if God wants them to be a missionary in the darkest part of Africa, to burn at the stake for Jesus, well and wonderful! Present your children to Christ.

II. Pray Over Your Children

Number two—number two: Pray over your children. Oh, ladies and gentleman, pray

over your children. If there has ever been a day when we need to baptize and immerse our children in prayer, it is this day. Listen. I had rather raise my children on the frontier, where there were rattlesnakes and Indians, than to try to raise them in this jungle with dope pushers and pornographers. We need to pray over our children. We need to pray, “Oh, God, protect our children! O God, build a wall of fire about our children!” Husbands and wives are a perfect team for prayer. The Bible says, in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 7, *“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers [to God] be not hindered”* (1 Peter 3:7). Husbands and wives, when they live together in sweet communion, they have such an influence, such a powerful means of prayer!

I remember years ago I was praying for my children one by one, and I prayed, “Oh, God, if any of my children are not saved”—they’d all made professions of faith, but I said—“Lord, if any of them are not saved, if they don’t know you, Lord, bring that child to you.” The very next Sunday, without my saying a word to anybody about my prayer, one of my precious daughters walked down the aisle and took her daddy by the hand and said, “Dad, I’ve been a member of the church. But, Dad, God spoke to my heart last week and showed me that I wasn’t truly saved. And I want to be saved.” Isn’t that wonderful? Now, why does God do that? Because we prayed. I believe with all of my heart that was an answer to prayer. Do you pray for your children?

III. Train Your Children, Using the Word of God

Number three: We must train our children, and the textbook is the Word of God. The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6—Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 6—*“Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). It doesn’t mean that he’s going to get away and then finally come back. It says he’ll not depart; that is, from the time he’s a child and knowing the Holy Scriptures and coming to Jesus right on through maturity, he will serve the Lord. We need to train them, and the textbook is the Word of God. We need to teach the Word of God convincingly. We need to teach the Word continually. We need to teach the Word of God creatively. We need to teach the Word of God compellingly. We need to teach the Word of God.

And what will the Word of God help us to train them in? Three things—three things.

A. Industry

Number one: in industry—industry. We need to teach them to work. Have you trained your child to work? I tell you, the hardest thing that I know of to teach a child to do is to work. It’s easier to do it yourself. You take a little four-year-old boy and tell him

to empty the wastebasket: he's old enough to empty the wastebasket on the ground. Now you can go and pick up all of that paper and put it in the garbage can, or you can stay with him and help him pick up each piece of paper. You see, there's a difference in teaching and training. We need to train them in industry.

Do you know that our children today don't know how to work? We say that they are privileged children. They're not privileged children; they are deprived children. And privileged children have to work. The child that has everything done for him will grow up to be a juvenile delinquent.

A municipal judge noted a while back that boys who practice football in the afternoons don't get in trouble at night. They're too tired. He said that he noted that a great deal of young men came—a great number of young men came—before his bench at the Juvenile Court after football season when they had time on their hands and nothing to do. You see, there's a way to keep our children out of mischief, and that is to cause them to work. And work develops character in our children, rather than characters. We're developing characters, I believe.

I want to quote what an expert said. He said, "Why do you suppose so many young people turn to various forms of lawlessness and depravity in order to make a living? The poor souls were permitted to play, play, play, play, from early morning to late at night, for eighteen years. They have learned nothing but foolishness—colossal and stupendous foolishness. How can they suddenly face the discipline and the mundane things involved in making an honest living? It is too late. Maybe you raised an eighteen-year-old slob, who has not yet learned how to work. You see, knowledge comes from a book, but character comes from work. Wisdom comes from work. We need to train them in industry.

B. Honesty

But not only do we need to train them in work, but also in honesty—honesty. Listen. If you want to teach your child something that will develop character, teach him to work, and teach him to be honest—I mean scrupulously honest. You teach your child that he is never more like the devil than when he's telling a lie. Jesus said, in John chapter 8, verse 44, that the devil is a liar, and he's the father of it (John 8:44). We are never more like Jesus Christ than when we're telling the truth, for Jesus is "*the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). Oh, dear friend, the cardinal sin, the sin of all sins, ought to be to lie to mom and dad; that ought to receive the greatest punishment. If there's ever a time you're going to be lenient, don't be lenient over a lie. Just make it absolutely certain that truth must be told—the truth must be told.

And if we're teaching them that they cannot lie *to* us, then we must not teach them to lie *for* us. Do you know the reason that we raise liars in our homes is that sometimes the

parents are dishonest? They tell the children lies. They tell them lies about Santa Claus, Easter, the bogeyman—all of these kinds of things, all kinds of little lies.

One mother was trying to get her child to behave, and she said, “If you tell another lie, they’re going to put you on the moon where a little green man will make you pick up sticks the rest of your life.” You see, it’s not right even to punish them for lying to us when we teach them to lie for us. The telephone rings, and you say to Junior, “Go answer the phone, and tell them Mommy is not here.” So he picks up the phone and says, “Mommy says she’s not here.” And then we punish them for lying to us.

C. Modesty

No, we need to train our children in industry. We need to train our children in honesty. And we need to train our children in modesty—in modesty. Someone has said that humans are the only animals that blush, but they’re the only ones that need to. But did you know that we have forgotten how to blush? Unspeakably immoral things are taking place, and the Christian needs to go to the Word of God and get the standards for modesty from the Word of God, and quit adjusting himself according to society and according to fashion and go back the standards of the Word of God. I’m amazed at the way some young people dress—amazed! They go out in the streets in things they ought not to come down the stairs in, and I wonder, where are the mothers? Where are the mothers? They say, “Well, I want her to be attractive.” What are you trying to attract? What are you trying to attract? You want her to be beautiful. You want her to be feminine. Yes, you want her to be lovely. Yes, wonderful, but modest.

Here is something that bothers me. Did you know, ladies and gentleman, that we have lived in immodesty and seen so much flagrant immorality that we’re becoming used to it? You know, you go to the high school campus, and the girls sit around in such immodest ways that there’s hardly anything left to the boys’ imagination. And you ask one of the teenage boys, “Doesn’t that bother you?” and he says, “Well, it used to, but you get used to it”—“you get used to it.” You say, “Well, that’s good, then.” No! That’s bad! That’s bad, because when we get used to certain things, then it takes even more to get a thrill. Do you want me to tell you why we are off on a binge of perversion and homosexuality? Because we have so sated ourselves with immorality that we’ve become used to it, and it takes something else to give a bigger thrill. We are raising a generation of perverts, because they have been sated with sex in their younger age.

I quote another man: “It is no accident that the trend toward immodesty”—“the trend toward immodesty”—“parallels the rise in perversion and homosexuality. Men become sated on natural sex through overstimulation, and so take up with unnatural and perverse behavior.” The surest road, both of morality and of their healthy desire, which

leads ultimately to marriage, is modesty. We need to train our children in modesty.

IV. Set Limitations for Your Children

Now the fourth thing, if we would be honorable parents—the fourth thing: not only do we need to present them to Christ, not only do we need to saturate them in prayer, not only do we need to train them according to the precepts and the standards of the Word of God, but, fourthly, we need to set some limitations for our children. We need to learn the meaning of that old-fashioned word *no*. We need to have the gumption to set down some sensible rules and stick to them. And it doesn't make any difference what the others are doing.

Dr. Max Rafferty, State Superintendent of Public Instruction in California, blames dropout parents for much of today's juvenile delinquency. I want to quote what Dr. Rafferty had to say: "We have been soft, when we should have been tough; permissive, when we should have cracked down; generous, when we should have been stingy; not involved, when we should have been up to our ears. Do you give your teenagers more money than they need for lunch, school supplies, and such? You know, do you? That's why so many of them today own expensive college pads, drive expensive little foreign cars, smoke expensive pot, and go to an expensive hell? Do you know where your high-schoolers are and what they're doing every moment they're out of school and away from home? If not, why not? In this connection, please spare me all the popular, corny rationalizations about Junior needing to learn independence and self-reliance."

Says Dr. Rafferty: "Independence and self-reliance are the last things in the world our offspring need to learn. They are positively bristling with these sterling qualities, like so many adolescent porcupines. I think I have learned every argument ever dreamed up about how the *now generation* demands unprecedented trust, can find a blank check. Horse feathers! What every new generation needs is adult concern, supervision, and a good firm *no* every once and a while. Every school kid I ever knew who got into trouble did so because his parents didn't know, or possibly did not care, what he was doing when he was getting into that same trouble. It's usually as simple as that."

"Do you know Junior's friends? Do they look reasonably clean and talk the same way; or, do they look and talk as though they had crawled out quite recently from under some particular noisome rock? If the latter description rings a bell, look out for squirrels ahead. It's only a question of time until Junior joins them under the same rock. Since Mom and Dad are older, wiser, and make more money to pay the grocery bills than does Junior, therefore he should keep a civil tongue in his head, obey orders, and maybe even do a little work now and then around the house. All statements characterizing the younger generation as being more sensitive, aware, concerned, intelligent, worried, belligerent, or sexy than previous generations are a lot of

belligerence. The kids today are just richer, that's all." And then Dr. Rafferty went on to say, "Parents who let their adolescent offspring go around unshod, unshorn, un-bathed, and uncouth ought to be locked up, or psychoanalyzed, or both."

Amen, or oh me? Now, take it up with Dr. Rafferty, but I believe he's right. I believe he's right. We need a generation of parents who will take the Ten Commandments and the Word of God, and set some goals. It's no fun to play the game of life if you don't know where the goals are and the sidelines are, and what's out of bounds. Your children want you to be firm, believe it or not. They want you to discipline them; they want you to set some standards. Oh, they'll act like they don't. They'll say, "What's the matter, Dad? Don't you trust me?" You know what your answer should be? "No."

You see, trust isn't something that you just dispense to make people feel good; trust is something that's earned. Oh, you can trust them in some areas, but when Daughter wants to go off to one of these passion pits called a drive-in theater with some guy she's just met, and Dad says, "No," she'll say, "Oh, Daddy, don't you trust me?" What should Daddy do? Daddy should answer something like this: "You don't trust a boy who is taking freshman chemistry, who wants to be a doctor, to perform a surgical operation, do you, just because he wants you to trust him?" You see, trust is built upon experience. To trust young people with the explosive potentials of sex, to throw them completely on their own with no safeguards, no rules, no restraints, is as foolish as trusting a surgeon's knife into the hands of a pre-med student. This is not trust, but foolish and dangerous irresponsibility. Trust is earned, but not only is it earned, it comes through experience; and, no matter how fine and how wonderful and how honest your children are, there are certain things they do not have the experience to cope with. And Mom and Dad need to set some rules. That's why God gave parents.

V. Learn to Set an Example

Now, next, number five: If you want to be the kind of parents that they can honor, learn to set an example; because presenting them to God, praying for them, training them, and setting discipline and rules for them are not enough. They must have that example.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 1—1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 1—the Apostle Paul said, "*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 11:1). "You follow me like I follow Jesus": can you say that to your children? Did you say to your children and your family, "You do as my mom and dad have done?" Can you say to them, "You can fuss and bicker and squabble when you hear Mom and Dad fuss and bicker and squabble?" Do you dare say to your children, "You imitate my life"? You ought to say, "You follow me, and I follow Christ." Someone has said that a juvenile delinquent is a child trying to act like his parents. Is that true? It may be. You see, the Bible preaches that, "the sins of the fathers are visited on the children unto the third and

fourth generation of them that hate me” (Exodus 20:5).

When my first child was born, I remember going, getting on my knees in that little house trailer where we lived while we were going to college. And I said, “Lord, if I never do anything good, if I never preach a sermon worth hearing, if I never pastor a large church, if I never do anything else, Lord, I want to be a good daddy; and, Lord, I want to so live, that my children will believe in my faith. I know that I have many failures.” And I know that there’s no such thing as a perfect father, a perfect mother; there are no such things as perfect children. But I do believe that we should so live that our children will believe that which we believe—what we profess to believe—and that we can set an example before them, and we can say to our children, “You follow me as I follow Christ.”

Parents, have you given your heart to Jesus Christ? Are you living by the Word of God? If not, you may be damning the very souls of those whom God has given you to bring to heaven with you. Children learn what they live. If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If a child lives with hostility, he learns to fight. If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy. If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty. If a child lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient. If a child lives with encouragement, he learns confidence. If a child lives with praise, he learns to be appreciative. If a child lives with fairness, he learns justice. If a child lives with security, he learns to have faith. If a child lives with approval, he learns to like himself. If a child lives with acceptance and friendship, he learns to find love in the world. Set an example.

VI. Learn to Use Bible Discipline

Next, sixthly, we need to learn to use Bible discipline. Turn, please, to Proverbs chapter 22 and verse 15: *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him”* (Proverbs 22:15). *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child.”*

Now I know there are those who, since the French Revolution, tell us that man is basically good, and that human nature is basically good, and that the evil that crops out from time to time is due to the lack of education and understanding of perhaps some psychological patterns inflicted by one’s background and environment. That all sounds too good. We’re told that what is needed today is education and some adjustment in the environment—economical, social, political, and psychological—that when we do all of this we just correct everything: then that little flower will unfold and blossom. Don’t you believe it! The Bible says that, *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child”* (Proverbs 22:15). The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 3, that we are *“by nature the children of wrath”* (Ephesians 2:3).

Now I don’t believe that we ought to go around beating on children, whacking on children all of the time. I believe that, if parents set the right example, if parents set

some rules—sensible rules, not a lot of Mickey Mouse rules; sensible rules—if parents inflict punishment for punishment—not brutality—if they begin early enough and show love while they’re doing it, they won’t have to give very many spankings. They will be very early, very few, and quite far between. I’m not talking about slapping at children. I’m not talking about pecking at children. I’m not talking about empty threats. And I’m not talking about going off into a rage. You know, you ought to count to ten sometimes before you give a spanking. You ought to have a little prayer yourself and make certain—make certain—that you’re not just trying to get even, amen?

I heard about a man pushing a baby carriage one time, and there was a baby just having a tantrum; and this man was saying, “Now, Albert; easy, Albert; Albert, take it easy, Albert.” A lady said, “Sir, I’ve never seen a man spend more time and be more gentle. It’s just wonderful—your gentleness toward Albert.” “Oh,” he says, “he’s Sam. I’m Albert.” “Easy, Albert.” We need to take care of ourselves and make certain that we have the right spirit when we do it.

Let me tell you something, ladies and gentleman. If we love our children, we’re going to discipline them. The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 23, verse 13—look at it—*“Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die...”*—any of you ever think you were going to? Let’s see your hand. I did. Man, sometimes, I wished I would—*“thou beatest him with a rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with a rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell”* (Proverbs 23:13–14). Now, what does that mean? That means, ladies and gentleman, that, if we do not teach our children some discipline, they will grow up to be rebellious children. The child that does not learn discipline in the home, and learn it early, will not learn discipline in the church; he’ll not learn it in the school; he’ll not learn it in the community; he will not respect authority; and, finally, he will not respect the authority of God. He will come to think of God as he thinks of his father, for we pray, “Our Father”—“Our Father.” You are giving your children a one-way ticket to hell when you refuse to discipline them.

Now I know some parents don’t discipline children, because, they say, “Well, I love them.” Well, the Bible says, *“Whom the [Father] loveth he chasteneth”* (Proverbs 3:12). So you say, “Well, I want them to love me.” Well then, whip them, if you want them to love you.

Turn for a moment to the Book of Deuteronomy, and let me show you something. Look in Deuteronomy chapter 6. We are to deal with our children as God deals with us. He is giving His command to His people, Israel, and He’s telling them that they ought to love Him. Look in verses 4 and 5: *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God...”*—notice that—*“thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”* (Deuteronomy 6:4–5). All right now, we’re to love God. But now, look in verse 13: *“Thou shalt fear the*

LORD thy God” (Deuteronomy 6:13). *“Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God.”* “Thou shalt love thy God.” *“Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God.”*

Now if God wants us to love Him, God also wants us to fear Him. And he who loves God the best fears God the most. He who fears God the most loves God the best. Your children will love you better when they respect you. You don't know more than God knows. You raise your children to disrespect your authority, and you're raising children who will never love you as they ought. I'm not talking about being cruel. Any person who abuses a child needs to be whipped himself. When you spank a child, you should hurt him, but never harm him. God will give you wisdom. God made a spanking spot. Somebody said, “Children need to be raised with a pat on the back: high enough when they do good; low enough when they do bad.” And both are important: not always picking, sometimes praising. But there is this matter of discipline—biblical discipline.

VII. Show Love

Now, finally, the seventh thing: If we would be the honorable parents that God wants us to be—to raise our children to meet us in heaven—then we need to show love. We need to show love. This is the sum total of all of these other things.

You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, everybody loves their children.” Well, I'm not so certain. The Bible teaches, in the Book of Titus, that the older women are to teach the younger women to love their children (Titus 2:3–4). Do you know we've come to a day and an age in which mothers need to be told, again, to love their children? You know, you're not supposed to put your children in a daycare center while you go off to “express yourself.” You're not supposed to get somebody else to raise your children for you. You're supposed to do that. Now my heart goes out to a woman who has to work in order to put bread on the table. But if you're just simply saying, “I don't want to be tied down with these children,” you need somebody to take a Bible and teach you to love your children.

Do you know how to spell *love*? *T-i-m-e*. That's how you love your children. We're to love our children. Nobody can give them the love like Mama can. Nobody can give them the love that Daddy can. Do you know why some kids are naughty? They're naughty to be noticed. Why some kids steal a car? They steal a car—they're saying, “Somebody pay some attention to me.” We need to love our children, and that love needs to be demonstrative love; it needs to be the kind of a love where we pick them up, squeeze them, kiss them, hug them, and tell them that we love them. You tell your children that you love them.

It may sound corny, but we told our kids, “You tell your mama you love her. You tell your dad that you love him.” And I want to turn that around today. I hope there will be some fathers who put their arms around big old teenage boys, give them a hug, and

say, “I love you,” and keep showing that love. If you do, they know you love them. You’ll be able to punish them. You’ll be able to set some limits. And they won’t mind that. Oh, how we need to express that love!

Conclusion

A father, a mother, and a little daughter—he was a banker—went up north, up to the north woods to take a vacation. Someone loaned them an executive cabin, and they were so happy to have it. It was going to be the perfect vacation. Mother was getting the lunch ready. Father said to the daughter, “I’ll take you out in the boat, and we’ll go out rowing.” And so they went out on the lake, and one of these storms came up, very similar to the storm that we had yesterday—one of those storms that just seemed to roll in with just boiling clouds. And it was kind of late in the afternoon, and it got dark, and the wind started to blow. And it was a large lake, and they lost their way. And the father was frightened, because the waves were boisterous, and the girl was only a little girl. He began to pray, and he said, “God, please help me to get my daughter back home safely.”

And then the little girl said, “Look, Daddy! I see a light! Look, Daddy! Over there, on the shore: there’s a light!” Mother had set a light in the window, and she said, “I see a light.” And Dad said, “That’s Mama! That’s the cabin! Now, honey, you sit in the back of the boat, and Daddy will sit here and row, and you’ll tell Daddy which way to go.” And that dad, even though the wind and the rain were coming down, had the perspiration running down his brow, but he pulled with those waves with all of his might. She said, “A little this way, Daddy; now a little this way, Daddy.” And he kept on pulling, and finally he heard that boat crunch on those pebbles there on the shore, and he reached down and pulled it up, and didn’t even wait to tie it. And then they burst open the door of that cabin with a relieved look on their faces. The little girl said, “Mother! Mother! We got home because we steered by your light.”

Oh, friends, I trust that there will be so many who come to heaven, boys and girls who will say, “Mom, Dad, we got home; we made it because we steered by your light.” Love them. Set an example. Give them to the Lord. Pray over them. Discipline them. When it is necessary, set some limitations. But bring those children home to Jesus.

The Sixth Commandment: Thou Shalt Not Kill

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 26, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:13 Outline

Introduction

- A. What This Commandment Does Not Forbid
 - 1. The Slaying of Animals
 - 2. Capital Punishment
 - 3. Protection of Oneself or One's Loved Ones
- I. Intentional Murder
 - A. Homicide
 - B. Suicide
 - C. Infanticide
- II. Indirect Murder
 - A. Cruelty
 - B. Corruption
 - C. Carnality
- III. Invisible Murder

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn, please, to Exodus chapter 20—Exodus chapter 20—as we're continuing our study in the Ten Commandments. Today, our text is very short, very pungent, very pertinent, and you will see in a moment, very personal—because you may think of all of the commandments this one does not apply to you, or at least it's one that may not have much relevance to you; but I think you'll change your mind if you'll listen to the message. Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13: *"Thou shalt not kill"* (Exodus 20:13)—*"Thou shalt not kill."*

A. What This Commandment Does Not Forbid

1. The Slaying of Animals

Now, by way of introduction, let's talk about what is not forbidden by this particular command, *"Thou shalt not kill."* (Exodus 20:13) Of course, it goes without saying that the Lord is not forbidding the slaying of animals—for you can see here in Exodus chapter 20—the same chapter—in verse 24 God gave instruction for the sacrificing of animals. It says in verse 24, *"An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine*

oxen.” (Exodus 20:24) So the Lord is not prohibiting the killing of animals. You know, there are some who are vegetarians, because they say the Bible says, “*Thou shalt not kill.*” I don’t know how they figure out the fact that Jesus ate fish and these sorts of things; but, of course, the Bible does not prohibit the killing of animals.

2. Capital Punishment

And, contrary to popular opinion, the Bible does not prohibit capital punishment. And, incidentally, I’m going to be preaching on capital punishment tonight: “The Bible and Capital Punishment.” But I want you to notice, as we’re just going right on through the book of Exodus now—look in chapter 21 and verse 12. You might draw a circle around it—Exodus 21:12: “*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*” Did you hear that? “*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death.*” That, my friend, is the Word of God. We’re going to be talking tonight about what the Bible has to say about capital punishment, because I have some people that are soft-headed. Let me say that any government that shrinks from punishing its criminals is the lamb defending the lion’s right to eat it.

3. Protection of Oneself or One’s Loved Ones

Now, next, not only does the Bible not forbid the slaying of animals; not only does it not forbid the government from executing people from capital crimes; it also does not forbid the killing of another person in order to protect one’s loved ones: one’s loved ones, one’s life, or one’s limbs. If you notice in Exodus chapter 22—and remember all of these are in the context of the Ten Commandments—Exodus chapter 22, verses 2 and 3: “*If a thief be found breaking up, and he be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft.*” (Exodus 22:2–3)

Now, what does that mean? It means that if in the middle of the night you wake up, and there’s someone breaking in your door—you can’t see who it is; the sun is not up; you don’t know what he has in mind; you’re afraid for life and limb—and in your attempt to protect yourself or the life of your loved ones that man’s life is taken, God says you are not held accountable: “There will be no blood shed.” (Exodus 22:2) “[*He that] sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.*” (Genesis 6:9) But God says, “Not here.” If you kill someone breaking into your home, and you don’t know but what he may mean to maim your wife, or rape your daughter, or you don’t know what is happening, and you in the middle of the night are protecting your own life, your own loved ones, and—the Bible says—he’s breaking in, then God does not hold you culpable; God does not hold you accountable. And we’re just simply saying what is not prohibited here is the slaying of animals for sacrifice, for food; what is not prohibited here is capital punishment; and what is not prohibited here is the protection of our loved

ones.

We have some people who are pacifists. They believe that it's absolutely wrong on any occasion to go to war. But that is not a correct interpretation of the Bible. Now war is terrible. Of course, war is not hell. War is hell? That's wrong. Hell is hell. If you say war is hell, then what is heaven? Peace? Listen, friend. War is hellish. War is terrible. And no person in his right mind should want to go to war or want a war. But what would you do if you were walking down the street and you saw two hoodlums accosting a person, beating a person, perhaps assaulting a young girl? What would you do? Would you not go to offense? Would you not help? Suppose one of your own children were being attacked, would you not go to that offense? And when we, by a just and a righteous war, are forced to defend our loved ones, that is but an expansion of this text that we're looking at here in Exodus chapter 22.

Now we don't have time to delve into that, but I just want to say that sometimes people misinterpret the commandment that says, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" Actually, the Hebrew is—listen—"Thou shalt not *murder.*" "Thou shalt not *murder*": that's what God is talking about. He's not talking about the slaying of animals for food. He's not talking about self-defense. He is not talking about capital punishment. But God says, "Thou shalt not murder."

And I want to mention in my message this morning three kinds of murder—three kinds of murder. The first kind of murder that I want to mention is intentional murder. The second kind of murder that I want to mention is indirect murder. And the third kind of murder is invisible murder. And I think we will be able to see all three from the Word of God this morning.

I. Intentional Murder

First of all, intentional murder.

A. Homicide

This is an injunction against the crime of homicide. *Homicide*: taking another man's life without warrant, whether he's talking about the murderous ways, the butcherous ways, of communism; whether he's talking about the insane retaliations of Idi Amin; whether he's talking about a thug who takes a forty-five and guns a man down on the street of Memphis, or in a supermarket, or whatever he's talking about; or whether he's talking about a man who assaults a young lady and sacrifices her upon the altar of his lust, God is saying, "*Thou shalt not kill.*" And here he warns against the sin—the horrible sin—of homicide. And I want you to know, dear friend, that though you may escape the justice of man, you will not escape the justice of God—the justice of God. "*God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*" (Galatians 6:7)

B. Suicide

But not only is He talking here about the crime of homicide; also he would be talking about the crime of suicide—for not only is it wrong to take someone else’s life; it’s wrong to take your own. No one has a right to take his own life, because, in the truest sense of the word, your life is not your own life: it comes from God, and there’s no excuse. May I underscore that? No excuse! No reason for one ever to take his own life! Even in the most incurable disease; even with the most constant, unbearable pain; even in the time of severest trouble and heartache and persecution, one should never take his own life, for that takes out of the hands of God matters that should only be left in God’s hands. God alone is wise enough, God alone is strong enough, and God alone is good enough to handle these problems rightly. And we should never, never, never contemplate suicide!

Somebody asked the question, “Could a Christian commit suicide?” Some may, but it is never God’s will; it is never God’s plan. God says, “There hath no trial—no temptation, no testing—taken you, but such as is common to man. And God will with the temptation freely make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (1 Corinthians 10:13) You see, dear friend, no matter how severe the testing, no matter how horrible the trial, there is a way out of trouble. But it is God’s way. It is not suicide. God will give grace according to your need.

Oh, there may be some person right now, some person listening to me, who says, “Brother Rogers, I don’t know where to turn. I had just rather end it all.” Well, dear friend, suicide doesn’t end it all—suicide doesn’t end it all. You would bring more shame upon your family, more grief to your loved ones, and how ashamed you would be when you faced the Savior and had to tell Him you could not trust Him to see you through, and that you could not trust Him to bear your burden and to carry your grief! Oh, I’ll admit that sometimes people may be mentally disturbed, and mental derangement and mental sickness may cloud the minds of some people, even the mind of a Christian. But, oh, how sad it is!

C. Infanticide

This commandment forbids the crime of homicide. It forbids the crime of suicide. And it forbids the crime of infanticide. And what I mean by that is this: the killing of little infants, the taking of the lives of preborn babies, what some call today abortions. Did you know that in America one million little babies were slaughtered with government approval last year? That makes me shudder; it makes me fearful. I wonder, can God withhold His hand of judgment upon America? In 1973, the Supreme Court ruled “that every woman in the United States has the same right to an abortion during the first six months of pregnancy as she has to any other minor surgery.” Now, catch that: “any

other minor surgery.” I deplore the classification of the killing of preborn infants as minor surgery. May God have mercy upon us!

There’s something very ungodly—there’s something very un-American—that’s going on in America. It is strange that we can have a project stopped over here in East Tennessee at the Tellico Dam because a little species of fish named a snail darter—that’s what it is—perhaps, they say, might become extinct, and so the United States government protects a little fish in a river, but does not protect a baby in the womb. What’s happening to us? What is happening to America?

You know, I can’t understand our Supreme Court sometimes. I cannot understand some of the things that are being done. I feel like telling some of these people, “Pick on somebody your own size.” Maybe we should abort the court. I don’t just blame the court. Dear friend, you don’t have to wait for the Supreme Court to rule before you do right. Oh, my friend, these are serious things! And I know there are some who have perhaps not been instructed, and I don’t hold them with the same guilt that I would hold a person whose eyes have been opened. And I know there are precious teenagers and others who have gone through this process, and I’m not trying to heap guilt upon you, because *“the blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin.”* (1 John 1:7) And, thank God, there’s forgiveness. But it is time that somebody stood up and spoke out for things that are right and against things that are wrong.

We ought to hang our heads in shame. *“Thou shalt not kill.”* Everybody says, “Well, it all just depends when life begins.” Well, you’re quite right: that is the issue. I want you to listen to Jeremiah chapter 1, verse 5. God spoke to Jeremiah and said, *“Before I formed thee in the womb I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”* (Jeremiah 1:5) “Before you came out of the womb I ordained you. I sanctified you a prophet. I knew you,” God said.

And the personhood of the yet unborn child: when does life begin? Within eighteen to twenty-five days, the heart of that little preborn infant is beating. Brain waves may be recorded in forty-five days. In eight weeks, the brain is completely present. By this time, the little one will respond to touch—at just nine or ten weeks. In just two weeks, he has fingernails, sucks the thumb, swallows, digests, recoils from noise or pain. Now all the organ systems are functional, and nothing new will develop until he becomes a full-grown adult with his place.

What is He saying here in this command? He is warning against the crime of intentional murder: the crime of homicide, the crime of suicide, and the crime of infanticide.

II. Indirect Murder

These are things that our Lord warns against, but let us go on and talk not only about

the crime of intentional murder, but let us think for just a moment about the crime of indirect murder; because many of you, if not most of you, would not ever be guilty of intentional murder, but I think there are some of us who are guilty of the crime—the crime, I say—of indirect murder. You are causing people to lose their lives, to shorten their lives, by the things that you are doing. Three ways I want to mention.

A. Cruelty

Some by cruelty: by cruelty you are cutting the life short of the ones that love you. Some of you are giving your mother and your dad gray hairs. Some of you are pinching wrinkles into their brows. Some of you husbands by the way that you're living are killing your wives by degrees.

The Chinese used to have a torture, the Chinese water torture. They would put an individual, tie him beneath a reservoir where there would be a constant dropping of water—constant, constant, constant—until, finally, the nervous system would explode with a devastating explosion. And death would result, not from one severe blow, but from the constant, constant, constant, constant drip, drip, drip, drip. Murder by cruelty—murder by cruelty. Indirect murder. It violates the command, *“Thou shalt not kill.”*

B. Corruption

But not only murder by cruelty, but murder by corruption—murder by corruption. What do I mean by that? For example, the whiskey industry. The liquor business is guilty of breaking this commandment—and those who favor it, those who vote for it, those who buy it, and those who sell it. If that makes you angry, you come and apologize to me, and I'll forgive you. It's brewed with tears, thickened with blood, flavored with death.

The scourge of God is upon us. Memphis, Tennessee went through quite a thing a while back where they were voting as to whether or not to have liquor by the drink. Everybody said we need it to make our city a better city. Check the record—check the record. Read the newspapers. Look at the crime statistics. Do you know what the Bible says in the book of Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 12? Look it up, if you can find it—Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 12: *“Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity!”* (Habakkuk 2:12) If the only way that you know how to build a city is with liquor money, gambling money, prostitution, and topless bars, I feel sorry for you. *“Woe unto him that builds a city by iniquity.”* And what iniquity is he talking about? Well, skip down a little further and look at chapter 2, verse 15: *“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also.”* (Habakkuk 2:15) *“Woe,”* God says, *“upon the liquor business!”*

Our highways have become slaughter pens, being wiped out by drunken drivers, and we sit idly by. We have those who protested the Vietnamese War. But let me tell

you something. During that same period of time that the Vietnamese War was going on, six times as many Americans lost their lives due to beverage alcohol as lost it fighting in the Vietnamese conflict. I said, six times as many lost their lives to King Alcohol.

And you cannot tell me that the liquor barons are not guilty of transgressing the commandment that says, *“Thou shalt not kill.”* It is indirect murder. Evangeline Booth said, “Drink has shed more blood, hung more crepe, sold more homes, plunged more people into bankruptcy, armed more villains, slain more children, snapped more wedding rings, defiled more innocence, blinded more eyes, twisted more limbs, dethroned more reason, wrecked more manhood, dishonored more womanhood, broken more hearts, blasted more lives, driven more to suicide, and dug more graves than any other scourge that has cursed the world.”

C. Carnality

How can we break this command? By intentional murder. By indirect murder: the crime of cruelty; the crime of corruption, and, thirdly, the crime of carnality. Indirect murder—that’s a form of indirect murder—carnality. What is carnality? The word *carnes* is the Latin word for “flesh.” It is living a fleshly, sensual, sensate life, rather than living and walking in the Spirit.

Did you know that if you live a carnal life, you’re committing slow suicide? Did you know that there are many people who through carnal habits, fleshly habits, are destroying themselves? The Bible says in the book of Galatians the sixth chapter, *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”* And then God says: *“He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption.”* (Galatians 6:7–8)

Do you know how many are going to die? They will dig their grave with their teeth, kill their selves with illicit sex, and embalm themselves with alcohol. And they have broken the spirit of this command that says, *“Thou shalt not kill.”* Our bodies are to be temples of the Holy Spirit. We are not to take into our bodies foul foods, and we’re not to take into our bodies intoxicants. Do you know what the word *intoxicated* means? It means “poison.” A toxic is a poison. When a man is intoxicated, he has poisoned himself. And a man who poisons himself is breaking the spirit of the command that says, *“Thou shalt not kill.”* Indirect murder—indirect murder.

III. Invisible Murder

But not only is it a crime of intentional murder—homicide, suicide, infanticide; not only is there the crime of indirect murder—cruelty, corruption, carnality; but I want to say, thirdly and finally, there’s also the crime of invisible murder. This is a murder that no one sees. It never comes to fruition. Really, no blood is shed, as such. But God writes it

down in His heavenly ledger with pen of iron and letters of flame in rocks of lead. God writes down “murder.” What is this—this invisible murder? It’s murder that’s in the heart but never finds expression.

Matthew chapter 15, verse 19—Matthew 15, verse 19—Jesus Christ said, “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders*” (Matthew 15:19)—“*out of the heart proceed...murders.*” Murders don’t come into the heart; murders come out of the heart. And when there’s murder in the heart, whether it ever really finds its expression, in reality, by the taking of another life, when God comes to judge, He still writes down “murder.” I want you to notice in Matthew chapter 5, verse 21—turn to it—Matthew 5:21, and read Jesus’ commentary on this commandment: “*Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill*”—now that’s the commandment; this is the Sermon on the Mount. Listen to it—“*Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment*”—but now, notice—“*but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment*”—and, incidentally, the best manuscripts do not have that phrase “without a cause”—“*whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca*”—which is a term of contempt that was used in that day—“*shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*” (Matthew 5:21–23)

What is the Lord saying? The Lord says, “If your heart is a malevolent heart that burns with anger toward other people, if you look down upon any human being made in the image of God and you speak contemptuously, if you have contempt and abhorrence of a human being, if you say, “Raca, you fool,” the Lord wrote down in heaven, “Murder, murder, murder.” The anger that people have—the anger! You see them, at intersections or wherever, get in a little traffic snarl, and see them just express—the blood rushes to the face, and they’ll beep the horn, and they’ll get so angry that you know that if it were not against the law, they would take a life.

I want you to look, if you will, for just a moment, in 1 John chapter 3, verse 15. We’re talking about invisible murder now. You’ll never be convicted in a human court for this, but look in 1 John chapter 3, verse 15. The beloved Apostle John says, “*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer*”—did you read that? Look at it—“*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*” (1 John 3:15) If your heart is headquarters for hate, you, my friend, are a murderer; and you need to be saved, because no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

I’m amazed at the hate that we see in America today: racial hate, religious hate, revengeful hate, hate mongers. If your heart is filled with hate, you’d better get saved. God wrote down “murder,” and you “*know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*” (1 John 3:15) “If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love

God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20) Invisible murder: out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murder. *"Whosoever is angry with his brother...shall be in danger of hell fire."* (Matthew 5:22) It's time that we had in America a good old-fashioned baptism of love. Did you know that? Oh, the city of Memphis needs to learn the meaning of the word *love*! The problems of our city are not going to be settled by city hall; they're going to be settled by you and you and you and you, when we start loving one another. The way that we can love is for Jesus Christ to love through us, and when *"the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy [Spirit]."* (Romans 5:5)

Charles Colson, the hatchet man for Watergate, got saved. Jesus transformed him from the hatchet man to the Jesus man—born again! Eldridge Cleaver, a militant black, whose heart, according to his own testimony, was filled with nothing but hate, found Jesus, and he got saved, born again. Charles Colson was telling me not long ago that he and Eldridge Cleaver were having a prayer meeting and talking about how sweet the fellowship was. Can you imagine two that would be on more opposite poles than Charles Colson, the hatchet man for the Republicans, and Eldridge Cleaver? Jesus brought them together in love. And Charles Colson said, in his prison ministry, that they found a man who had been one of the chief proponents of racial hate down in Mississippi, one of the leaders of the Ku Klux Klan who also was recently arrested, and he too has been saved. He said, "There's a man I want you to meet." This man said, "Who is he?" Colson said, "Eldridge Cleaver." This man said, "Are you sure he's saved? Are you sure he's saved?" And, oh, let me tell you something, friend—let me tell you something, friend. When those kinds of people can get together in Jesus, that is the answer.

I don't care what your solution to the sociological thing is. I'm not talking about schools and busing and segregation. I'm not talking about that. I'm saying this: that you will never solve the problem until you do it in the context of love. You can have one intellectual answer, and I can have one intellectual answer; and you can believe as one way, and I can believe as another way. But there is one way over all—and that is love. And only Jesus can do that. Only Jesus can do that! Only Jesus can do that! The love of God must be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. *"Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."* (1 John 3:15) Oh, the hateful, spiteful ways of people!

One woman went to the doctor. He looked grave. She said, "What's wrong?" He said, "Madam, you have hydrophobia. You have rabies." She got out a pencil and started to write. He said, "What are you doing: making your will?" She said, "No, I'm making a list of people I'm going to bite." I believe I met her sister on one occasion.

"Thou shalt not kill." Intentional murder: homicide, suicide, infanticide. Indirect murder: cruelty, corruption, carnality. Invisible murder: out of the heart of man proceeds

evil thoughts, murders; “[he] that hateth his brother is a murderer.” (1 John 3:15) “*Thou shalt not kill*”—“*thou shalt not kill.*”

Conclusion

Now, many times we feel this doesn't apply to us. We feel so self-righteous. However, one man was talking to Dr. Robert G. Lee, and he was wanting to get right with God, and feeling, I suppose, a great need for confession. He said to Dr. Lee—he said, “I suppose I've broken all of the commandments, except one.” Dr. Lee said, “Which one is that?” He said, “*Thou shalt not kill.*” He said, “You broke that one, too.” He said, “When?” He said, “Two thousand years ago, when you helped to crucify Jesus.” Amen?

Listen, friend. Let me tell you something. We all stand guilty before the Lord; all of us stand guilty before the Lord. We have participated, not in homicide, but in deicide. Ours were the hands that slapped Him. Ours was the spit that defiled His face. Our sins were the nails that held Him to the cross, and our hard hearts were the hammers that drove those nails. And yet *that very cross that reveals our guilt also reveals—praise God—our salvation.* And, oh, I'm so grateful that the Lord—He who knew no sin—became sin for me.

You see, there is a way, there is a way. Whether this is the commandment that shall condemn us, or whether it's another commandment; whether we're guilty of murder, or guilty of covetousness; whether we're guilty of blasphemy—taking God's name in vain— or whether we're guilty of refusing God's Sabbath rest; whatever it is, I'm so glad to tell you today there's a way. And, you see—listen; listen to me—God brought you here, and God brought me here. God brought you to listen, and God brought me to preach it. I'm certain God wants me to preach today. I wouldn't be up here if He didn't want me to preach. And the Lord has anointed me to preach. And the same God that brought me to preach brought you to listen. And there's a message for you. You see, *God is not only going to hold you accountable for what you hear; God is going to hold you accountable for what you would have heard if you had listened, amen?* God brought you here.

Some years ago a farmer was walking down the roadbed of a Pennsylvania railroad, and he noticed that a great section of the track had been bowed out, some of the ties had been loosened. This farmer knew that before long the railroad trains would be coming from New York to Pennsylvania—the express trains—and he knew there would be a certain wreck. He could already feel the roadbed vibrating as one of the trains was coming. He could hear the whistle in the distance. This farmer had a lantern, and he knew not what else to do. But he dropped his packages and started running down the track at full speed toward the oncoming train. He stumbled, and the lantern broke. He picked it up. He started running again onward as fast as he could toward the oncoming train. And at the last moment, just before the train got to him, he jumped off the track,

took that lantern, and hurled it right into the face of the engineer. The engineer, sensing the danger, knowing that something surely was wrong, applied the brake, and disaster was averted.

This morning, dear friend, the Holy Spirit of God is taking the bloodstained cross of Calvary and doing the same thing. He's lifting it up before you. He's saying, "Stop! Look! Listen! God loves you." Don't go on the way you're going without Christ. There is a way. Would you listen as the Holy Spirit holds up the cross of Jesus Christ before you today, where the greatest murder of all was perpetrated for you and for me—the one we participated in and yet the one that helped to redeem us? I don't want you to see me here today. I want you to see Jesus Christ as He stands before you today with tears coursing down His cheeks. I want you to see Jesus as His heart pulsates and heaves within His bosom. I want you to see Jesus as He stretches out His nail-pierced hands. I want you to see Jesus as He says, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" (Matthew 11:28) I want to tell you there's no sin that the blood of Jesus will not cleanse—even murder. Amen? Amen! "*Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*" (Isaiah 1:18)

Why are souls lost? Because no provision has been made? No. Because no offer is made? No. Because they cannot be saved? No. Why are souls lost? Because they obstinately, deliberately, callously refuse Jesus. And when they do, they commit the most foolish murder of all—soul suicide—soul suicide. "*Thou shalt not kill.*" (Exodus 20:13) Jesus said, "*Come unto me...and I will give you rest.*" If I could come for you, if I could receive Jesus for you, I would, but I can't. But I beg you, give your heart to Jesus. Trust Him. Let Him save you.

The Seventh Commandment

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 3, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:14

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Sacredness of Married Life
 - A. What Jesus Teaches About Marriage
 1. Marriage Is Divine in Creation
 2. Marriage Is Supreme in Commitment
 3. Marriage Must Be Steadfast in Continuance
 4. Marriage Is Miraculous in Consummation
- II. The Sinfulness of the Adulterous Life
 - A. Adultery Is a Sin That Man Must Recognize
 1. A Sin Against the Self
 2. A Sin Against the Home
 3. A Sin Against the Church
 4. A Sin Against the Nation
 5. A Sin Against the Lord
 - B. Adultery Is a Sin That God Must Revenge
- III. The Safeguard for the Pure Life
 - A. Decision
 - B. Dependence
 - C. Devotion
 - D. Development
 - E. Discipline
 - F. Determination

Conclusion

Introduction

In Exodus chapter 20 and verse 14, we come to this commandment: *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exodus 20:14)—*“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”* May we pray one more time. Our heavenly Father, we pray that as we preach thy Word thou shalt give special anointing from heaven. Lord, we claim anointing, we claim power, and we claim, dear God, in the name of Jesus, the fullness of your Spirit. And, God, I pray that the lost will come to know Jesus and that the saved will be strengthened. For we pray in His name. Amen.

We are told—I say, we are told—that America has gone through a moral and sexual revolution. But if it is a revolution, indeed, it's been a pitiful revolution, for we have turned the wrong way, and Americans are being sucked down into the swirling spools of sin by certain demon-inspired philosophies that are being profligate on every hand. Some wag asked, "Do you remember when air was clean and immorality was dirty?" Do you have that long a memory? Oh, dear friends, there are certain things that are still wrong, and God's Word is still true. There are three things that I want you to notice about this verse today.

I. The Sacredness of Married Life

Number one: I want you to notice the sacredness of married life—the sacredness of married life. The word *adulterate* means, "to make impure." The word *adulterate* means, "to harm; to mar something that is beautiful." What is it that is so beautiful, what is it that is so pure, that God does not want it diluted and marred and harmed? Of course, it is the married life. And here God is speaking of the sacredness, the sanctity, of the married life.

There are some people who would like for us to believe that marriage, like the Model-T Ford, or like the kerosene lamp, is obsolete—if it ever was in vogue. And Dr. David Mace quotes a judge who said, "Let's face the facts. I suppose we'll just have to allow ourselves to have two or three marriages before they finally settle down." Well, you know, I don't believe that. I believe that marriage is a wonderful institution ordained of Almighty God. It was the first institution that God ordained.

I heard about a woman who was speaking about her husband, and someone said, "Where did you meet him?" She said, "I met him at a travel agency. He was the last resort." Well, marriage is not God's last resort.

To the contrary, it was God's first institution. It would be interesting for you to note that marriage came before laws, before government, before civilization, before the Church, or even before God gave us a system for worship. Marriage was the first institution in the Garden of Eden.

The Bible says, in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 18, "*And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make an help meet for him*" (Genesis 2:18). That word *help meet*—incidentally, it does not say "help eat"—that word *help meet* means, "a help that is fitting; a proper help." You see, man was incomplete without his woman. A woman was incomplete without her man. And the Hebrew scholars tell us that, when Adam saw Eve, he said, "*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh,*" and said some other things, and they say perhaps the best way to translate what Adam said when he saw Eve was, "Wow!" (Genesis 2:23). Now, really, I'm not being facetious. Or someone else said it ought to be translated, "Oh boy!" And that's all right.

That's good, because, you see, we did not think up the idea of boys and girls. God thought up the idea. And God made us different that He might make us one. And we have to say, "*Vive la difference!*" How wonderful that God made us different that He might make us one! God ordained marriage. And a woman might have to say, of her husband—should say—"I'm only a half a person without him"; and a man ought to be able to say to his wife, "She completes me."

I want you to see what Jesus said about this, as we're talking now about the sanctity and the sacredness of marriage. Turn, please, to Matthew chapter 19 for just a moment and see what the Lord Jesus Christ had to say about it. I enjoy seeing Jesus' comments on the Ten Commandments. And in Matthew chapter 19, beginning in verse 4: "*And he answered*"—that is, "And Jesus answered"—"*and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:4–6).

A. What Jesus Teaches About Marriage

Now there are four things Jesus teaches about marriage in these short verses.

1. Marriage Is Divine in Creation

Number one: He teaches that marriage is divine in creation. Look in verse 4: "*He which made them at the beginning made them male and female*" (Matthew 19:4). Look in verse 6: "*What...God hath joined together...*" (Matthew 19:6). You see, marriage did not come from the prehistoric swamp of sexual immorality; marriage is divinely ordained of God—ordained of God. It is divine in creation.

2. Marriage Is Supreme in Commitment

But not only is it divine in creation; it is supreme in commitment, of all earthly commitments. Look at verse 5: "*And [Jesus] said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother and cleave to his wife*" (Matthew 19:5). You see, the words *leave* and *cleave* tell us about marriage; they tell us that marriage is to be supreme in all earthly commitments. Your commitment to your husband, to your wife, should take precedence over your commitment to your children. Did you understand what I say? Your commitment to your husband or to your wife is to be stronger than your commitment to your own children. Children are not your supreme commitment.

You'd be surprised how many say, "Well, the job is, you know." The businessman said, "Oh, pastor, we're being transferred." "Well, have you prayed about it?" "I didn't have to pray about it. They said go." Let me tell you something, friend. That corporation doesn't own you; that job doesn't own you. I thank God for one of the fine young men in this church today, who, his business said, "We're going to move you; we're going to

move you out of Memphis, Tennessee; we're going to give you a big fat raise; and you're going." He said, "I'm sorry, but my wife and I have prayed about it, and we're staying—we're staying. We're staying in our neighborhood; we're staying in our church; because we happen to be where God wants us to be."

Let me tell you something, friend. It is the marriage relationship that is supreme of all earthly relationships: higher than your relationship to your children, higher than your relationship to your parents, and higher than your relationships to your job.

3. Marriage Must Be Steadfast in Continuance

Now not only is marriage divine in creation, not only is it supreme in commitment, but it must be steadfast in continuance—steadfast in continuance. Notice what the Lord Jesus said in verse 6 again—look at it: "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:6). "*What...God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*" No third party, no manmade law, may be allowed to disrupt this union. A marriage is neither to be established nor to be dissolved simply to suit the conveniences or the contingencies of men. "*What...God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matthew 19:6). God's plan is one woman for one man till death do them part.

One preacher preached very firmly, very adamantly, on this, and later he was met by a young lady who was somewhat perturbed. She said, "Pastor, I want to speak to you about that." He said, "What's the matter? Don't you agree with what I said?" She said, "Oh, yes. I agree with it. I just want to get in on it."

Well, let me tell you—Kim said, "Amen"—all right: One man and one woman till death do them part. Marriage is to be steadfast in continuance.

4. Marriage Is Miraculous in Consummation

The fourth thing that Jesus taught about this—and we're talking now about this sacredness, the sacredness of marriage—it is this: that it is miraculous in consummation. Jesus said, in verse 6, that we become flesh, and that's a miracle (Matthew 19:6). If you take two folks as different as Adrian and Joyce and blend those personalities together and just make one flesh, friend, that's a miracle. Our marriage is a miracle marriage, but Jesus makes it work. It's so strange. It's like two streams of water that meet and merge and flow together, and so intermingle that they can never again be separated.

I told Brother Lane in the first service, being somewhat of Indian extraction—I don't know how much Indian he's got in him. I don't know whether he's full-blooded; he looks about a pint low to me. But anyway, I told him that the Cherokees had a marriage ceremony. When they would get married, they would hold hands—bride and groom—and walk together across a stream, symbolizing that their lives, like the water in that stream, are now intermingled, never again to be separated.

Jesus said, "They two shall become one flesh" (Matthew 19:6). And it's just so

wonderful the way God does that. It's like a violin, and it's like a bow: each of them incomplete in themselves, but when brought together, what beautiful music is made. That's God's plan—that's God's wonderful plan. And so the very first thing I want you to see—regardless of what the anthropologists have to say about it, regardless of what the psychologists say about it, regardless of what the sociologists say about it—marriage is sacred: the sacredness, the sanctity of marriage.

II. The Sinfulness of the Adulterous Life

Now the second thing I want you to see is the sinfulness of the adulterous life. If we see the sacredness of the married life, it is against that backdrop that we can see the sinfulness of the adulterous life. And why is the adulterous life such a sinful life?

A. Adultery Is a Sin That Man Must Recognize

May I mention that adultery is a sin that man must recognize.

1. A Sin Against the Self

It is, number one, a sin against the self—against one's own self. Paul said, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 18, that, when a man commits the sin of immorality, he sins against his own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). There are few sins, if any, that will do more damage to you physically, more damage to you emotionally, more damage to you spiritually, more damage to your personhood and to your selfhood, than the sin of immorality. You can laugh at God's laws if you want. But, sir, you don't break God's laws; you are broken on them.

Lord Byron—witty, handsome, wealthy, talented, the great poet of England—was also the playboy of his day. He died diseased, lonesome, and relatively young. And this is what he wrote:

*My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and the fruits of life are gone;
The worm, the canker, the grief,
Are mine alone.*

—LORD BYRON

He was simply illustrating the text, "*He that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body*" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

2. A Sin Against the Home

But not only the sinfulness of the adulterous life is seen—that we sin against ourselves—but also we sin against the home when we commit the sin of immorality. Adultery is a sin against the home, and here is the sad thing about it—here is the unfair thing about it. The lives of multiplied thousands of children every year in America are blasted and torn apart and wrecked and ruined by some selfish father, by some selfish

mother, who seems not to care for the family, who seems not to care for the children. All they wish to do is to satiate their lust.

I want to tell you that, when God built the home, God built some walls around the home. God made the home, because God knew that man has certain spiritual, certain social, certain physical, certain psychological needs. And every child has a right to be reared in a home like that, where Daddy loves Mommy and is faithful to her, and where Mama loves Daddy and is faithful to him. Adultery—I say, adultery—is blasting the lives of innocent children. It is a sin, a sin—not only against the self; it's sin against the home.

3. A Sin Against the Church

But, thirdly, it's a sin against the church. You sin against me when you commit adultery; you sin against your brothers and sisters in Christ. You say, "Brother Rogers, it's none of your business." If you're a Christian, it's plenty of my business. We are members of the same Body. What affects you affects me; what affects me affects you. We are members one of another. No one lives unto himself, and no one dies unto himself. I want to tell you that this church is no stronger than you are strong. The church is no purer than you are pure. The church is but the sum total of the aggregate of its members.

We are the temple of God. And the Bible says, "*If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, which temple ye are*" (1 Corinthians 3:17). How can we take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? God forbid! God forbid! (1 Corinthians 6:15). We sin against the church. Churches in America are crippled, churches in America are weak and anemic, when they ought to be powerful; and the reason why is sexual immorality has weakened the church just like Samson was shorn of his strength. And we go forth to shake ourselves, and the world laughs, because there's no power.

4. A Sin Against the Nation

I want to say that immorality and adultery are sins against the nation—against the nation. I believe that immorality is a sin of treason. A nation is no stronger than its people, no stronger than it's home. Proverbs chapter 14, verse 34, says that "*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*" (Proverbs 14:34).

Professor Sorokin of Harvard University, so far as I know, makes no pretense of being a churchman; he makes no pretense of being an evangelical Christian. He's certainly not a preacher. He's a sociologist at Harvard. But he wrote a book called *The American Sex Revolution*, and I want you to hear what he has to say. He says, "Unless there's a change in America, we are doomed for the ash heap." He says—and I quote—"No civilization, no empire, no nation has survived obsession with sex and impurity. This disease," he says, "is eating the heart out of America. It is eating the heart out of America." It is a sin, dear friend, against the nation. It is a sin of treason. It's the sin that

led to the downfall of Greece. It is the sin that led to the downfall of Rome. It is the sin that led to the downfall of Egypt. It is the sin that led to the downfall of Babylon. When he wrote his book, *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon listed five reasons that Rome fell, and number one was immorality and the breakdown of the home.

Why is this? Friends, you listen to me. In spite of all of the Playboy philosophy, and in spite of all of the hedonism, you listen. People who treat sex lightly always treat other persons lightly too. It shows a basic lack of respect and integrity for the other man: the other man's person, the other man's home, the other man's family—whatever it is. It is the downfall of any nation.

5. A Sin Against the Lord

But, dear friend, not only is adultery a sin against the self, and not only is it a sin against the family, and not only is it a sin against the Church, and not only is it a sin against the nation; God thundered from Sinai, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery,"* because it is a sin against the Lord (Exodus 20:14).

David said, in Psalm 51 and in verse 4, *"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight"* (Psalm 51:4). Surely, David sinned against Bathsheba. Surely, he sinned against Uriah the Hittite. Surely, he sinned against Israel. Surely, he sinned against the kingdom. But, primarily, David sinned against the Lord. Adultery, my dear friend, treats God with contempt. It is not Adrian Rogers, it is not the Baptist church, that's saying, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). It is God. Adultery shakes it's puny fist in the face of God and says, "God, I'll have it my way, and I don't care what you have said in your Word."

B. Adultery Is a Sin That God Must Revenge

It's a sin against the Lord, but not only is it a sin that man must recognize; it is a sin that God must revenge—a sin that God must revenge. Take your pencil and jot these scriptures down. Hebrews 13, verse 4: *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4). God said that, *"Marriage is honourable...and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."* Jot this scripture down—Job 31, verse 11: *"For this is a heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges"* (Job 31:11). Jot this scripture down—Proverbs 6, verses 27 through 29: *"Can a man take a fire in his bosom, and his clothes be not burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet be not burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent"* (Proverbs 6:27–29)—*"whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent."*

Listen to Proverbs chapter 6, verse 32: *"But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding."* "You don't have good sense," God says. *"Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his*

own soul” (Proverbs 6:32). Listen to 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 9: “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate,*”—that means, “homosexual”—“*nor abusers of themselves with mankind*” (1 Corinthians 6:9). God says, “Don’t kid yourself.” It doesn’t make any difference what other people say. It doesn’t make any difference what the sociologist says. It makes no difference what the anthropologist says. It makes no difference what the liberal clergyman says. God says, “*Be not deceived*” (1 Corinthians 6:9). Don’t you let anyone deceive you. God’s Word is not changed. The Ten Commandments have not been annulled. God’s Word says, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (Exodus 20:14). It is a sin that man must recognize. It is a sin that God must revenge. And you can see the sinfulness of the adulterer’s life when you see it in the backdrop of the sacredness of the marriage life.

III. The Safeguard for the Pure Life

Now the last thing I want you to see is the safeguard for the pure life—the safeguard for the pure life. How are we going to live in this adulterous and sinful generation? How are we going to keep ourselves pure? How are we going to live when we are bombarded on every side with Madison Avenue techniques telling us that we are to compromise our purity? May I give you some words that you might want to jot down?

A. Decision

The first word is the word *decision*—*decision*. Give your heart to Jesus Christ. Decide for Jesus Christ. There’s no way, dear friend, that you can live in this world victoriously without the dear Lord in your heart. Decisions. Have you received Christ? Have you invited Him into your life? Have you turned the control of your life over to Him? Decide now. Say, “From henceforth, I will serve the Lord.”

B. Dependence

The second word is the word *dependence*. For it is not enough to decide for Him; you must depend on Him. He’s the One who gives you strength. The way that you live victoriously is Christ living in you, for, “*Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*” (1 John 4:4).

All of us have heard the story of the little girl who got saved, and someone said, “What are you going to do when Satan comes and knocks at your heart’s door?” She said, “I’m just going to say, ‘Jesus, would you please go answer the door?’” Oh, that’s good—that’s good. “*Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*”

C. Devotion

Decision, dependence, and then *devotion*—*devotion*. Begin to love the Lord, and let

the Lord help you to love your wife, to love your husband. You see, really, we're to love our mates with God's kind of love—not just erotic love, which is sometimes erotic, but with real love, genuine love.

Sometimes a man says, "Well, Brother Rogers, I'm going to leave my wife." I say, "Why?" "Well, I just don't love her anymore." He thinks that's his way out: "Please release me; let me go. I don't love you anymore." Do you know what I tell him? I don't weep crocodile tears for him. I say, "Mister, you learn to love her." Listen. The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 5, "*Husbands, love your wives*" (Ephesians 5:25). That's not a request. That's not a suggestion. That is a command.

Now, are you paying attention? Behind every command of God is the power to carry it out. Suppose God were to say to me, "Adrian, jump over this building. If you don't jump over it, you're a sinner." Now, what kind of a God is that? I couldn't worship a God like that, because I can't jump over this building. God is unfair—God is unjust—if God ever commands me to do something I cannot do. And, sir, when God says, "You're to love your wife," that means you can; by the grace of God, you can. Devotion: letting the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost (Romans 5:5)—that's the way you love her.

D. Development

And then the word *development*. Continue to feed your love. When I perform a ceremony, and those couples stand before me, and I say, "Wilt thou?" and she says, "Yes," and I say, "Wilt thou?" and he wilts, and they just stand there, you know, one of the things I say is, "John, will you take Mary to be your lawfully wedded wife, and will you shun all others and keep yourself unto her alone, so long as you both shall live? And will you continue to feed your love—feed your love—from day to day, and from week to week?"

Year to year, from the very best resources of your life, oh, friend, there ought to be a developing thing. You know, so many times we don't understand what love is. You know, this generation has talked more about love and understands it less than any generation. They call the marriage act *making love*. That's not *making* love. That's *expressing* love. They don't even know what love is. That's expressing love. They need to understand what love is, and love is not something that you just stumble on like a rare beautiful diamond, a precious emerald, that you pick up and say, "Oh, there it is; we found it; we'll just keep it and cherish forever." No. Love is not static like that—not like a diamond. It's more like a fragile flower that must be cultivated and cared for and nurtured that continues to bloom and bloom and bloom.

Listen. If you don't love your wife far more now than when you married her, the chances are you love her a whole lot less. The honeymoon should never end; it just

ought to continue to develop and unfold. You know, we fail to let our marriages develop. Do you know what some people have? They have the philosophy, “Well, why chase a streetcar after you’ve already caught it?”

Do you remember how you used to dress up, lady, when you were trying to get him? You know, while he was chasing you, until you caught him. Do you remember how you used to, you know, put the perfume behind your ears, and so forth? You remember that. Now he comes home from work and meets you at the door, and you wear those old faded housecoats, and you’ve got hardware in your hair and makeup on your face, a different colored slipper on each foot. You look like something Kaiser made when Frazer wasn’t looking. And then you say, “Well, I just believe my husband is chasing around.”

Some of you guys—listen—some of you guys, remember how you used to shave twice a day? Remember how you used to open the door. Somebody said, “When a man opens the door now, one of two things are new: the wife or the car.” But you remember how you used to open the door and let her in? Love needs to continue to grow; it needs to be cultivated.

E. Discipline

Develop the love that you have. Work on it. Decision: decide for Christ. Dependence: depend on Christ. Devotion: love through Christ. Development: let your heart, your life, and your marriage develop. Next, *discipline—discipline*. You guard your company. You watch your reading matter. You take care of yourself physically, you take care of yourself emotionally, and you take care of yourself spiritually. You get run down, and you’ll get wrung out by the devil. You’re disciplined in all areas of your life. If you fail to discipline yourself physically as well as spiritually, you’ll be susceptible to certain sinful seductions.

Twenty-seven times in the New Testament we’re told to run, to flee. The Bible says, “*Flee fornication*” (1 Corinthians 6:18). This is not a sin we’re to fight; it’s a sin we’re to flee from. If you deliberately place yourself into temptation, you’ve already sinned. *He who would not fall down ought not to walk in slippery places*. There needs to be a certain discipline in your life. You guard your company. The Bible says, “*A companion of fools shall be destroyed*” (Proverbs 13:20). Watch what you set before your eyes. Don’t think impure thoughts. Jesus said, “*Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*” (Matthew 5:28). And you read these vile, filthy magazines—you’re sinning; you’re breaking this commandment. You say, “Well, I was just admiring.” Jesus wrote down, “adultery”—“adultery.” You wouldn’t put garbage in your mouth. Why put it in your mind? Discipline your life. And you do it not in the strength of the flesh, but in the power of the Holy Spirit.

F. Determination

The last word: *determination—determination*. Just after you've done all of these other things, just make up your mind, "By the grace of God, I will be pure." Be like old Joshua who said, "I don't know what the rest of you are going to do, but as for me and my house we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). We're going to do it. We are going to do it. Be like the Psalmist, who said, "*My heart is fixed, O God*" (Psalm 57:7).

Have you made that kind of decision? I mean, have you been firm? Have you been resolute? You can make a few decisions that will keep you—a few big decisions that will keep you—from having to make so many small decisions. I don't know about you, but my mind is made up. I don't have to keep rethinking whether or not I'm going to commit this sin. My mind is made up. I don't say that boastfully, in the strength of my flesh, but we need some old-fashioned determination, where people say, "My heart is fixed."

Conclusion

Now, let me say, dear friend, perhaps your home has been broken by adultery, and your heart is bitter, but I want to tell you, friend, that God can heal a broken home, and God can heal a broken heart, if you give Him all of the pieces. Perhaps there's been a time of moral impurity in your life. Maybe it wasn't actually outward, overt impurity; maybe it was just the lust of your heart, or maybe it was overt impurity. But I've got good news for you. Are you listening? The Bible says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us...*"—now, listen—"*and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

We have some people who want to put the sin of immorality in a certain category and act like someone who has committed that sin is never again clean. What God has called clean, let no man call unclean. And the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7). Isn't that good news? I tell you, isn't the gospel wonderful? Isn't it great to be a Christian? Now some of you, of course, have never committed this sin; but you've not given your heart to Jesus, and you've left yourself susceptible, because you need Christ in your heart to enable you to live victoriously.

The Eighth Commandment

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 17, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:15

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Thievery of Stealing from Others
 - A. Aggressive Robbery
 - B. Fraud
 - 1. Lazy Workers
 - 2. Poor Wages
 - 3. Shrewd Business Deals
 - C. Gambling
 - D. Unpaid Debts
 - 1. Bills
 - 2. Borrowed Items
 - E. Slander
 - F. Cheating
 - G. Theft of Someone's Faith
 - II. The Thievery of Stealing from God
 - A. Withholding Yourself
 - B. Withholding Your Stewardship
 - 1. In Tithes
 - 2. In Offerings
 - III. The Thievery of Stealing from Yourself
- Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Exodus chapter 20. We're continuing our study in the Ten Commandments, God's laws for living; and I want to read, by means of review and reflection, each of these commandments we've preached on and upon thus far, and then come to our text for today.

So I commence in verse 1: *"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other Gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to*

them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery.” And then we come to our text for today: *“Thou shalt not steal”* (Exodus 20:1–15). *“Thou shalt not steal.”*

I heard one time of a church that was interviewing a pastor. It was a country church, and they were interviewing a pastor—the pulpit committee was—to see if they wanted him to be their pastor. And among the questions they asked him was this: “Do you preach against sin?” He said, “Not only do I preach against sin; I call it by its first name.” They said, “What do you mean by that?” He said, “Not only do I preach, ‘*Thou shalt not steal,*’” he said, “I preach, ‘*Thou shalt not steal watermelons.*’”

Now I believe that’s the kind of preaching we need. I believe that we need to get it out of the realm of the ethereal and the abstract, and get it down to the personal and the pertinent, something that we can apply to our hearts; and, by the grace of God, that’s what I want to do with this commandment today that says, *“Thou shalt not steal.”*

Jesus Christ gave a parable; it’s the parable of the Good Samaritan. And you can read it, if you choose to, when you get home. In Luke chapter 10, beginning in verse 30: “But Jesus said, ‘A certain man was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among thieves, and the thieves beat him, and left him there by the wayside, half dead. And then,’ he said, ‘a priest came by and passed on the other side, a Levite also, and left him lying right there. But then,’ Jesus said, ‘a certain man this time, a good Samaritan, stopped and rendered first aid, set this man upon his beast, and carried him to an inn, paid his bill, and took care of them’” (Luke 10:30–34).

And there in the parable that Jesus gave we have the three philosophies concerning personal property—personal property. The first philosophy is illustrated by those thieves, who said, “What’s yours is mine, and I’ll take it from you if I want it.” And that’s what we’re going to be preaching today: the philosophies of the thieves. But there’s another philosophy there, and that’s the philosophy of the priest and the Levites. These didn’t say, “What is yours is mine, and I’ll take it if I want it,” but they did say, “What is

mine is mine, and I'm going to keep it—what's mine is mine.” They pass by on the other side. Their motto was like so many people who, while they're not thieves, as such, they are so selfish and so stingy. Their motto is, “Get all you can; can all you get; sit on the lid; and poison the rest.” They are just out for number one—for me—for self and self alone, as though Christ had never lived, as though Christ had never died.

They remind me of the little girl who wrote the poem:

*I gave a little party this afternoon at three.
It was very small, three guests in all: I, myself, and me.
Myself ate all the sandwiches, while I drank up the tea;
And it was I who ate the cake and passed the pie to me.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Well, perhaps you are that kind of a person: “What's mine is mine, and I'm going to keep it.”

But then there was the Good Samaritan, who really represents the Lord Jesus Christ, and his spirit ought to be in all of us. The Good Samaritan said, “What's mine is mine, but I'll share it with you if you need it.” That's the Christian's attitude toward property—not, on the one hand, “I'll take what belongs to you”; not, on the other hand, “I'll keep what belongs to me”: the Christian recognizes the right to personal property, but he also recognizes that the ownership of personal property is a divine stewardship.

So I want us to think about our text this morning—“*Thou shalt not steal*” (Exodus 20:15)—under three headings. First of all, I want us to think of thievery from others—robbing our neighbors. Secondly, I want us to think of defrauding deities—stealing from God. And, thirdly, I want us to think of the crime of stealing from oneself, or swindling self.

I. The Thievery of Stealing from Others

First of all, what is the sin—the crime—of stealing from others—robbing our neighbors? For example, there is the thief who just simply takes a gun, or who, under the stealth of nighttime, slips into a home and purloins, who steals, who snatches away that which belongs to somebody else: “What's yours is mine, and I'll get it if I possibly can.”

A. Aggressive Robbery

I was interested to note that when the lights went out in New York City, everybody—or many people—turned to looting. As a matter of fact, they were able to catch 3,500 looters. They could have caught more, if they had had more policemen and time—but 3,500 of them. Do you know something? *The test of a man's character is what he is in the dark—amen?*—what he is in the dark. You see, a man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he's a thief. And the problem with those people is they just

didn't have an opportunity to steal until the lights went out; and when the lights went out, the character showed up. Character is what a man is in the dark.

Now, many a time, a man thinks he's getting away with it, but he's not getting away with it. And, you see, they thought they were working under the cover of darkness. How sad! The Bible says, concerning our Heavenly Father, that the night and the daytime are light to Him (Psalm 139:12).

I heard of a thief, a robber—a bank robber—who went into the bank, took a note, and passed it to the teller. It said, "Give me all of your money. This is a stick-up." The teller wrote a note, and sent it back to him, and said, "Straighten your tie, stupid! They're taking your picture." God's candid camera is grinding away, and the light and the darkness are a light to him.

And whether you're a kid ripping things off from the supermarket or the drugstore for thrills, or whether you're stealing—robbing—on the street, or whether you're robbing banks, I want to tell you that Almighty God has said, "*Thou shalt not steal*" (Exodus 20:15)—"*Thou shalt not steal.*"

B. Fraud

There is often aggressive robbery, but not only is there that; there's also the crime of fraud; and this is high-class stealing. Many people who are guilty of fraud never really think of themselves as thieves.

1. Lazy Workers

For example, the person who refuses to do an honest day's work. When I used to work for a construction company, construction people used to have a saying when a man was loafing on the job. It was this: "Get your hand out of the boss man's pocket." What they meant by that is, when you were not doing an honest day's work, you were stealing from your employer.

Look in Colossians chapter 3, verse 22, for a moment—Colossians 3, verse 22: "*Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice,*"—that is, not simply when the boss is watching—"as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, hearing God" (Colossians 3:22). And, ladies and gentleman, and boys and girls, when you go to work, and you're getting paid for working, if you are lazy, careless, sloppy, indifferent, you have broken the spirit of this command that says, "*Thou shalt not steal*" (Exodus 20:15). You have frequently taken your paycheck.

2. Poor Wages

But there's another side to this, and some of you employers need to hear the other side. And it's marvelous how balanced the Bible is. Turn to James chapter 5 and verse 4—James chapter 5 and verse 4—listen to this verse: "*Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the*

cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Saboath" (James 5:4). What is God saying? God is saying that, if you do not pay a decent wage, you're going to have to face Almighty God about it. You say, "Well, I can get by with paying less." It's not a matter of what you can get by paying; it is a matter of what is right. And if you do not pay what is right, if you do not pay what is fair, if you're taking advantage of someone because he has to work, you may call yourself a shrewd businessman, but this verse, in James chapter 5, verse 4, calls it fraud. And you're going to face Almighty God at the judgment. And both labor and capital need to listen.

We are to do an honest day's work for a day's pay, and we're to give an honest day's pay for a day's work. And if we sin on either side, we have sinned against Almighty God, and we have broken the spirit of this command that says, "*Thou shalt not steal*" (Exodus 20:15).

3. Shrewd Business Deals

Some of you are proud of your business mind. You know a good deal when you see it, and what you call good business is sometimes just mere satanic shrewdness. I want you to look at the scripture in Mark chapter 12 and verse 40, where Jesus Christ was talking to the Pharisees. And the Pharisees were very religious: they were in church every Saturday; they made long prayers. But Jesus Christ knew their business dealings. And Jesus Christ spoke of the Pharisees—and this is His description of them. He said they were those who "*devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation*" (Mark 12:40).

Now, what did he mean by someone who "*devours widows' houses*"? There were those who see a widow who did not understand business principles and finances. Perhaps a husband would die, and he would leave her some legacy; and these shrewd people would move in and would wrest away from that defenseless widow her livelihood, and they said, "Well, business is business." But God said, "At the judgment—at the judgment—hell will very hot for a person like that." No matter how religious he is, no matter what church he attends, no matter how long his prayers are, God wrote down shrewdness; God wrote down thievery—thievery.

C. Gambling

"*Thou shalt not steal*" (Exodus 20:15). You see, we can do it by open robbery or we can do it by fraud. Let me mention another form of stealing—and it's gambling—gambling. What's wrong with gambling? Some people think to be against gambling is a Baptist doctrine. What is wrong with gambling? Is it just something that Baptists have chosen to be against? Not at all! I thank God that many evangelical Christians have recognized the ruin, the hurt, and the crime of gambling—yes, the crime of gambling. Gambling is morally wrong, because it transgresses the spirit of the command that says,

“Thou shalt not steal.”

What is wrong with gambling? Listen, and listen carefully. Gambling is morally wrong because no one can win at gambling without another person losing. Did you understand that? No one can win at gambling without another person losing. Here is what is wrong with gambling. When you win, it is profit and pleasure at the expense of someone else’s pain and loss. That’s what’s wrong. It violates the spirit of concern and love. You see, it is trying to get into your control—it is trying to get into your grasp—what belongs to someone else, without working for it, without earning it.

One man meets another man in a dark alley and at the point of a gun takes away that man’s valuables, and we call that robbery. Two men meet each other in a casino, each seeking to get what belongs to the other person, and we call that gambling. The only difference is, in the first case, there was one man with the spirit of thievery; in the second case, there are two men with the spirit of thievery.

Someone has said, “When a man gambles and wins, he’s a thief. When he gambles and loses, he’s a fool.” You see, the Bible teaches that we may receive something as a gift when someone willingly gives it to us, or else we may earn it, but we are not to take, by chance, that which belongs to someone else. It is built upon the spirit of greed; it is trying to get something that belongs to you into my possession, without working for it, and without giving you something in proper exchange.

Some people, in order to justify gambling, say, “Well, the stock market is a gamble.” No, the stock market is a risk, not a gamble. But when you invest money in business and stocks, or whatever it is, you are simply trying to give something in order to get something. You’re not trying to get without giving. The gambler is trying to get without giving. He is motivated by a spirit of greed. No one can win at gambling without someone else losing. Listen to the Word of God—Jeremiah chapter 22, verse 13: *“Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor’s service without wages, and giveth him not for his work”* (Jeremiah 22:13). Woe unto such a man who tries to get what belongs to his neighbor without paying him for it!

Again, the Bible says, in Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 6, *“Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his”* (Habakkuk 2:6). What is wrong with the spirit of gambling? It is so akin to the spirit of deceit. It is trying to get into my possession that which belongs to you, without giving you something in fair exchange for it, or without you willingly giving it to me. And that, my friend, transgresses the spirit of this commandment.

D. Unpaid Debts

There’s another transgression of this commandment, and that is by unpaid debts—by unpaid debts. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 13, verse 8, *“Owe no man any*

thing” (Romans 13:8).

1. Bills

And when you become a deadbeat, when you refuse to pay your bills, you transgress the commandment and the Ten Commandments, which say, “*Thou shalt not steal*” (Exodus 20:15). Now you say, “Brother Rogers, you mean it’s wrong to buy a refrigerator on time? it’s wrong to buy an automobile on time? it’s wrong to owe money to the bank?” No, that’s not wrong; that isn’t what this verse is speaking about. You see, when the payment is due and you don’t pay it, then you owe it—then you owe it. That’s what this is talking about. It is talking about the refusal to pay honest debts. When the debt is due, and you refuse to pay it, you owe it to someone.

Oh, it’s amazing how many people will try to find excuses for not paying the rent! They’ll say, “Well, the landlord didn’t put in new linoleum: I’m not going to pay the rent.” Or, “This thing happened,” or, “That thing happened,” or, “He made me mad: I’m not going to pay him.” Sir, let me tell you something. You pay—you pay—because it’s right. You say, “Well, he didn’t do his part.” Well, don’t you become a thief because he didn’t do his part. You do what’s right, and God will bless you for it.

2. Borrowed Items

People say, “It pays to be honest.” Sometimes, it costs to be honest. But you go ahead and be honest, anyway. Don’t you be a deadbeat. And, by the way, return things you borrowed. It might help some of us to go around and check up in our houses and see how many Bellevue Baptist Church hymnals we have there, and how many chairs that you borrowed for that party, and tables, and bring them back. Amen, Brother Tommy? Some of my books, too, if you borrowed them, and just bring them on back. Listen. You break that commandment—you break the spirit of that commandment—when you have unpaid debts and unreturned things that you have borrowed.

E. Slander

Slander is another way of transgressing this commandment. You see, there are more things to steal than a person’s real estate and personal property; you can steal someone’s reputation.

Shakespeare said this: “He who steals my purse steals trash...”—that’s particularly true if you look in some women’s purses these days—“He who steals my purse steals trash, but he that filches from me my good name robs me of that which not enriches him, and makes me poor indeed.” Have you been guilty of that? Have you been guilty of gossip? Have you been guilty of slander? Have you been guilty of robbing someone of their reputation and their good name? I tell you, God hates this; God hates the sin of slander. “*A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches*” (Proverbs 22:1). It would be far better for you to steal a man’s money than it would be for you to steal a

man's reputation. That's another way you can transgress this commandment.

F. Cheating

Some of you young people, when you cheat in school, you may say, "Everybody is doing it." Well, it may be that everybody is wrong, but you are not to do it. You are a Christian, and the Word of God says you shall not steal (Exodus 20:15). And when you steal, dear friend, you are always the loser. The person who cheats in school is cheating himself most of all.

The big dumb football player—not all of them are big, and certainly not all of them are dumb, but this one was—sat next to a Phi Beta Kappa, and he cheated off of this Phi Beta Kappa almost all the way through school. The professor suspected that the football player was cheating, but he never could prove it until one day the Phi Beta Kappa came to a particularly hard question, and he wrote on his paper, "I do not know the answer to this question." The football player wrote on his paper, "Neither do I." Well, you will not know, if you don't learn to study, to make good grades. It would be better to fail.

You see—look, folks—everybody says, "Well, a man's got to live." No, a man's got to die, and he's got to face God; he's got to face the judgment. We're to do right, regardless of the consequences. It is never right to do wrong. A fellow says, "Well, I've got to get through school, and then I can." It is never right to do wrong. "*Thou shalt not steal*" (Exodus 20:15).

G. Theft of Someone's Faith

I want to tell you of one of the most heinous, horrible, wicked sins of stealing. It is the theft of someone's faith. Look in Jeremiah the twenty-third chapter for a moment. Let me show you a verse of Scripture—Jeremiah chapter 23, and let's start in verse 29: "*Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?*" (Jeremiah 23:29). I have proven this so long. I have preached God's Word, and I have seen God's Word burn like a fire. I have seen God's Word like a hammer: it just keeps on pounding away, pounding away, pounding away, until the hardest rock will crack. There's power in preaching the Bible. Did you know that?

That's one reason I try to preach the Bible. *If there's been any reason for any success that God has given me in the ministry, it's not because of any super intelligence; it's not because of any particularly hard work; it is because God has honored His Word.* God honors His Word. God's Word is like a fire. God's Word is "*like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces.*" And we thank God for His Word—the power of His Word.

But now, notice verse 30: "*Therefore...*"—that is, because God's Word is so powerful, listen—"*Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that*

steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness" (Jeremiah 23:30–32). What is God saying? God is saying if you are guilty of stealing the Word of God out of someone's heart, or stealing something from someone else, and calling it the Word of God when it's not the Word of God, and preaching it as it is the Word of God, God says, "I'm against you." This is the worst form of thievery.

I used to hear Dr. Lee talk about his wrath against those theological professors who would break into the house of faith of some young student and with reason's scissors clip faith's wings. I say *amen* to that. Jesus said, "If you cause someone to stumble—one of these little ones that believe in me—it would be better for you if a millstone were hanged about your neck and you were cast into the deep of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). This is God's warning against false prophets; this is God's warning against liberals; this is God's warning against modernists; and this is God's warning against those who do not believe that the Bible is the inerrant, inspired, infallible Word of God, like a fire and like a hammer (Jeremiah 23:19). It's thievery to steal away faith out of someone's heart. God said, "I'm against those prophets" (Jeremiah 23:30). And there's going to be a lot of moaning and groaning at the judgment, when some of these liberals who have destroyed the faith of young people in college come. And they have transgressed the commandment that says, "*Thou shalt not steal*" (Exodus 20:15). "They steal away my words"—steal God's Word—"every one from his neighbour" (Jeremiah 23:30). There's the theft of faith.

Hume was a great rationalist—the humanist. His mother was a Bible-believing Christian, but he was so witty, he was so clever, he was so intelligent, and he was so logical, that he could argue against her faith. And day after day after day after day, he argued with his mother. He belittled her, he cut her down, and he whittled away at her faith until finally he had stolen the Word of God out of her heart. At last, when his mother came to die, he tried to comfort his mother. Can you imagine a humanist—an infidel, an agnostic—trying to comfort someone in the hour of death? He said to his mother, "Mother, hold on." She looked at him with agony and said, "Son, there's nothing to hold on to. You've taken away my faith." Those who "*steal my words*" (Jeremiah 23:30). There is the theft—the theft, the robbery—of one man against another.

II. The Thievery of Stealing from God

But now, let me mention another form of thievery. Not only is there the thievery of one against another, but there's also the thievery of stealing from God; not only defrauding man, but defrauding Deity. How can one do that?

A. Withholding Yourself

Turn, please, to 1 Corinthians chapter 6—1 Corinthians chapter 6—and look, please, in verse 19: *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God,”*—now, underscore this phrase—*“and ye are not your own...”*—underscore that—*“ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). You say, “Well, at least I own me.” No, you don’t; you belong to God. You are bought with a price.

Now, suppose I take something that belongs to you, and I abuse it, misuse it, ruin it, use it up, and waste it: I have become a thief. Well, my friend, when you take your life, your body, your soul, your spirit, that belongs to God, use it, misuse it, abuse it, waste it, and throw it away, you have robbed God—you have robbed God. You belong to the Lord. He bought you in agony and blood upon the cross with His rich red royal blood. You’re not your own. *“Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Peter 1:18–19).

When I was a youngster, just a lad, I heard my preacher tell a story. He told a story of a little boy who made a sailboat—a little toy sailboat, fashioned out of wood—carved it, painted it red. He was very proud of it; it was his workmanship, his craftsmanship. He took it down to the stream to sail it. He was guiding it with a stick when a puff of wind blew it from his grass, and it sailed down the stream, across the body of water, out of his grass, and finally out of his sight. He was dejected and heartbroken, but several days later, as he was passing a secondhand store, he looked in the window, and there was his own boat. Someone had fetched it from the water. He went into the store and demanded it. The proprietor said, “Son, I cannot give it to you. I purchased it for someone. It is for sale. If you want it, you may purchase it.” The little fellow said, “How much is it?” The man told him. The youngster went, worked, earned the money, came back to the proprietor of the store, put the money upon the counter, and said, “Now, let me have the boat.” The man, of course, gladly did so. The little boy took the boat that was the work of his own hands and walked out of the store caressing it and talking to it. And this is what he was saying. He said, “Little boat, you’re mine. You are twice mine. You are mine because I made you, and you are mine because I bought you back.”

Now, my dear friend, God can say that to every one of us sitting here: “You are mine. You are mine. You are not your own; you are mine, because I created you, and you are mine because I redeemed you. I bought you back.” And you steal from God—you defraud God—when you refuse to serve God with all of your heart, your mind, your soul, and your strength. You steal from Almighty God.

Have you surrendered everything to Jesus Christ? Have you given Him your life?

Have you surrendered your all to Jesus Christ? If not, you have broken the command that says, “*Thou shalt not steal*” (Exodus 20:15)—for you’re not your own.

B. Withholding Your Stewardship

There’s another way you can steal from God—not only by withholding yourself, but by withholding your stewardship. Turn to Malachi 3. You knew I’d get to it, didn’t you? All right, turn to Malachi 3—the last book in the Old Testament, but not last by importance. Look in verse 8. We’re talking now about stealing from God—and verse 8 asks a question: “*Will a man rob God?*” (Malachi 3:8). Will a man rob the God that says, “*Thou shalt not steal*”? (Exodus 20:15). “*Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee?*” And here is God’s answer: “*In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation*” (Malachi 3:8–9). There’s another way to steal from God—and that is by withholding one’s stewardship, one’s tithe.

1. In Tithes

Now when you talk about tithing, there are always those who protest, of course. Those who protest are those who don’t want to tithe, and they say, “Well, tithing was taught in the Old Testament, not in the New Testament. Tithing was for Jews under the law.” Let me tell you something, friend—and listen. Tithing was taught before the law, tithing was taught during the law, and tithing was taught after the law. *Tithing* is bringing a tenth of your income and giving it to the work of the Lord. Someone has said, concerning tithing, that Abraham commenced it. That was a long time before the Mosaic Law. Abraham commenced it. Jacob continued it. Moses commanded it. Jesus commended it. And who am I to cancel it? Abraham commenced it. Jacob continued it. Moses commanded it. Jesus commended it. And who am I to cancel it? Oh, people say, “Well, Brother Rogers, that was Old Testament; that only speaks of a tenth. In the New Testament, everything belongs to the Lord.” They use that as an excuse not to tithe.

2. In Offerings

Friend, everything belongs to the Lord in the Old Testament. It always has; it always will. “*The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof*” (1 Corinthians 10:26). But if we do not bring the tithe, and the offering on top of the tithe—listen—you’ve not done your duty. When you tithe, that’s not all. There’s also an offering. We’re to give as God has prospered us. For some people, to give merely the tithe is an insult to God. God *doesn’t* measure *your gift only by the face of the amount on the check, but by the balance on the stub*. God has been so good to some people. And for you to fail to give more than the tithe and to give abundantly is a sin against the God who giveth the power to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Listen, dear friend. God’s tithe is not His way to raise money. He owns it all,

everywhere. God's tithe is His way to bless your heart and to teach you to trust Him. And so he says, "Bring the tithe into the storehouse, and prove me herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, that if I would not open you the windows of heaven, and pull you out a blessing, there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:10). Oh, you need to try God; you need to prove God; you need to believe God; you need to trust God; and you need to stop stealing from God. I tell you, I'd rather be anything than a God-robber.

But what am I saying? Listen to me. Not only may we transgress this commandment by stealing from one another; we may transgress this commandment by stealing from Almighty God, from swindling Almighty God.

One man professed to be a Christian. A pastor spoke to him and said, "Have you been baptized?" "Oh no," he said, "I haven't been baptized." "Why not?" He said, "Well, the dying thief wasn't baptized, so neither have I been." He said, "Well, are you a church member?" "Oh no, I'm not a church member." "Why not?" He said, "Well, the dying thief wasn't a church member, so why should I be?" He said, "Do you give your money to support the gospel?" He said, "Oh no." He said, "The dying thief didn't give his money. All he did was believe." The pastor looked and said, "Yes, but there's one difference between you and that thief." He said, "What's that?" He said, "He was a dying thief; you are a living thief."

I want to tell you, ladies and gentleman, any man who does not render unto the Lord that which is His is stealing from God. He is stealing from God. You are not your own; you are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). "[The tithe] is holy unto the LORD" (Leviticus 27:30).

III. The Thievery of Stealing from Yourself

But not only can we steal from one another, and not only do we steal from God, but I suppose the strangest form of thievery is to swindle one's self. Now, look, friend. When you steal, or when you refuse to surrender to God, you never gain; you always lose. You'll always lose—you always lose. Jesus said, "He who would save his life"—that is, steal it from God—"the same shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life"—that is, give it to God—"the same shall find it" (Mark 8:35). "*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together*" (Luke 6:38). When you refuse to obey God's commandments, you're the one who is swindled, you are the one who is cheated, and you are the one who loses. You lose far more than the person you steal from. And you need to understand that. You swindle yourself.

The Bible says, in the Book of Jeremiah chapter 5 and verse 25, "*Your sins have withholden good things from you*" (Jeremiah 5:25). God loves you. My soul! God loves you! God loves you so much that He sent Jesus Christ to die for you—that's how much God loves you. And you're afraid to trust a God like that? You are afraid to surrender

your life to a God like that? When you do, you rob yourself, you swindle yourself, you cheat yourself, and you steal from yourself the joy, the peace, and the happiness that God wants you to have. What kind of a creature is he who steals from himself? Behold, your sins are withholding good things from you (Jeremiah 5:25).

Conclusion

In Oklahoma City years ago, there was a horrible, terrible, apartment fire. The firemen had rescued all they could from the building. There was one woman in hysterics. She said, "I must go back into that building. My baby is in that building." The fireman would not release her. They held her with strong hands, yet compassionate hands. She said, "You must let me go! You must! My baby is in there! My baby is in there!" They said, "Madam, no one can go back into that building now; it's too late." She said, "Please, oh, please, somebody, please!" One strong fireman said, "Turn the hoses on me. I'm going in." They said, "If you wish, you may. But you may never come out." He said, "I'm going. I can't stand here." And up the ladder into that second story he went. They sprayed the fire hoses on him to keep away the flames. He went into that room, black, dark, acrid with smoke. He found the crib where the woman said it would be. He looked in that crib: there was that bundle. He reached down, picked it up gently, hugged it to his bosom, and back out he went. When he appeared in the window through the flames, the people cheered. He came down the ladder. The mother broke away from the fireman, rushed up, and reached out and received that bundle, pulled the blanket back, and said, "Oh, my God! That's not my baby! That's my baby's doll!"

I can't think of anything much more tragic than that, unless it would be for a man to come to the judgment of our Almighty God, clinging to his bosom the toys of this world, and having missed the Savior. Oh, what a tragedy, when all of the smoke is cleared away, to see that you went through life, and you robbed yourself of the joy, and the peace, and the happiness that only Jesus can give! What a tragedy! What a tragedy for a man, a woman, a boy, or girl to swindle one's self, because he degraded one's God, and was not honest toward one's neighbor!

The Ninth Commandment

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 24, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:16

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Father of False Witness
 - A. The Devil Used Slander to Corrupt a Good Man
 1. He Slandered the Truthfulness of God
 2. He Slandered the Righteousness of God
 3. He Slandered the Goodness of God
 - B. The Devil Used Slander to Criticize a Godly Man
 - C. The Devil Used Slander to Crucify the God-Man
 - II. The Family of False Witness
 - A. The Perjurer
 - B. The Rumormonger
 - C. The Flatterer
 - D. The Insinuator
 - E. The Slanderer
 1. The Hearer of Gossip
 - F. The Coward
 2. Why Men Tell Lies
 - III. The Folly of False Witness
 - A. It Is Hurtful
 3. It is Hellish
 - IV. The Fate of False Witness
- Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn, would you, to Exodus chapter 20, as we continue our pilgrimage through the Ten Commandments. Exodus chapter 20—I begin reading, again, by way of review, these commandments, until we come to our text this morning: *“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for*

I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thou maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal.” And then we come to our text for this morning: *“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour”* (Exodus 20:1–16)—*“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”*

Man, in his history, has made some very foolish laws, and some of those foolish laws have been made right here in the United States of America. Did you know that in Pine Island, Minnesota, a man must remove his hat when meeting a cow? Did you know that is against the law in Pocatello, Idaho, to go around looking peeved and dejected? Now I know some folks who ought to be arrested. Did you know that whoever peels an orange in his hotel room in California is breaking the law? Did you know that wives in Kentucky must have their husbands' permission to move the furniture around in the house? Now that sounds like a sane law to me. Did you know that every animal out in the streets in Berea, Ohio, after dark, must wear a taillight? Did you know that, according to law, crocodiles may not be tied to hydrants in Michigan? Falling asleep in the bathtub in Detroit is unlawful. Elephants, in Natchez, Mississippi, are not permitted to drink beer. Taking a bath in winter breaks an Indiana law. Buying a sack of peanuts after sundown is against the law in Alabama. And if a women wants to buy a hat in Owensburg, Kentucky, her husband must try it on first.

Now these are foolish laws—foolish laws—and yet somehow they found their way into the law books and were passed by some legislators somewhere. But they're not like God's Ten Commandments. None of God's Ten Commandments is foolish; none of God's Ten Commandments are frivolous. You know, God's Ten Commandments cover the gamut of every law that needs to be made a proper interpretation of; these Ten Commandments meet every human need for law. Did you know—did you know—that no one, think as he may, can conceive of an eleventh commandment that is not somehow comprised already in these ten? What a wonderful set of laws the Ten Commandments are—and they're not foolish. Every one of God's Ten Commandments

is given to protect something that's very precious, whether it be our conception of God, whether it be the name of God, whether it be the worship of God, whether it be our relationship with our parents, our relationship with our wives, whether it be personal property—all of these laws are given to protect something that is very precious. This commandment is given to protect personal reputation: *“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour”* (Exodus 20:16).

I. The Father of False Witness

Now I want to introduce you not to some foolish laws, but to a foolish family: the family of those who break God's commandment, in this sense. And, first of all, Roman numeral one: I want you to meet the father of false witness—the father of false witness. Would you turn, please, to John chapter 8 and verse 44. Jesus Christ was in a contest with the Pharisees, and these Pharisees were bearing false witness against the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ looked at the Pharisees and said, in John chapter 8 and verse 44, *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44). Every lie has been spawned by Satan. Satan is the father of all liars. And if you are a liar, you are of your father, the devil. And, therefore, when you tell a lie, you are acting like your father; you're a chip off the old block. The devil—the devil—is the father of false witness.

Listen to me. You are never more like the devil than when you're telling a lie. You are never more unlike Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness, than when you are bearing false witness. Satan has always been a bearer of false witness. The first time we see Satan is in the Garden of Eden, and he is slandering God before man. The very word *devil* means, “slanderer.” As you read the story there in Genesis the third chapter, you find where Satan crawled his sliming, corroding path into the pages of history, and there he confronted Eve, and he slandered God on a threefold basis.

A. The Devil Used Slander to Corrupt a Good Man

1. He Slandered the Truthfulness of God

In the first place, he slandered the truthfulness of God. He said, *“Yea, hath God said...?”* In verse 1 of chapter 3: *“Hath God said...?”* (Genesis 3:1). And *any time any man puts a question mark after the Word of God, that is a slander against the character of God “Hath made him a liar”* (1 John 5:10). A man and his word may be different, but God and His Word are the same. But Satan put a question mark after the Word of God, and he slandered the truthfulness of God.

2. He Slandered the Righteousness of God

But then he also slandered the righteousness of God. For God had said to Adam and Eve, “In the day that you disobey me, you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). But Satan said, “You will not surely die,” and he slandered the Word of God (Genesis 3:4).

3. He Slandered the Goodness of God

But he wasn't finished yet. In verse 5, he slandered the goodness of God; for he said, “God doth know that in the day ye eat, your eyes will be open, and you'll be like God, knowing good from evil” (Genesis 3:5). And there Satan was implying that God was holding out on Adam and Eve, that God was cutting them short of fulfillment, that God somehow was cramping their style, that God was withholding good things from them, and that they were like a bear in the woods whose eyes had not been opened; and Satan was slandering the goodness of God.

B. The Devil Used Slander to Criticize a Godly Man

He's a slanderer. The very word *devil* means, “slanderer.” But not only do we find Satan bearing false witness about God before man. The next thing I want you to notice: the next time Satan appears in the Bible to speak we find Satan slandering man before God. And if you will read there in the Book of Job, you will read something very remarkable. In Job chapter 1, beginning in verse 6, the Bible says that God and Satan are talking, and God says, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there's none like him?” (Job 1:8). And then Satan begins to bear false witness against Job. He begins to slander Job, and this is what he says. He says, “*Doth Job fear God for nought?*” (Job 1:9)—for nothing.

Now, what is the implication? “God, Job is playing you for a sucker. The only reason that Job is serving you is that you have bribed him; you have bought him off; you have been too good to him.” Notice this dirty devil. In the Garden of Eden, he was insinuating that God was not good enough to Adam and Eve. But when he gets over speaking to God, he's saying, “You're being too good to those people down there.” What a liar he is! What a deceiver he is! You'll find him either slandering God before man or slandering man before God. And the devil is still in the business of slandering God in your eyes, and he's still in the business of slandering good people before you, saying, “Oh, well, the only reason that man goes to church is for business reasons. The only reason he's in the ministry is for what he can get out of it,” or whatever it is. He is just simply slandering God's people.

But I thank God for Job, and I thank God that Jehovah God can say, “You don't know my servant Job. You don't know my servant Job. You take away everything that he has, and he will still love me.” And I thank God for some of you who have been through some awfully deep water lately. I know some of you have. But you've not

denied the Lord. You've said, "Though he slay me, yet shall I trust him" (Job 13:15). And I want to tell you a faith like that shuts the devil's mouth. And God picks out certain people, and God allows certain people to suffer, so that they can prove to this world that there's something real to it, and that we can be a Christian even when He is not shining. And I want you to notice that the devil is a slanderer.

C. The Devil Used Slander to Crucify the God-Man

But wait—he's not finished yet. Not only did he use slander to corrupt a good man, and not only did he use slander to criticize a godly man, but he also used slander to crucify the God-Man—to crucify the God-Man. The Bible tells us, in Matthew chapter 26, verse 59, that they "*sought false witnesses*" in order to crucify Jesus—false witnesses, encouraged, inspired by Satan himself, to nail Jesus to the cross (Matthew 26:59). I want to tell you, ladies and gentleman, when you begin to bear false witness, you put yourself into some terrible company. You are of your father, the devil, "*and the lusts of your father ye will do*" (John 8:44). Jesus said, "*He is a liar, and the father of it*" (John 8:44).

II. The Family of False Witness

Now the second thing I want you to notice is not only the father of false witnesses, but I want you to notice the family of false witnesses. I'd like you to notice some of the children in this family. Where Jesus said, "*Ye*"—plural—"*are of your father the devil*" (John 8:44), who is in this family of false witnesses?

A. The Perjurer

May I say, first of all, the perjurer—the perjurer—the person who perjures himself and perjures himself in a court of law has transgressed this commandment. Look, please, in Exodus chapter 23. The commandment is given in chapter 20. And then look at the amplification in chapter 23, verse 1: "*Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment*" (Exodus 23:1–2).

Now, what does that mean? That means that, when you stand in a court of law, swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, or whether you swore a *no*, you perjure yourself, and the wrath of Almighty God is upon you. I tell you, I believe that we see here in the city of Memphis, Tennessee, men and women, boys and girls, who take the witness stand and tell a lie. I want you to know that while you may testify falsely in a trial concerning murder, or while you may testify falsely in a trial concerning business, or in a trial concerning thievery, whatever it may be, you may pull the veil over the judge's eyes and the over the jury's eyes, and you may get by with it for a time, but I

want to tell you with all of the authority, the unction and function of my soul, you will stand before Almighty God and be judged.

And the Bible teaches, I believe, that when you perjure yourself and set the murderer free, God writes down by your name murderer. You perjure yourself, and you set the thief free; and God writes down not only liar, but thief—thief. You bear false witness; you transgress the commandment. There's another court coming one of these days, when the graves are going to give up their moaning, shrieking, groaning dead, and they will stand, one by one, in single file: *“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the heaven and the earth fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened”* (Revelation 20:11). Mr. Nixon got into trouble because of the tapes, but I want to tell you there's something else there: the books. And God is keeping books. The perjurer—the perjurer—is one member of this family who will surely, surely face judgment.

B. The Rumormonger

But not only is the perjurer a member of this satanic family, this foolish family, but also the rumormonger is a member of this family. Notice, in Exodus chapter 23, verse 1: *“Thou shalt not raise a false report”* (Exodus 23:1). This is to begin a rumor. Rumors are so easy to begin, so easy to spread. Rumormongers break the spirit of this commandment that says, *“Thou shalt not bear false witness”* (Exodus 20:16). Did you know that they used rumors to crucify Jesus? It was rumored that Jesus planned to destroy the temple. Of course, He had not. Jesus said, “Destroy this temple”—speaking of the temple of His body—“and in three days I'll raise it up again” (John 2:19). But the rumors and the rumormongers said that Jesus was out to destroy Herod's temple. And that was one of the false charges they brought against Him.

One time a man handed me a little note, and this is what it said: “It's not me that starts all of these rumors; it's the people I tell them to.” Well, maybe you're like him. You just can't understand how rumors get started.

I heard of a lady who went to the hospital, and it was reported in the newspaper of that county-seat town that she went to the hospital for removal of a tumor. Rumors are so easy to get started.

A new minister came to a church, so I am told, and he stayed there for a while. The congregation really didn't even know him that well, but you know how they're prone to talk about a new preacher. And the word got out in the Ladies' Society that the new preacher had come to one of their meetings and had forced his wife to leave the meeting in tears and to go home. This rumor spread all around the church. Finally, he stood at the pulpit and said, “I've heard this rumor, and I have four things to say.

Number one: I never interfere with the choice of my wife; she may attend whatever she wishes. Number two: my wife did not even attend the meeting in question. Number three: I was not at the meeting in question. And, number four, and finally: I don't have a wife."

How easy it is for rumors to get started! But the Scripture says, "Thou shalt not raise a false report" (Exodus 23:1).

C. The Flatterer

And then I want to mention another member of this family—and this person is the flatterer, the person who uses insincere flattery. All flattery is insincere. Look in Proverbs chapter 26 and verse 28, please. Put a star by it: "*A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it...*"—how many people have been afflicted by a lying tongue?—"A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin" (Proverbs 26:28)—"*a flattering mouth worketh ruin.*" God lists flattery with lying, and God says that if you flatter people, actually, you're hurting people. You see, the flatterer wishes to use people; he's making merchandise of people. He's not really trying to give praise, and attribution, and honor.

Now I want to say something right here. There's nothing wrong with giving honor; there is nothing wrong with expressing sincere appreciation. The Bible says to give honor to whom honor is due, to pay tribute to whom tribute is due (Romans 13:7). The Bible teaches that we're to be thankful and to be "*in honour preferring one another*" (Romans 12:10). And when I say of this young man that he sang beautifully, and that God anointed him, and that he blessed my heart, that's not soft soap; that's not flattery—that's truth. And it's well that we might say that, and it's good that we might say to those who blessed us, "You blessed my heart." But oh, the flatterer—the person who would make merchandise of you—beware of such a person! If you will get through in life, watch flattery. I tell you, I've learned something since I've been in the ministry. I get some thanksgiving, and I appreciate that; but I also get some flattery, and I also get some criticism. And do you know what I've learned to do with all of it? Pass it to Jesus. And if you pass the praise to Jesus, you can pass the criticism to Him too. And if you can pass the legitimate praise to Jesus, you can pass the flattery to Jesus. But you'd better watch the flatterer.

I want you to notice here in the Book of Psalms the lesson that David learned. Look in Psalm 55 and verse 21. David was a wise man when he wrote this: "*The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords*" (Psalm 55:21). You watch the flatterer. He is breaking the spirit of the command that says, "*Thou shalt not bear false witness*" (Exodus 20:16).

D. The Insinuator

Then, another member of this family is the insinuator—the insinuator. Now the Bible does not mention the word *insinuation*, to my knowledge; but the Bible does mention *insinuations*. For example, in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 20, it's mentioned as *whisperings*—*whisperings* (2 Corinthians 12:20). Insinuation is one of the most damnable ways of bearing false witness.

Did you know that Jesus Christ had to face insinuations all of His life—dirty, diabolical, damning insinuations? In the scripture that I read to you, where Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, and said, “You are of your father the devil” (John 8:44), during that contest between them, they were talking about that they belong to Father Abraham (John 8:39), and then, in my estimation, they said one of the most hateful things that has ever been said in the Bible. And yet no one could prove that they meant a thing, unless you kind of pick up the tone and read between the lines.

In John chapter 8, verse 41, they said to Jesus, “*We be not born of fornication*” (John 8:41)—“*We be not born of fornication.*” Do you catch the sneer? Do you catch the entrance? Do you catch what they are saying? They're saying, “We know who our father is.” You don't know who your father is. What they were insinuating is that Jesus is the illegitimate son of Mary, and yet they didn't say it in so many words; they said it with a sneer. They said it with an insinuation: “We know who our father is” (John 8:41). “*Thou shalt not bear false witness*” (Exodus 20:16)—insinuation. What they said may have been a fact, but it was not the truth. You can lie with the arching of the eyebrow, you can lie with the tone of your voice, and you can lie by the way you word or insinuate something.

On a certain ship, I am told that the captain wrote in the ship's log: “The first mate was drunk today.” The first mate begged the captain not to let that be in the ship's log, but the captain said, “The ship's log stands as it is written. It cannot be changed.” The next day, it was the first mate's time to take care of the ship's log, and he made this entry: “The captain was sober today.” Now that was true, but do you see the insinuation?

There are some people who pride themselves in that they can use language so precisely that they can say one thing and mean another, and yet no one can pin them down. But there is One who can. There is One who knows the motive of your heart. And the Bible says, “*Thou shalt not bear false witness*” (Exodus 20:16).

E. The Slanderer

Another member of this family is the slanderer—the slanderer. The Bible says, in James chapter 4, verse 11, “*Speak not evil one of another, brethren*” (James 4:11). Slander and gossip are vile, horrible, damnable sins. I want to ask you, I want to beg

you, and I want to plead with you, that you will never be a part of gossip and slander as a member of this church. *The devil had rather start church people gossiping and slandering than to sell a barrel of whiskey any day.* Oh, how we need to pray, “O God, O God, put a seal upon my lips.” Do you know what Mr. A. B. Simpson, a great Christian Missionary Alliance pastor of yesteryear, had to say? He said—and I quote—“I had rather play with forked lightning or take in my hands living wires with their fiery currents than to speak a reckless word against any servant of Christ, or, I believe, repeat the slanderous darts which thousands of Christians are hurling on others.”

1. The Hearer of Gossip

And may I say, dear friend, to listen to gossip also breaks the spirit of this command. Did you know there’s a law against stealing, and there’s a law against receiving stolen goods—did you know that? And when you receive gossip, you are participating; you are becoming an accomplice to the crime. You know, some people say, “I just don’t understand why everybody wants to tell me everything.” I understand it: They believe you’re the kind of a person who wants to hear it. And it is a devious compliment to you that people want to use your ears for garbage cans. Perhaps you’ve sent out the signal that you’re the kind of a person who loves to hear juicy gossip. Someone has well said, “He who utters slander ought to be hung by the tongue, and he who listens to it ought to be hung by his ears.” Have you been responsible for aiding and abetting the slanderer?

F. The Coward

Then there’s another way that you might transgress this commandment, “*Thou shalt not bear false witness*” (Exodus 20:16). And this is the sin of cowardliness: not speaking at all when you ought to speak. Now, listen to me. When the Bible says, “Thou shalt not do something,” it is also taught that you *shall* do the contrary. What I mean is that the negative implies the positive, and the positive implies the negative. As we’ve said before, if you are outside, and I say, “Don’t stay outside,” that means, “Come inside.” And when the Bible says, “*Thou shalt not bear false witness*,” the Bible means, therefore, that you shall be a true and a faithful witness.

Now, look in Leviticus chapter 5 and verse 1: “*And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity*” (Leviticus 5:1). God says, “If you refuse to speak...” Do you know what the law people tell us here in the city of Memphis? The law people tell us, if people in the neighborhoods could speak out when they know of a crime, if they would speak out when they know a wrongdoing, if they would have enough courage to stand up and be a true witness, that many of the crimes in the city of Memphis could be solved by people having enough courage to speak out. When you have the sin of cowardliness, when you refuse to speak, when you refuse to testify, you break the spirit

of the command that says, *“Thou shalt not bear false witness”* (Exodus 20:16). And, contrariwise, when you hear of a good person whose name is being maligned, when you hear of a person who is being castigated, and you know that what they’re saying is not true, it’s time for you to rise up, and speak out, and say, “That’s not so, and I want to take the side of that person that you’re bearing false witness against.” That’s what this command enjoins.

And, friend, I’ll tell you One whose side we ought to be taking everyday—and His name is Jesus Christ. I want to tell you that more false witness is being borne about Jesus Christ. All blasphemy is false witness. All blasphemy is false witness. It is a distortion of character to hear of our God and Savior the Lord Jesus Christ’s name being taken in vain. And some of the late night talk shows, and other films, and so forth, are making a mockery of holy things. And it’s time God’s people rose up, and spoke out, and said, “I resent the way you speak. That’s my Savior you’re speaking about.” “Ye shall be witnesses of me, saith the LORD” (Isaiah 43:10). *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so”* (Psalm 107:2)—bearing true witness. Cowardliness is one of the ways that a person is a member of this foolish family. The father of the family is Satan. Your father, the devil, he was a liar from the beginning (John 8:44).

2. Why Men Tell Lies

Through slander he corrupted a good man. Through slander he criticized a godly man. And through slander he crucified the God-Man. Are you a member of this family? *“The lusts of your father ye will do”* (John 8:44). Why do men tell lies? The Bible says, in Matthew chapter 15, verse 19, “Out of the heart of man proceeds lies” (Matthew 15:19). A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he’s a liar. The Bible says, in Psalm 58 and verse 3, “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray speaking lies as soon as they are born” (Psalm 58:3).

You don’t have to teach a child to lie; you have to teach children to tell the truth. You say, “Oh, they learn to lie from influence.” You put little children on an island and let them be raised by remote controls, and when they get old enough, they will lie. “The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray speaking lies as soon as they’re born”—lies as soon as they’re born. Lies proceed out of the heart, and it is because people have a sinful nature (Matthew 15:19). And the only answer to lying and falsehood and false witness is to receive the new nature that Jesus can give. It is Jesus who is the truth. It is Satan, the father, who lies.

III. The Folly of False Witness

Now I want you to notice one more thing. I want you to notice, not only the father, and the family, but I want you to notice the folly of false witness—the folly of false witness. The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 8, *“The folly of fools is deceit”*

(Proverbs 14:8). The most foolish thing that you could do is to be dishonest. *“The folly of fools is deceit.”* Deceit, false witness, lying: why are they such follies?

A. It Is Hurtful

Number one: because it is so hurtful—so hurtful. There are few things that you could do that would be more hurtful than to bear false witness against someone.

A great Christian was slandered; a worthy servant of the Lord had a vicious, horrible thing said about him. Dr. Stephen Olford tells about it. This man was so wounded and so grieved by the false witness that was brought against him that, though he was frail already in body, it brought him to his deathbed. The one who had uttered the slander at length repented and came to see this dying saint upon his bed, and confessed, and said, “I’m sorry for the slander and the falsehood, and I repent. And I’ve asked God to forgive me. And I want you to forgive me.” And the dying saint said, “My brother, I fully and freely forgive you, but there’s one thing that I want you to do. I want you to take the pillow from beneath my head. Take your penknife and slit it. I want you to go to the window and shake the feathers out into the breeze.” The penitent man did that, and then he said, “I’ve done as you ask, but I don’t understand why.” And then the dying man who had been slandered said, “Now, sir, would you please go and gather all of those feathers again and bring them back to me?” And this man said, with tears in his eyes said, “I cannot do that, for the wind has taken them I know not where.” And then the dying man said, “Nor can you ever again gather the words that you’ve sent out.”

I want to tell you, ladies and gentleman: You do irrefutable harm when you bear false witness against a man. If you counterfeit a coin, you can gather that coin and bring it back, per chance. If you forge your name on a note, perhaps you can go out and bring it back. But when you speak words—when you speak words—they can never again be brought back. I tell you that it is folly because it is so hurtful.

3. It is Hellish

It is so hellish. Did you know that God absolutely hates this sin? Did you know that God took time, in His Word, to write down some things that He hates above other things? Turn to Proverbs chapter 6. I want those of you who are tempted to gossip to turn to Proverbs 6: *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:”—*now, what are they? What seven things are so terrible that God inspired the writer of Proverbs to list them?—*“a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren”* (Proverbs 6:16–19).

My friend, God hates it; the wrath—the anger—of God burns against it. You might say, “Well, I never killed anybody. I don’t commit adultery.” Do you bear false witness?

God doesn't list murder here. Well, He mentions shedding innocent blood. He doesn't mention adultery, as such. But He does mention bearing false witness. Listen. Why does God hate it? False witness corrupted mankind, false witness cursed the world, and false witness crucified Jesus. You're never more like the devil than when bearing false witness; you're never more like Jesus Christ than when you're telling the truth.

IV. The Fate of False Witness

One last thing—and I'm finished. I want you to notice not only the folly of false witness, but I want you to notice the fate of false witnesses. Where's this family going to end up?

Did you know that the Bible says, in Revelation chapter 21, verse 8, that *"all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone"* (Revelation 21:8)? All liars—all liars, all liars—shall have their part in the lake of fire—that's what God's Word says. Did you know that the Bible says, in Matthew chapter 25 and verse 41, that hell was *"prepared for the devil and his angels"* (Matthew 25:41)? Do you know what the word *angelos* means? It means, "messenger." Did you know that, when you tell a lie, you are the devil's angel? Did you know that, when you tell a lie, you're the devil's messenger? Boy, you're the devil's false witness. Hell is prepared for the devil and his messengers (Matthew 25:41). *"All liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone"* (Revelation 21:8).

Hell is no joke. People speak about a preacher being a *hellfire* preacher. That's a compliment to the preacher. He preaches as Jesus preached. The Word that I just quoted to you—Matthew 25:41—is the Word of Jesus. I want to tell you something, friend. This foolish family is going to have a homecoming in hell. One of these days, you'll be gathered with all liars; you'll not get into heaven. God will not let you into heaven. Turn to Revelation chapter 21. Now, friend, this was not just put in the Bible just to look at, but to heed, to listen to. The Lord is speaking of that city foursquare, and He's talking about how wonderful it is. And I'm reading verse 27. And God says, *"And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life"* (Revelation 21:27). Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Is it?

Conclusion

I want you to know that all of us are liars; there's not a man, a woman, a boy, a girl who's not guilty of breaking this commandment that says, *"Thou shalt not bear false witness"* (Exodus 20:16). There is not a person but what sometime, somehow, somewhere, you've broken that commandment. "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray speaking lies as soon as they're born" (Psalm 58:3). And God says that no liar will go to heaven (Revelation 21:27).

Now that makes it seem pretty dark, but I want to tell you that there is one way that the record can be cleansed; there's one way that that lie can be washed out of God's book—and that's through the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son. And when we believe in Jesus Christ, when we receive Jesus Christ, the Bible teaches, *“Though [our] sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). And I want to tell you, by the grace of God—hallelujah!—every blot, every blur, every blemish, and every stain that ever came across a human soul, no matter what commandment you may have broken—whether all of them or one of them—the blood of Jesus can make the vilest sinner clean.

Has that happened to you? I know that I'm a liar. I know that I have broken this commandment. But I also know—praise God—that my sin is under the blood. And I also know now He's given me a new nature. It used to be my nature to want to lie. Now it's my nature to want not to lie. And I thank God for that nature that Jesus Christ has given me.

Do you know the Lord Jesus? Are you saved? Now, you see, long ago, men crucified Jesus by bearing false witness. That's the reason I'm going to ask you today to take a public stand for Jesus. Would you come today and be a true witness? Would you come today and openly and publicly say, “I receive Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Savior of my life; I place my sins under the blood of Jesus; I trust Jesus Christ as my Savior; and I confess Him as my Lord”? False witnesses crucified Him long ago. Are you willing to stand for Him before men today?

The Tenth Commandment

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 31, 1977

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:17

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Roots of Covetousness
 - A. Sinfulness
 - B. Selfishness
 - C. Shallowness
- II. The Results of Covetousness
 - A. A Debasing Sin
 - B. A Deceiving Sin
 - C. A Damning Sin
 1. The Attributes of the Rich Young Ruler
 - a. Eager
 - b. Humble
 - c. Courageous
 - d. Possessed Discernment
 - e. Spiritually Interested
 - f. Morally Clean
 2. The Flaw of the Rich Young Ruler
- III. The Remedy for Covetousness
 - A. Commitment to Christ
 - B. A Contentment in Christ
 - C. A Containment of Christ

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn to our text, please, this morning, Exodus chapter 20, verse 17: *“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s”* (Exodus 20:17). Now this commandment is last, and it is different from all of the others. The other commandments deal with actions. This one deals with attitude. The other commandments deal with deeds. This one deals with desires. So, in order to enforce this commandment, we would have to take the policeman off the corner and put him in the heart. You need a policeman in your heart to convict you, convince you, and

control you, when it comes to this commandment, which says, “*Thou shalt not covet*” (Exodus 20:17).

To *covet* means, “to have an unlawful desire.” To *covet* means, “to want something that is not rightfully yours, something that by right pertains to someone else.” I want to say that the sin of covetousness is not limited to money: You might covet someone’s influence. You may covet their power. You might covet their fame. You might covet their appearance. You might covet their popularity. Or you may covet their health. Let me say, dear friends, that it’s a very, very common sin: we just simply need to translate it in today’s idiom. Perhaps we should say, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s automobile, thy neighbor’s dishwasher, thy neighbor’s education, kids, or thy neighbor’s motorcycle.” Thou shalt not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor—something that is not rightfully, something that is not lawfully yours.

This does not mean we’re not to want things. This does not mean there’s to be the cessation of desire. As a matter of fact, it is right to want certain things. Speaking of spiritual gifts, the Bible says to “*covet...the best gifts*” (1 Corinthians 12:31). There are certain things that you can desire, certain things that you want. These things are normal and natural. We want love—it’s all right to want that—friendship, home, happiness, joy, success, victory, peace, a wife, a husband—that’s all right. But you’re not to want that which is not rightfully yours, not lawfully yours. It is inordinate desire that this command is against.

I want you to notice three things about this command. First of all, I want you to notice the roots of covetousness; secondly, the results; and, finally, the remedy.

I. The Roots of Covetousness

First of all, the roots: Why are people covetous?

A. Sinfulness

Well, first of all, covetousness roots in sinfulness. Would you turn, please, to Mark chapter 7 and verse 21? Let’s use our Bibles, this morning, shall we? Mark chapter 7 and verse 21. Jesus is speaking, and Jesus says, “*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts,*”—and, here it is—“*covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man*” (Mark 7:21–23). Why is a man covetous? Because it comes out of his business with the devil. It was the devil who coveted the throne of God, and that’s how Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night: through covetousness. How did Adam and Eve fall in the Garden of Eden? They coveted and took of the forbidden fruit. It was covetousness that corrupted mankind, and since then we have a sinful, covetous

nature. It is in us all. Jesus said these things come out of the heart (Mark 7:21). There's not a person here—not a person here—but what at some time or another has not coveted. You see, *the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.*

B. Selfishness

But not only does it root in sinfulness; it also roots in selfishness, because we're sinful, and we're also selfish. It is sin that separates us from God. It is sin that causes a man to die spiritually, and when he dies spiritually, there's a part of him that is missing. So, rather than being God-centered, he now becomes self-centered. Man then becomes an egomaniac, and he lives for himself. And that's why people are covetous. They're seeking to satisfy, to sublimate, to get for themselves and for self alone.

If you would like to be perfectly miserable, let me give you a recipe. Charles Kingsley said, "If you wish to be miserable, think about yourself, about what you want, about what you like, what respect people ought to pay you, what people think of you; and then, to you, nothing will be pure; you will spoil everything you touch; you will make sin and misery for yourself out of everything God sends you; you will be as wretched as you choose."

C. Shallowness

First of all, sinfulness comes out of our sinful nature. Secondly, we're selfish because we're sinful—we're, by nature, selfish, and we covet. Thirdly, shallowness: Selfishness roots in shallowness. Turn to Luke chapter 12, would you, and read in verse 15: "*And he said unto them...*"—that's Jesus, again—"*And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of...*"—you put a star there, because He's talking to you. This is not what Jesus *has* said; this is what Jesus *is* saying to us—"*beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.*" And then Jesus gave a parable to illustrate this: "*And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there I will bestow all my fruits and my goods.*" Can you hear the selfishness in this man? "*And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool...*"—God's epitaph on this man's tombstone was *fool*—"*Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God*" (Luke 12:15–21).

Now, what was this man's problem? He was a materialist; he was a covetous man. He knew how to make a living, but he didn't know how to make a life. He didn't own money; money owned him. And he thought that he could satisfy his soul with material

things. *“I will say to my soul, Soul...take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.”* What a shallow man this man was! He thought that the deepest needs could be satisfied with material things.

Some people blame others for trying to get the world and they say the world is too big. No, friend, that’s not the problem. It is not that the world is too big for us; it is that we are too big for the world. We were made for the infinite, and we can never be satisfied with the finite. The world is too small to satisfy you. And what a shallow person the covetous person is, because he’s trying to satisfy the longings of his soul with things that can never satisfy!

That is the root of covetousness: sinfulness, selfishness, and shallowness. Do you know anybody like that? There are a lot of shallow people. Somebody asked a church pastor, “What size is your church field?” He said, “Ten miles wide, half an inch deep”—shallow. Trying to satisfy the deepest longings of your heart and your soul with material things: that’s the problem with the covetous person. He has a vacuum in his heart, and he’s trying to satisfy it the wrong way.

II. The Results of Covetousness

Now the second thing I want you to notice: not only the roots of covetousness, but notice the results of covetousness. What are they?

A. A Debasing Sin

Number one: May I say, this is a debasing sin. Turn, if you will, to 1 Timothy chapter 6 for a moment—1 Timothy chapter 6—and we’ll begin reading in verse 9: *“But they that will be rich fall into a temptation and a snare...”*—now it doesn’t say, “they that are rich.” Nowhere in the Bible is being rich called a sin. But the Bible says *“they that will be rich,”* those who set their goal, their ambition, resolutely for this one thing: riches. If that is the prime motivation of your life, if that is the will of your life, the driving force of your life—*“they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”* They’re like a bee that follows a barrel of honey and drowns. *“For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after,”*—there’s our word—*“they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Timothy 6:9–10). Let me tell you something, friend. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It doesn’t say, “Money is the root of all evil,” as some erroneously say; it says, “The love of money is a root”—not *the* root, a root—“of all kinds of evil” (1 Timothy 6:10).

If I had time this morning, I could show you from the Bible how that covetousness can cause you to break each of the other nine commandments. Covetousness may cause a man to break any or all of the other nine commandments, because the love of

money, which is covetousness in one form, is a root of all kinds of evil. The desire to get is an octopus that fastens itself upon the soul and cannot be shaken off, apart from the power of God. What a debasing sin it is!

I was reading a while back about a man who was very successful in a chain of restaurants. He became even famous as a caterer. But when it came time for this successful businessman, this wealthy man, to die, his family gathered around his deathbed. His relatives were there; they were bending low to find out what his last words would be. He whispered something in a forced voice. They inclined their ear to him, and this is what he said: “Remember to slice the ham thin.” Now he’s dying. “Remember to slice the ham thin.” Covetousness had kicked his soul to death. Here was a man ready to die, and he says, “Remember to slice the ham thin.”

B. A Deceiving Sin

It is a debasing sin. But not only is it a debasing sin; it is a deceiving sin. First Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 5, speaks of the “*cloak of covetousness*” (1 Thessalonians 2:5), and that suggests the deceitfulness of that sin. Did you know that it’s a sin that nobody else thinks he has? You know what you’re thinking right as I’m preaching? “Preacher, tell them about that sin of covetousness. They really need to hear it.” All of these folks here on the front row have a shovel, and they’re just shoveling it over their shoulder. And all of those in the back have an umbrella, and they’re just letting it slide off on everybody else. And they’re just saying, “Now, now, you tell them how they ought not to be covetous.” Nobody ever thinks he’s covetous. That’s a strange thing.

Do you know what Charles Haddon Spurgeon said? He was a preacher of yesteryear, and a great preacher, and he said this tongue-in-cheek, with a twinkle in his eye. He said, “I’ve seen thousands of people converted, but I’ve never seen one covetous man converted.” Now what he meant by that is not that covetous people don’t get saved—because they may, and they do—but what he meant is he never heard a man confess that he was saved from the sin of covetousness.

Do you know what Francis Xavier, the leader of Roman Catholics of yesteryear, had to say? A man who was a priest and listened to many confessions, Francis Xavier, said, “As an older man, I have listened to thousands of confessions, and I have yet to hear one person confess the sin of covetousness.” The cloak of covetousness: we always think that it is for the other person, but not for us. It is a deceiving sin; and if you’re not careful, it will deceive you. And that’s the reason the Savior said to “*beware of covetousness*” (Luke 12:15).

C. A Damning Sin

Not only is it a debasing sin, a root of all kinds of evil; and not only is it a deceiving

sin that you may wear like a cloak to hide your real motivations; but also, ladies and gentlemen, it is a damning sin—it is a damning sin. Look in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 5, for a moment. Some people think that this is just a little old minor sin: “After all, if it’s a sin, it’s not such a big one; and we don’t have to be so worried about covetousness.” Some of you people here, who wouldn’t think of getting drunk, and some of you wouldn’t think of committing adultery, you think, “Well, covetousness, if that’s all that’s wrong with me, I’m not in such bad shape.” But look in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 5: *“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God”* (Ephesians 5:5). Now, notice the company in which God puts covetousness, and notice God’s description of covetousness. God calls it idolatry: *“[No] covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any [part] in the kingdom of Christ and of God”* (Ephesians 5:5). It is a damning sin.

I think the best illustration is the rich young ruler. Turn to Mark chapter 10—Mark chapter 10—and let’s begin reading in verse 17. Many of us are familiar with this story. Here’s the story of a young man who came to Jesus to inquire about eternal life. Mark 10:17: *“And when he”—that refers to Jesus—“was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?”*

1. The Attributes of the Rich Young Ruler

Thus far, so good. I tell you what: this was an exceptional young man. What an amazing young man! I want you to look at the attributes of this young man.

a. Eager

In the first place, he was eager. For the Bible says, in verse 17, he came running (Mark 10:17). He was not a spiritual dullard, that I know—those who come to church on Sunday morning and put a sign around their neck that says, “Please do not disturb.” No—he came running. He was eager; he was enthusiastic; and he wanted to know. Give him credit for that.

b. Humble

Not only was he eager; he was humble. He knelt in front of Jesus. Now, remember, he was a ruler; remember, he was wealthy—a rich ruler. He has position, and he had possession; and yet he knelt before a Galilean prophet, a carpenter’s son—humble.

c. Courageous

Not only was he eager, not only was he humble; he was courageous. Where did he do it? In the broad way, the highway. The Bible says, *“When Jesus was gone forth into the way...”* (Mark 10:17)—out in front of everybody else. It took a lot off courage to do that. He didn’t care about the sneers of the godless gang and the Christless clique. He kneeled in front of Jesus. Give him credit for that.

d. Possessed Discernment

Also, he had discernment, for he said to Jesus, in verse 17, “*Good Master*” (Mark 10:17). He knew goodness when he saw it. There was something in the heart and life and mind of this young man that enabled him to discern goodness when he saw it. Give him credit for that.

e. Spiritually Interested

He was spiritually interested. He’s not coming for healing. He’s not even coming for more money. He’s not coming for more power. He is coming, inquiring of eternal life. “*Good Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?*” (Mark 10:17). He was spiritually interested. Give him credit for that.

f. Morally Clean

He was morally clean. When Jesus Christ spoke to him of the commandments, he was able to say, “All of these have I kept from my youth up” (Mark 10:20)—and, outwardly, he had. He would have made a good neighbor. He would have made a good business associate. The Jaycees would have elected him president. He’d be Man of the Year. Join the church? They’d want to make a deacon out of this fellow. Why, he just looked so fine!

2. The Flaw of the Rich Young Ruler

But Jesus, who was more discerning than this young man, looked at him and saw that he had a fatal flaw. This young man was infected, inflicted, and eaten up with the sin of covetousness. But little did he know it. Jesus knew it. And I wish I could tell you that this story had a happy ending. But it does not have a happy ending.

Jesus talked to this man about keeping the commandments. Now if you read this carelessly, you might think that Jesus is teaching that salvation is by commandment-keeping. He’s not teaching that; He is teaching just the opposite. He is teaching that you cannot be saved by keeping the commandments—because none of us is that good. This man did not realize that. Jesus was teaching this young man that he could not behave himself into the kingdom of heaven. And so Jesus talks to him about the commandments. He says, “Oh, I’ve kept them all” (Mark 10:20). Jesus said, “Well, there’s one thing that you lack. Sell all that you have; give it to the poor. Take up your cross, and follow me” (Mark 10:21).

When Jesus said that, he struck a vital nerve, because Jesus knew that this man was not really a commandment-keeper. No man is. No one has kept the law; no one can keep the law. You see, the law is divided. The first four commandments deal with our relationship to God; the last six deal with our relationship to man. Jesus showed to this covetous man that in spirit he’d broken all the laws, because he loved money more than he loved God, and he loved money more than he loved man. Wasn’t that a great way that Jesus just ferreted this man out?

Now, listen. Jesus knew many rich people, and He had many rich friends, and this is the only man Jesus asked to do this that I know of, in this circumstance, because Jesus doesn't say this to every rich man. But He said it to this rich man, because He wanted to reveal to this rich man what his problem was. His problem was covetousness, and little did he dream. He thought that he was a commandment-keeper, and he thought that he was so fine. But he was eaten up with the transgression of the Tenth Commandment: "*Thou shalt not covet*" (Exodus 20:17).

I want you to watch him. The battle begins. He clenches his fist, he furrows his brow, and he bites his lip. The angel in heaven, the recording angel, is there with his pen poised, ready to inscribe this man's name in the Lamb's Book of Life. The demons, the imps of hell, are there, too. They are perched on his shoulder, and they whisper in his ear insinuations and fears and ridicules, and tell him of the fool that he would be to give away everything that he has. Finally, the young man gives the fateful answer—a firm, quiet, resolute *no*—and his soul strikes out, and he has committed spiritual suicide through covetousness. Covetousness is a damning sin.

Did you know that there are people who will not come down this aisle and profess faith in Jesus Christ and become a part of His church, because they think, if they do, the church will want some of their money? If you think I'm kidding, you just don't know human nature. There are a lot of them. They say, "Oh, all they want down there is your money." Do you know what that man's problem is, sir? Covetousness. Did you know that there are people who would give up coming to church before they would give up getting a new refrigerator? Did you know that? Did you know that there are people whose god is gold, whose creator is greed, and who are infected with the sin of covetousness? They'll find all kinds of reasons for not giving their heart to Jesus. But like the rich young ruler, they're covetous.

You don't have to be rich to be covetous. You know, if you own a Ford, you can covet the other man's Cadillac; but if you own a Volkswagen, you can covet the other man's Ford. If you own a bicycle, you can covet the other man's Volkswagen; and if you've got a new pair of shoes, you covet that bicycle. I mean, you don't have to be rich to be covetous. Covetousness is a damning sin.

III. The Remedy for Covetousness

Now I want us to go on and think, not only about the roots of covetousness, and the results of covetousness; but, in the moments that we have left, can we talk just for a few moments about the remedy—the remedy—for covetousness? How can old covetous hearts like mine and like yours ever be changed? What is the remedy for covetousness? May I suggest, this morning, a three-fold remedy—a three-fold remedy—for covetousness.

A. Commitment to Christ

Number one—and we can never start until we start here, no matter what the sin problem is—number one: commitment to Christ—commitment to Christ. Now, what does this do? When you commit your heart and your life, by faith, to Jesus Christ, do you know what happens? You get a new heart. Do you remember when we said that these things proceed out of the heart? Do you remember that passage, “*Out of the heart of men, proceed...covetousness*” (Mark 7:21–22)? So, if that’s the problem with your heart, you need a new heart. Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17, says, “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). You get a brand new heart. You see, Christians are not just nice people; they’re new Christians. They’ve been born again. They get a brand new nature. That’s what the Lord Jesus Christ will do for you.

You say, “Oh, that’s just talk.” No, it’s not just talk. I know—I know what Jesus Christ has done in my heart. Jesus gave me a new nature. If you don’t believe it, you go talk to some of those schoolteachers who were teaching me when I got saved. They’ll say, “Something happened to Adrian Rogers.” You go ask my mom and dad. They’ll say, “Something happened to our son.” You go ask the neighbors. You go ask the boys I used to fight with. They’ll say something happened. It wasn’t just *something*; it was *Someone*. A brand new heart: Jesus will give it to you. That doesn’t mean that it will never be possible for you to covet again, but it does mean that covetousness will not be your way of life. It need not be your way of life, because Christ is in you, and He’s given you a new heart. Now that old nature won’t be there, and you’ll find that old pull; you’ll find that old nature. But when you yield to your new nature, then Christ will take over. But there’s no way—hear me—there’s no way to be victorious over this sin, or any sin, until you have the nature of Christ in you, or commitment to Christ—a commitment to Christ.

B. A Contentment in Christ

Number two: a contentment in Christ—contentment in Christ. Some people have committed to Christ, but they’ve not yet discovered all that they have in Christ, and, therefore, they are not yet contented in Christ. Look, if you will, please, in Hebrews chapter 13, and this is written to Christians. Turn to it—Hebrews chapter 13, beginning in verse 5: “*Let your conversation be without covetousness;*”—now the word *conversation* here means, “behavior”: “Let your *behavior* be without covetousness.” All right, that’s the command. How are we to fulfill it?—“*and be content with such things as ye have*”—you say, “Content with such things as I have? I don’t have anything. I’ve got plenty of nothing.” Are you a Christian? Are you saved? Are you born again? If you are, then you’ll understand what he’s talking about, because he’s not talking about material

wealth. If you want to know how wealthy you are, if you want to know how rich you are, you add up anything that you have that money cannot buy and death cannot take away: then you'll know how rich you are—*“be content with such things as ye have:”*—what do you have? Well, continue to read—*“for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:5).

You've got Jesus. And if you've got Jesus, you've got everything—and, that's not just talk. That's true. You can be content in the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't care where you are or what your situation. Everybody enjoys living nicely and comfortably, but do you know what the Apostle Paul says in the Book of Philippians? *“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”* (Philippians 4:11). *“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am...to be content”*. Why? Because Paul had Jesus Christ in his heart. And Jesus had said to Paul, *“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:5).

You say, “Oh, that's just talk.” Well, you just don't know what you're talking about, mister. Only people in Jesus are content. Oh, there may be some Christians who are saved, who are not as content as they ought to be, but you show me a Christian who has let go of this world with both hands and has taken hold of Jesus Christ with both hands, and I'll show you a Christian who is content, and has joy unspeakable, and is full of glory, and has come to the place where he need not covet, because he has what satisfies him: he has the Lord Jesus Christ in his heart.

I feel sorry for people who don't know Jesus Christ in this life. I don't care if you've got fame and money. Ernest Hemingway did. Ernest Hemingway was brilliant, talented, wealthy, and all of the rest of it. But do you know what he said? I quote: “Life is just a dirty trick—a short journey from nothingness to nothingness. There is no remedy for anything in life. Man's destiny in the universe is like a colony of ants on a burning log.” And he committed suicide. He had wealth. He had intellect. He had talent. He had praise. He had popularity. But he didn't have Jesus Christ. I want to tell you, we're not a colony of ants on a burning log; we're children of the King. We're royal bluebloods; we're somebody. And *“[God's] Spirit...beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God”* (Romans 8:16)—satisfaction in Jesus.

Not to want something is just as good as owning it. As a matter of fact, it's better, because you don't have to maintain it. Uncle Bud Robertson—Robertson was a Nazarene preacher; he'd always preached in country churches. One day, they took him to New York City. He'd never been to New York City. He was tongue-tied—talked with a lisp—and he went to New York City—Times Square, all of those places; saw all of those things. Finally, he got back to his hotel room that night, and he got down by his bedside, and he knelt in prayer, and he said, “Lord, I thank you that you let me see all of these things.” Then he said, “Lord, most of all, I thank you that I didn't see a single thing I

wanted.” Amen? Amen? *“Be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:15).

John Muir was a naturalist. He wasn’t a wealthy man, but he was a contented man. He was talking one day with a multi-millionaire—a railroad magnate—and he said to this man, “Mr. Harriman, I am richer than you are.” And the railroader said, “And how is that?” John Muir said to him, “Because you have millions of dollars, and you are not content. But I have enough. Therefore I’m richer than you are.”

Now you think about that. You see, listen. The cure for covetousness is, number one, a commitment to Christ, who alone can give you a new heart, who alone can change that old covetous nature. Secondly, a contentment in Christ: to find out the riches that we have in Christ. That’s where it is, folks; that’s where it is.

*Friends all around me are trying to find
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;
I have the secret; I know where 'tis found:
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

*Jesus is all this poor world needs today.
Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way.
O to draw back the grim curtains of night,
One glimpse of Jesus and all will be bright!*

—HARRY D. LOES

C. A Containment of Christ

But let me say, thirdly, and finally, not only must there be a commitment to Christ, not only must there be a contentment in Christ, but there must be a containment of Christ. You see, when I commit to Christ, He commits to me, and He comes into me. And when He comes into me, He gives me a new nature. And then, do you know what He starts to do? When I contain Him, He starts to love you through me. And it’s not me loving you. It’s Jesus loving you. For the Bible says, *“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 5:5).

Now, draw up your chair and listen. You can never ever love anybody, and covet anything they have. Now, you think about it. Have you ever seen parents who were covetous of their dear beloved children? the children’s wealth, the children’s success, the children’s happiness? No. You say, “I’m so happy you’re happy.” Why? Because they love those children. And, my dear friend, when you contain the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus throws His love into you, and puts His love into you, and you begin to contain Him and love other people, you won’t find yourself coveting your neighbor’s house, your neighbor’s wife, your neighbor’s servants—because Christ in you makes a difference.

And what a difference! What a difference!

Conclusion

Why don't you let Jesus Christ transform your life? Why don't you let Him give you a brand new life?

I heard a story once. There was a man who met a tall sinister figure, and this sinister figure promised this man all of the property, all of the land, that he could possibly encircle in a day. The man took the sinister man at his word, and so he was early up the next day, and before the sun had appeared on the horizon he was ready to go as soon as the sun peeked. This man started on his journey, putting his feet down, saying, "This is mine; this is mine; and this is mine," and on and on he went. The noonday sun came up in this heat. This man would not stop for food; he would not stop for water. Greed had eaten him up; covetousness had infected him. A friend said, "Turn aside and rest a while." Another said, "Stop and eat." Another said, "Stop and drink." But he would not stop. Finally, he ripped his blouse from his chest, and he's going on further in the heat, stretching himself out. His goal is out there in front of him. The sun is setting out there in the west—just one more step, just one more step, just one more step—and finally he reaches his goal—and he falls dead. And he has all of the ground he can cover: a burial plot, six-by-two, and that's it.

Remind you of anyone you know? "More! I want this! I want that! Oh, I've got to get this! I've got to get that! The sun is setting on me!" Friend, "What should it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? and what should a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). This world cannot satisfy. It's not that it's too big; it's too small. You will need God, and you will never find satisfaction until you find it in Jesus Christ.

The Way to Worship

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 27, 1986

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:1–6

Outline

Introduction

- I. A Proper Conception of God is Necessary for Worship
- II. A Proper Conception of God is Necessary for Persuasive Communication with God
- III. A Proper Conception of God is Necessary for a Prayerful Contemplation of God
 - A. God Desires Worship
 - B. God Deserves Worship
 - C. God Demands Worship

Conclusion

Introduction

The title of my message is “The Way to Worship.” I want you to take your Bibles and turn the page to Exodus 20:1–6: *“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.”*

I. A Proper Conception of God is Necessary for Worship

Man, by nature; man, by instinct; and man, by creation, needs to worship. No one is ever born an atheist; he has to be taught to be an atheist. A man can only become an atheist by committing spiritual and moral suicide with his spiritual and moral faculties. Man’s desire to worship God is as instinctive as breathing. Now we’re reading the Commandments. The First Commandment tells us that we are to worship the Lord God and have no other gods. The Second Commandment tells us how we are to worship. The First Commandment forbids false gods, and the Second Commandment forbids false worship. I want us to think about worshiping God, because you cannot learn to do anything more important than to worship God. Some churches think that assuring that

people are saved is the most important thing. It is not. Worshiping God is the most important thing.

Do you know why we get saved? So we can worship God. That's why people get saved. The bottom line is not the salvation of souls. The bottom line is the glory of God: the worship of God, knowing God, loving God, and serving God. Now in these verses we see the importance of a proper conception of God. Now the Bible says, in verse 4, "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image*" (Exodus 20:4). You cannot worship God until you have a proper conception of God. You must know God to worship God. The reason that a graven image is so wrong is this: it gives you a wrong concept of God. Now a graven image is a physical, material thing; but God is a spiritual person, and so a material thing can never adequately represent the spiritual God. Jesus said, in John 4:24, "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" So there is no object, no matter how beautiful it may be, that can represent God.

One of my favorite verses in the entire Bible is in Isaiah 40:25. The verse asks a question. God is speaking. He says, "*To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.*" No matter what your image of God is, it can't be like God, because there is only one God. Therefore there is nothing that can represent that one God. There is nothing to which you can compare Him.

Comparisons are always dangerous. I once heard of a man that was an absolutely out-and-out terrible sinner. He was a drunkard, a gambler, and an adulterer—a profane man. He had a brother, and his brother was also a horrible man. The man died, and his brother went to a preacher. He said to the preacher, "I want you to perform the funeral for my dead brother." The preacher replied, "Well, I'll do it." The brother then said, "Now there's one thing, preacher, that I want you to do. Some time during the funeral I want you to call my brother a saint." The preacher explained, "I just couldn't do that." The brother then said, "Now, listen. If you will do it, then I'll donate 500,000 dollars for your building program." The preacher said, "I'll pray about it." When the preacher arrived at the funeral, the dead man was in the casket. The preacher looked down at the casket and said to the people sitting in the pews, "I want you to know the man in this casket was a drunkard, a gambler, and an adulterer—a profane man; but, compared to his brother, he was a saint." Comparisons are dangerous.

God asked this question: "What are you going to compare me to? What are you going to liken me to?" There is nothing to which you can liken God. There's no kind of image that you could make of anything that would be a good picture of God. And who wants a bad picture of Him in circulation? Now there are people today who do make images. In some of these services you'll find these images and you'll find people bowing down before them. They call themselves Christians. And do you know what they say about that? They say, "Well, these images only remind me of the true God. They are an

aid to worship, because they remind me of the God that I worship. I don't worship the image; the image only causes me to think of the true God."

Suppose that one of you ladies were to come into your home and find your husband embracing another woman, when he found that he'd been caught, he says to you, "Sweetheart, she looks so much like you. She just reminded me of you. Really, while I was embracing her, I was thinking of you, darling." Hey, is that going to satisfy you ladies? I don't think so.

I'm going to tell you something else. When you worship anything other than the true God, it does not satisfy Him. That is the meaning of the phrase here as we read it: "*I the LORD thy God am a jealous God*" (Exodus 20:5)—a jealous God. God is a jealous God.

Now sometimes we have the idea that jealousy is wrong. There is a kind of jealousy that is absolutely wrong. For example, one athlete has no right ever to be jealous of another athlete. I'll tell you why. There are other athletes. One musician has no right to be jealous of another musician, because there are many musicians in the world. No artist ever has the right to be jealous of another artist, because there are many artists. No minister has the right to be jealous of another minister, because he's only one minister among many. But, you see, God has every right to be a jealous God, because there is only one God.

There is a true, a righteous, and a godly jealousy. You see, God made heaven and earth. Put yourself in His place, if you could. Imagine that you are God—that you created everything—and then the people that you created began to worship a frog, a beetle, or a statue; or they are giving worship and priority to money, sports, family, intellect, or denominations. You would have every right to be jealous of that worship. I'll tell you, dear friends, God demands all of our worship. God will not be King for a day. He's not a moonlighting deity with a duplex for a throne. His very nature demands that He be first.

Now I want to say this. When the Bible says we shall not make any graven images, it does not forbid religious art. I have spoken to Muhammad Ali and tried to win him to Jesus Christ. He studies the Islamic faith. He's a Muslim. The verse that I have read to you is the same verse that Ali used to argue against Christianity. He said, "Now, wait a minute. You say that you obey the Bible, and yet," he said, "you make graven images." He said, "You can go into the Evangelical churches—the Christian churches—and you will find pictures on the wall—pictures of the disciples, and angels, and these kinds of things." He said, "Therefore, you break this commandment." I said, "Champ, I want to tell you that the Bible does not forbid religious art. As a matter of fact, the Bible commands religious art."

If you would stay in this book of Exodus, then in just a few chapters you would come to where God commanded Moses to make the tabernacle. God told Moses to make that

veil in the tabernacle, separating the Holy Place from the Most Holy. The temple was to be covered with beautiful embroidered figures. God told Moses how to sculpt and to make cherubim that would guard the angelic cherubs that guard the Ark of the Covenant. Then God told Moses how to make those beautiful golden candlesticks and how to decorate those golden candlesticks. Then God told Moses how to make garments for the high priests. God explained that the hems of those garments were to have bells, pomegranates, and beautiful fruit on them.

We sing about Solomon's temple. How beautiful was Solomon's temple? It was profusely ornamented with open flowers, pomegranates, palm trees, oxen, lions, and cherubim. Was God pleased with it? God said, in 1 Kings 9:3, *"I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually."* God approved what Solomon did, and the temple was adorned with beautiful images. God is saying that man should never make an image to worship, but God is not against religious art. The art is not a means of worship, but a means of education. God is not opposed to beauty and art. But what does all of this say to us? All of this is saying that we must worship God; and in order to worship God, we must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. No graven image can depict God. There must be a proper conception of God.

II. A Proper Conception of God is Necessary for Persuasive Communication with God

Now, secondly, why must there be this proper conception of God? Because, not only is the proper conception of God necessary for worship, but also, it is necessary for persuasive communication with God. Look at verse 5—God says, *"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them,"*—that is, graven images—*"nor serve them:"*—now, watch—*"for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me"* (Exodus 20:5). Do you know that the way you teach children about God is by worship? If you want to communicate God to your children, then you communicate God by the way you worship. False worship corrupts the minds of those who observe it being done.

Now when God says that the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those that hate me, what God is talking about here is false worship. False worship is a horrible, heinous, hateful iniquity. But not only does it corrupt a person who does it; it also corrupts the generations that follow. When the Bible says that God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, God does not mean that the children are held guilty for their father's sin. God is not talking about the guilt. God is talking about the results. What God is saying here is—and I want you to pay attention—a man's great-grandchildren will reap the horrible results of his false worship.

Listen. A man's great-grandchildren will reap the horrible results of his horrible worship.

I want you to do what I'm going to do. Put your bookmark right here in Exodus 20, and I want you to turn to 2 Chronicles 26. I want to give you an illustration of what I'm talking about. This is one of the most heartbreaking stories in the entire Bible. In 2 Chronicles 26:16, it speaks of a king—an episode in the life of a great man. His name was Uzziah. In 2 Chronicles 26:16–21, it speaks of King Uzziah, and the Bible says, *“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God.”* And now, notice verse 19: *“Then Uzziah was wrath,”*—that means he was angry—*“and had a censer in his hand to burn incense:”*—now a censer is a thing that holds incense so you can keep it on fire—*“and while he was wrath with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.”* Now, notice verse 21: *“And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.”*

Now I want you to learn a lesson. King Uzziah was basically a good man, but he made a terrible mistake. He tried—he endeavored—to worship God in a wrong way. And when he endeavored to worship God in a wrong way, the result was God's judgment was laid upon him. Now he never went back into the house of the Lord. Later, he had a son named Jotham. I want you to look now in chapter 27:1–2. I want you to see what happened to the son of this man who worshiped in a wrong way. Chapter 27:1–2: *“Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem... And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD,”*—all right, here's a good boy—*“according to all that his father Uzziah did:”*—but now, watch it—*“howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly”* (2 Chronicles 27:1–2).

Now this is a very interesting thing. Doubtless, this man Jotham remembered the unpleasant feelings and experiences of his father. I'm certain that his father, who was very angry and had his feelings hurt, discussed all of this at home. By the way, many children have been turned off of church because, when they go home on Sunday

morning, they have roast preacher, or roast deacon, or roast Sunday School teacher for lunch. Kids sit there and listen to that. Now here was a boy whose father was hurt in church. Here was a boy whose father had tried to worship God in a false way. He was repudiated, and God judged his father. Yet this boy was a good boy. He loved God, but he did not have the influence that he ought to have had.

Now there is Uzziah the father, Jotham the son, and now I want you to see Ahaz the grandson. Notice, if you will now, in chapter 27, verse 9: *“And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead”* (2 Chronicles 27:9). Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz.

Well, what was Ahaz like? Ahaz was an enthusiastic servant of Satan. Look, if you will now, in chapter 28:1–2: *“Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not do that which was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father: for he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim”* (2 Chronicles 28:1–2). Here now is a man who is worshipping a demon idol god. Look, if you will, in chapter 28:24: *“And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem”* (2 Chronicles 28:24). Now here is a man who is worshipping false gods. He is a demon-inspired servant of Satan, and he nailed the church doors shut.

Let’s go on. His dad had no use for spiritual worship, so why should he? But we’re not finished yet. I want you to look in 2 Chronicles 28:3. Here is the saddest thing of it all. The Scripture speaks of Ahaz, and it says, *“Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.”* Do you know what the heathen would do? In order to appease their fire god, Molech, they would take their precious little babies to that fire—that god, that demon god, that idol. The god would have a great fire burning in his belly, and the priest would beat the drums. Then they would take the little baby and cast that baby into the molten belly, the fire, of that demon god. That little life would be consumed by the same demon that’s inspiring people today to murder their little babies in their womb. That little baby would be consumed.

Now, you watch it. Here was a good man who got his feelings hurt in church: Uzziah. Here was his son, who just didn’t go to church anymore. He loved God, but now, because of a church fuss, he’s not going back. He thinks that he can make it without public worship. But then here is a grandson who becomes a servant of Satan, and here is a great-grandson sacrificed to a demon god. *“I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me”* (Exodus 20:5). Dear friend, there is nothing more corruptive than false worship. Failing to worship God as we ought to worship God: what a terrible,

horrible thing it is!

This is the law of sowing and reaping. But I want to tell you something. For the law of sowing and reaping, thank God—because He works both ways: you sow to the Spirit, and you'll reap to the Spirit. I think of another young man. His name was Timothy. He became a mighty preacher of the Word of God, and the Apostle Paul said of him, in 2 Timothy 1:5–6, *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”* Isn't that wonderful? “First, the Spirit dwelt in your grandmother, then in your mother, and now in you.” Thank God for that.

Hey, I want to ask you a question. When should we start training children for God? When they're fifteen? “Oh no, pastor!” You say that's too late? You're right. When they're ten? “No, pastor; that's too late.” When they're five? “No, pastor; that's too late.” When they're a year old? “No, pastor; that's too late.” When they're three months old? “No, pastor; that's too late.” When they're first born? “No, that's too late.” Start training children for God with their great-grandparents. That's when to start. That's when to start training a child for God. I want to be training my little unborn grandchildren right now, by worshiping God and praising God.

The Bible says, *“The generation of the upright shall be blessed”* (Psalm 112:2). I want the faith that's in me to be in my daughter and to be in my grandchildren. I want, dear friend, the love of God that's in my home to go on down. *“I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me”* (Exodus 20:5).

III. A Proper Conception of God is Necessary for a Prayerful Contemplation of God

Why does God say not to make any graven image? Number one: You must have a proper conception of God to worship. And when you have a proper conception of God, you're going to have a persuasive communication with God. Now there's a third thing I want us to look at tonight, and then we'll be finished. This proper conception of God that leads to a powerful persuasion of God is really a prayerful contemplation of God. I want you to go back, if you will now, to our text, and look at verse 6. God says, in verse 6, “I am a God that shows mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:6). Now, friend, when you see a commandment, if it is a negative commandment, then remember that it has a positive with it. If it is a positive commandment, then understand that it has a negative with it. You see, when God condemns false worship, at the same time, true worship is in the commandment.

For example, if I were to say, “You don't stay outside,” that's a negative, isn't it? Well

then, if you don't stay outside, then what must you do? Come inside, right? You see, every negative has a positive. When I say, "Don't worship God in a false way," then that means that you must worship God in a right way. You see, "Don't worship graven images" means, "Worship God in spirit and in truth." "Don't stay outside" does mean to come inside.

Now, what is worship? Worship is practicing the understanding of who God is. He's the God of mercy. He's the God of covenant. He's the God that keeps His word. We are to contemplate Him. That's what worship is: it is the prayer contemplation of God. Now, why is worship of such supreme importance? I give you now just three reasons, and I'll be finished.

A. God Desires Worship

Number one: God desires it. Jesus said, in John 4:23, "*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.*" The great heart of God desires worship. Do you want to please God? Do you know what pleases God more than anything else? Worship. God's heart desires your worship.

I want to tell you something wonderful. Believe it or not, there are some people who can sing better than I can. As a matter of fact, I tried to sing a solo one time, and the people in the deaf ministry here put their hands on their eyes. There are people here who can give more money than I can give. There may be people here who can teach or preach better than I, but I want to tell you something: There *ain't* nobody here who can love God more than I can or more than you can. Isn't that wonderful? You see, in this respect, we're all equals. Isn't that beautiful? Some may be able to out-sing, out-preach, out-teach, out-think, or out-give, but none of us can out-love one another. See, it's just a wide open field. We can love God, every one of us, just as much as we want. Isn't that beautiful? That's the thing that God desires more than anything else. God desires that more than our music. God desires that more than our study. God desires that more than our giving. It is the love that God desires. God desires it.

B. God Deserves Worship

Now, let me give you another reason. God does not only desire it, but God also deserves it. Do you know from where we get our word *worship*? It comes from *worth ship*. You see, we say, in Revelation, "Worthy is the lamb to receive honor, and glory, and dominion" (Revelation 5:12).

C. God Demands Worship

But I want to say that not only does God desire it, and God deserves it, but God also demands it. Jesus said, in Matthew 4:10, "*Worship the Lord your God, and serve him*

only.” Now, no matter what else you do, if you don’t worship, then you fail. Coming to church is not worship. Worship may be, for you, just a spectator sport. People can worship all around you, but nobody can worship for you. Worship comes before work. Worship cannot be substituted with service. It must come first. Are you going to worship the Lord? I mean, really worship?

Conclusion

This Stradivarius violin belonged to a very wealthy Englishman. Fritz Kreisler, a master violinist, had heard about that violin, and he tried to buy it. The Englishman who didn’t need money said, “It is not for sale.” One day, Fritz Kreisler called upon him, and he said, “Sir, may I just see it? May I touch it? May I hold it?” And the wealthy Englishman said, “Yes, you may play it.” Fritz Kreisler tucked it under his chin and began to play. You could hear the angels sing. You could hear the birds in the trees. You could hear the laughter of little children in the streets. You could hear those great strings of music as they swept across the strings and those melodies that came out. The Englishman sat there. Great tears began to course down his cheeks. Fritz Kreisler played for twenty minutes uninterrupted. Then he saw the Englishman crying. He said, “I’m sorry. Forgive me. I just wanted to play it. Won’t you sell it to me?” The Englishman replied, “No, I will not. But I will give it to you. I will give it to you, because you’re the only one worthy of it. You’re the master, and it belongs to you.”

Friend, I want to tell you that the only one worthy of my life is Jesus, and I give it to Him. I give it to Him, and it is only as I give it to Him that He can take my life and do what only the Master can do. Why worship our God? He desires it. He deserves it. He demands it. *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit”* (John 4:24).

Leading Family Worship

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 30, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:4–5

Outline

Introduction

- I. A Proper Conception of God
 1. He Is Spiritual, and the Material Can Never Represent the Spiritual
 2. He Is in a Class and Category All by Himself, So Any Idol Is a Bad Picture of God
 3. God Is a Jealous God
 4. An Idol Is Anything We Love More Than God
 - a. Yourself
 - b. Money
 - c. The Family
 - d. Popularity
 - e. Pleasure/Sex/Sports
 - II. A Persuasive Communication of God
- Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding Exodus chapter 20. When you've found it, look up here. We're talking today about the Ten Commandments: "A Perfect Ten for Homes That Win." God does not want your home to be a loser. Let me say this about the Ten Commandments: The Ten Commandments are not arbitrary; they're universal.

Now we have some laws in America that are arbitrary. One of them says you drive on the right side of the road. One time, in England, I missed a plane connection and had to rent an automobile. I'd never driven over there. Those folks over there drive on the wrong side of the road, but they say it's the right side. They say we're wrong. That's all arbitrary. Really, it doesn't make much difference what side of the road you drive on: if everybody agrees where you are, that's what you're going to be doing.

The Ten Commandments, however, are not arbitrary; they're universal. And they're not temporary; they're eternal. We don't need a new morality for a new age; the old one is settled by the Word of God. And, in the truest sense, you don't break the Ten Commandments; they stand. When a man jumps out of a ten-story building, it doesn't break the law of gravity; he demonstrates it. And when you transgress God's commandments, you don't really break them; you are broken on them. But when you stand upon them, and build upon them, then they become to you strength.

Now, today, we're dealing with the Second Commandment. The First Commandment tells us whom to worship: no other gods. The Second Commandment tells us how to worship. The First Commandment forbids false gods. The Second Commandment forbids false worship. Now, what does this have to do with the family? Well, friend, the greatest gift you can give to your children, beyond a shadow of any doubt or peradventure, the greatest gift—are you listening?—is to teach them to worship. Hello? The greatest gift—listen—the greatest gift you can give your children is to teach them to worship. You couldn't teach them anything any greater than that.

And yet, how many children today learn to worship in the home? You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, we come to church to worship." Well, friend, it will do you little good to come to church and act pious around the Lord's Table if you've been bickering around the breakfast table. *The worship that does not begin at home does not begin.* The greatest gift you can give your children is to teach them to worship.

Now these commandments are given to fathers and mothers to teach their children. And here's what Exodus chapter 20, verse 4, says: "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers unto the children of the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments*" (Exodus 20:4–5). How important it is, therefore, that we keep His commandments—and this one that says there shall be no false worship!

Now this is set in the negative, but anything that is in the negative has to have a positive—or it could not be a negative. For every positive, there is a negative; for every negative, there is a positive. And when I tell you not to do the negative, that means you must do the positive. For example, if I say, "Don't stay outside," what does that mean? "Come inside." You see, you cannot obey the negative—"Don't stay outside"—without obeying the positive—"Come inside." And when the Bible forbids false worship, it is an injunction for true worship. And so, no matter how you look at these commandments, whether they are negative or positive, they arrive at the same conclusion, rightly understood. And every one of them, rightly understood, is a positive commandment.

And all of the commandments are positive. *Every time* God says "*Thou shalt*" *He's just saying, "Help yourself to* happiness *"And every time* God says, "*Thou shalt not,*" *He's saying, "Don't hurt yourself."* These are wonderful rules, wonderful laws, for all time, eternal and universal. And, today, we're talking about learning family worship.

Fritz Kreisler was one of the greatest violinists of all time. He had a violin. It was a Stradivarius violin. There are only a few Stradivarius violins in the world. Let me tell you how he got it. The violin that Fritz Kreisler played belonged at one time to a wealthy

Englishman. Fritz Kreisler learned about the violin and tried to buy it. The Englishman said, “It is not for sale.” Kreisler, once upon a time, went to visit that Englishman and very humbly said, “Could I just touch it? Could I just touch it?” And the Englishman said, “All right, touch it.” And Kreisler took a little advantage, and he tucked it under his chin and began to draw the bow across those strings. And when Fritz Kreisler began to play that violin, you could hear the laughter of children in the street. You could hear birds singing. You could just hear the music of the spheres. The old Englishman listened for a while, and then great tears began to course down his cheeks. When Fritz Kreisler realized he’d pushed it a little far by taking that violin into his hands, he apologized. He said, “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have done that. I just wanted to play it. I wish you would sell it to me.” The Englishman said, “No, it is not for sale. But it is yours. You may have it. It belongs to you. You are the master. It doesn’t belong to me; it belongs to you.”

Friend, I want to say, likewise, God is the only one who is worthy of your life. It belongs to Him—for no one else. And you must give your heart, your life, and all that you have to Him in worship. And you must teach your children to worship.

Now, let’s look at this command here a little more carefully and see if we can make some applications to our lives here.

I. A Proper Conception of God

First of all, this command tells us there must be a proper conception of God, because if you conceive of God wrongly, you’re going to behave wrongly. I want you to take your Bibles and turn over here to Psalm 115 and look at what God says about those who worship idols. He says, “*Their idols are silver and gold,*”—this is verse 4; Psalm 115, verse 4—“*the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not: they have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not: they have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.*” Now he’s describing the stupidity, the silliness, of worshiping anything but Almighty God. And then he says this in verse 8: “*They that make them are like unto them*” (Psalm 115:4–8). First, the family molds the idol; and then, the idol molds the family. Think about it. We become like what we worship.

1. He Is Spiritual, and the Material Can Never Represent the Spiritual

So it is so very important that we have a proper conception of God—not just any god. We must understand who God is, and what God is like. And, therefore, God has absolutely forbidden the making of anything material as an object of worship. Why? Because God is not a material God; He is spiritual. The Bible tells us, in John chapter 4, verse 24, that, “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). It literally says that God is Spirit—not a *spirit*; He *is Spirit*. That is His essence. God is Spirit, and to worship Him, we must worship Him in spirit and truth.

So what material thing can represent spirit? God *is like a circle whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere*. I mean, how would you describe a God like that? How would you image a God like that? You cannot do it. And so we are forbidden to try to make anything material and say, “This is what God is like.”

Here’s a verse I want you to put in your margin—Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 25: “*To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One*” (Isaiah 40:25). “*To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.*” You’ll make a big mistake if you say God is compared to anything. I mean, what are you going to say God is like? I can say one man is like another man. One piano is like another piano. One pulpit is like another pulpit. One suit is like another suit. There’s only one God, so there’s nothing else to compare Him to. God says, “You can’t compare me to anything.”

2. He Is in a Class and Category All by Himself, So Any Idol Is a Bad Picture of God

Number one: He is spiritual, and the material can never represent the spiritual. And, number two: He is in a class and a category all by Himself, so any idol is a bad picture of God. And who wants a bad picture of himself or herself in circulation?

When we get the pictures back from the photomat, we look at them. If there’s one that really is not very good one of us, we want to tear it up. If there’s one that makes us look better than we are, we want to keep that one. And, you know, a good photographer says, “Where there’s beauty, we take it; where there’s none, we make it.” Nobody wants a bad picture of himself. But the Bible speaks of people who have changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man (Romans 1:23).

Now we all have a desire to worship something. Nature abhors a vacuum. Man is incurably religious, and if he doesn’t worship the true God in the right way, he’s going to worship something else. Do you know what an idol is? An idol is a magnified sinner. What a man does is he takes his worst vices and makes gods out of them. And so the gods of the pagans represent lust and greed and war and vengeance—that’s what all of these idols are. Men take their worst vices and make gods out of them; and then they worship those vices, and legitimize that vice. Pretty neat, huh?

For example, Baal was a pagan god; he was a fertility god. And so, since they wanted to fornicate, they just said, “Well, the way we worship our god is through fornication and adultery.” Pretty slick! And what they had done is just to take their vices, magnify their vices, worship their vices; and then they legitimized their vices. That’s the reason that idolatry is such a horrible thing.

Now there are some people who say, “Well, what I do is not really idolatry, but I have a statue,” or, “I have an image; I have an icon; I have something that just reminds me so much of God that I venerate that statue. I venerate that image because it reminds me so much of God. It just really helps me to worship the true God.”

Well, ladies, I want to ask you a question. Suppose you happen upon your husband in a room somewhere, and he had a woman in his arms, kissing her? And then he looks over out of the corner of his eye, and he sees you. He says, “Oh, sweetheart, how are you? Come in. I’m glad to see you. I know you think I ought not to be doing this, but I want to tell you, this woman was so beautiful and so gorgeous she reminded me of you. And I was really just thinking of you, darling, and that’s why I was doing this. You see, she reminds me of you.”

I don’t know how many women in this congregation would buy that, but I think very few. This helps us to understand something of the jealousy of God. This is the reason this text says, “*I the LORD thy God am a jealous God*” (Exodus 20:5).

3. God Is a Jealous God

Now a wrong kind of jealousy is a terrible thing. But look, if you will, in verse 5: “*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous god*” (Exodus 20:5).

Now we think of jealousy as a green-eyed monster. And wrong jealousy is indeed that. But there is a holy jealousy—a holy jealousy, a righteous jealousy. Now you and I, in most of our jealousy, have no right to that jealousy. For example, we had two young people who stood here and sang just a few moments ago, and that was beautiful. But if you’re a singer, you have no right to be jealous of their voice, because you don’t own music. One athlete has no right to be jealous of another athlete; one preacher has no right to be jealous of another preacher—because we don’t own athletics; we don’t own preaching. But God has every right to be jealous of who He is, because there’s only one God—only one, not two. He has a monopoly on being God. He has a holy jealousy, and He is a jealous God.

4. An Idol Is Anything We Love More Than God

Now there are all kinds of false idols. Very frankly, we in America today don’t make idols of gold and silver and wood. There are some like that around. Most Americans don’t make those kinds of idols, but the Bible also speaks of the idolatry of the heart. And, for example, it says covetousness is idolatry (Colossians 3:5). It speaks of those who have set up gods in their heart. And I just want to mention some of these—and we’re not going to bear down on these, but just mention them.

a. Yourself

For example, you can make an idol of yourself. And, by the way, that is *the* greatest idolatry *right now in* America: me-ism. *We’ve gone from* theology *to* me-ology. Have you noticed that? that we’re worshipping the creature? And the Bible prophesies the last days, in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 2, where people will be “*lovers of their own selves*” (2 Timothy 3:2). Now anything *that you* love *more*, fear *more*, serve *more than*

God *is an* idol. Anything you love more, serve more, fear more than God is an idol. The Bible speaks of those who are “*lovers of their own selves.*”

b. Money

Others have made a god of money. The reason that some won't come to church is they say, “All they want down there is their money.” But the truth of the matter is it's all that he wants is his money. I mean, his god is greed; his creed: “Get all you can, can all you get, sit on the lid, and poison the rest.” He worships the almighty dollar. But Jesus said, “*Ye cannot serve God and mammon*” (Matthew 6:24). You just can't do it. Either God is God, or money is god. And there are so many who worship money.

c. The Family

There are some who worship the family. Rather than being in church on Sunday night or Sunday morning, they are out with family affairs. And they say, “Well, after all, God gave me this family, and I am going to put my family first.” You will make a terrible mistake if you put your family first. Jesus said, “*He that loveth father and mother more than me is not worthy of me*” (Matthew 10:37). The best thing you can do for your family is not to put them first. Joyce doesn't mind being second place in my heart, and she is second place. God is first place. You say, “Oh, you ought to love her better than that.” Friend, I love her so much more because God is first place in my heart and in my life. I love her with a love He has given me that I could not love her with if God were not first in my heart and in my life. Don't make a god of your family. Our Lord warned against making a god of your family.

d. Popularity

We've got the gods of popularity. I believe that there are some mothers today who would let their daughters spend a weekend in hell if they thought it would make them more popular. John chapter 12 and verse 42: “*Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue*” (John 12:42). What does that mean? It means there were some who said, “I really believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, but I'm not going to make it public, because, if I make it public, it is going to hurt my associations. I want to be well thought of.” There are some of you who may be sitting in this building today who ought to come down one of these aisles openly and publicly, and take a stand for Jesus Christ, and follow Him in the water of believer's baptism, but your god is the opinions of other people, and you love and fear the opinions of people more than you love and fear God.

e. Pleasure/Sex/Sports

Of course, in our sex-saturated society, anybody can look around and see that we've made a god of pleasure, and a god of sex. Some have made a god of sports. I'm amazed how Sunday has become *fun day*, and the stadiums now are filled. Our

forefathers would never have thought about that. We're going to be talking about that when we get to that commandment that says, "*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy*" (Exodus 20:8).

I'm not against sports. Michael Jordan has recently come back to professional basketball. We ought not to use the word *great* carelessly, but, folks, I want to tell you that man is a great athlete—I mean, a *great* athlete, any way you cut it. He can do things that, when I watch it, it defies physics. I mean, I don't see how that happens. He is an incredibly great athlete. And I'm not against that, and I give him all the praise that is due to a man. He has earned it. But I was a little saddened as I read some of the hype about him coming back into basketball. Little kids were saying, "Now I have hope again." Some sportswriters were likening that unto the Second Coming.

You know what's wrong with us today, friend? We have too many idols and too few heroes. We need to be teaching our kids again about heroes. We made a god of pleasures. The Bible speaks of those who are "*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*" (2 Timothy 3:4). Where have all of the heroes gone? And where did all these idols come from: sex idols, and sports idols, and all of these other things?

II. A Persuasive Communication of God

Now, first of all, there must be a proper conception of God. "*God is a spirit:*"—God is Spirit—"*and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). But, secondly, with that conception of God must come that communication of God. And that's where you come in, parents. It's not enough for you to have theological exactitude. It's not enough for you to write down in your notes. Yes, "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24), but how does that play out in your family? How are you teaching your children about the worship of God? Again, I say, the greatest thing you can do for your children—the greatest thing—is to teach them to worship.

Now wrong worship is the worst thing you can do, and that's the reason God puts this great warning here. Listen to what He says in verse 4. He says, "There must be the proper conception." But now, in verse 5, He says there must be the proper communication: "*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*" (Exodus 20:5). False worship is iniquitous; it corrupts the minds. And the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation: not the guilt of the fathers, but the result of the father's guilt is visited upon the children.

I want to give you an example of what I'm talking about—how it is that your worship will go on down to your children, your grandchildren, and your great grandchildren. The

way you worship has a result that will last on and on and on, after you are gone. We're going to do a little Bible study this morning in the Old Testament. I want you to see something. I want you to see what happened to a man named Uzziah. And if you would, just take your Bibles and turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 26. Let me just show you this. It's worth turning to. It's an amazing thing here in the Old Testament—2 Chronicles chapter 26 and verse 16.

Now, here was a man who basically was a good man: King Uzziah. But King Uzziah one day decided he would worship God in a way that was forbidden to worship God. And look, if you will, in 2 Chronicles 26 and verse 16: *"But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense"* (2 Chronicles 26:16). Now I'm not going to tell you why that was so wrong, but it was wrong. What King Uzziah did was absolutely wrong. He was worshiping the true God in the wrong way. Then, skip on down to verse 21 of that same chapter. The Bible says, *"For he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house"* (2 Chronicles 26:21). Now, here's Uzziah; he's worshiping God the wrong way. He loves God, but he did something that was very wrong, and gave a wrong conception and a wrong picture of God.

Now he has a son, Jotham—this is his son. And what was Jotham like? Well, Jotham said, "I'm not going into the Temple anymore." Look, if you will, in 2 Chronicles 27, verse 1, now: *"Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem."* Now, look in 2 Chronicles 27, verse 2: *"And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all his father Uzziah did:"*—Uzziah was a good man; Jotham was a good man—*"howbeit..."*—now if you just don't mind marking your Bible, just put a circle around that—*"howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD"* (2 Chronicles 27:1–2).

Here was a dad who stopped going to church, and here was a son who said, "You know, I can love God without going to church." Do you ever hear that? "I can love God without going to church. Hey, let's go down to the lake this Sunday. Kids, get the Bible: we're going to have Sunday School and fishing. We're going to have a wonderful time. We don't need to go down there to Bellevue. I mean, God is everywhere. Come on, kids." Sounds all right—yeah. So here is King Uzziah; he's worshiping God the wrong way. There's a church fuss over it. So Uzziah says, "Well, I don't have to go to church anymore." Jotham says, "Sounds like a good idea to me, Dad." So *"He entered not into the temple of the LORD."* Now father and son.

Now, what about the grandson? Go to 2 Chronicles 27 and verse 9: *"And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead"* (2 Chronicles 27:9). Uzziah worshiped God the wrong way. Jotham said,

“Well, I don’t have to go to church to worship God.” Now along comes Ahaz, and what was Ahaz like? Well, look in 2 Chronicles 28, verse 2: *“For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim”* (2 Chronicles 28:2). He became a pagan idolater. Uzziah loved God, but worshiped the wrong way. Jotham loved God, but wouldn’t go to church. Ahaz, Uzziah’s grandson, begins to worship a false god. Second Chronicles chapter 28, verse 24: *“And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God,”*—now there was one grandfather who just didn’t go to church. Here is a grandson who is tearing the church down—*“and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD”* (2 Chronicles 28:24). Well, his father had no use for the house of God, so why should he?

Now he takes the holy vessels and cuts them in pieces, and nails the door of a church house shut. But it’s not over yet. Look in 2 Chronicles 28 and verse 3: *“Moreover he”—Ahaz—“burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel”* (2 Chronicles 28:3). What does it mean—*“He...burnt his children in the fire”*? They had a molten god named Molech, and they would take their little children and put their little children into the belly of that god, which was a furnace of fire, and cremate their little children, screaming alive. “Oh,” you say, “nobody would kill little babies.” Hello? Pagan. Here was a dad who worshiped God the wrong way. Here was his son who loved God but saw no need for the church. Here was his grandson, a pagan, nailing up the doors of the house of God. Here were his great-grandsons sacrificed to a pagan god. *“I am the LORD thy God...visiting the iniquity of the fathers unto the sons of the third and fourth generation of them that hate me”* (Exodus 20:2–5).

We have Mr. Pott sitting in our congregation, this morning—a godly man who holds a high government job in Washington, in the Department of Ethics. His grandfather helped found Bellevue Baptist Church, and there he sits. Would you stand, sir? Just give him a hand. All right, that is the generation of the righteous. Here’s a grandfather, and a father, and a grandson; and he’s surrounded by his family. They love God.

Listen to me, my folks—listen to me. We have something that is very, very wrong in America today. It is this philosophy: “It doesn’t matter what you do, as long as no one else gets hurt.” Have you heard that? Have you heard that? If you haven’t heard that, you’ve been Rip Van Winkle. “It doesn’t matter what you do, as long as nobody else gets hurt.” Come up close—I’m going to tell you something: Nobody on the face of this earth has ever sinned one time without somebody else getting hurt. Nobody ever sins by himself. There is no such thing as a solo sin. Sin never hurts just one person. We’re bound up in our humanity together. Sin never hurts just one person. Understand that. And the most hideous result of sin is its effect on the sinner’s children.

But I want to turn that around. Let me say something wonderful: that the law of

sowing and reaping reaps for good, too. You know, one of my life verses is, *“The generation of the upright shall be blessed”* (Psalm 112:2). And, friend, I’m not just living for my children; I’m living for my grandchildren, my great-grandchildren, and their children. And I’m holding God to that, and I want them to say, “There was a man—my great granddaddy—I never knew him, but he loved God. My mom and my granddaddy loved God. And my mama loves God, and I love God.” Second Timothy 1, verses 5 and 6—Paul said to Timothy, *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also”* (2 Timothy 1:5).

A woman came to her pastor. She said, “Pastor, when should I begin the spiritual training of my child? when he’s five years old?” The pastor said, “No.” “When he’s three years old?” “No.” “When he’s three months old?” He said, “No.” “Well, when shall I begin?” The pastor said, “With his grandparents—with his grandparents: ‘the faith that was first in your grandmother, and now in your mother, and now in you.’”

Don’t you want your grandchildren to love God? Oh, how important it is that we teach our families to worship! True worship is commanded, and I wish I had more time to talk with you about true worship. But let me say this. God deserves it. As we’ve learned, the word *worship* comes from *worth-ship*. God desires it: *“The Father seeketh such”* (John 4:23). God demands it: *“Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only”* (Matthew 4:10).

Conclusion

Parents, look at me. I’m asking you a question. Do you worship the one true God? Do you worship Him in spirit and in truth? Do your children know that you love Him more than anything else? I’ve got four kids, and one thing they know is they know their dad is not perfect; they know it. But I’ll tell you something else they know—and all four of them will tell you—that dad is not a phony. He loves God—he loves God. And they know that He is number one. And I’m telling you—O God, help me to tell it—the best thing you can do for your kids is not to give them a college education, or leave them a legacy, but it’s to teach them to worship God.

Leading Family Worship

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 30, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:4–5

Outline

Introduction

- I. A Proper Conception of God
- II. A Persuasive Communication of God
- III. A Prayerful Celebration of God

Conclusion

Introduction

We're studying these commandments under the title "A Perfect Ten for Homes That Win." God does not want your home to be a failure, and your home can never succeed apart from the holy commandments of God. Believe me, there is no possible way that you can have a successful home apart from these commandments. These commandments are not arbitrary. That is, they are for all people, at all times, and universally applicable.

Now we have some laws that are arbitrary. For example, in the United States, we drive on the right side of the road. In England, they drive on the other side—to us, the wrong side. I found that out when I rented a car one time in London and tried to drive to Northern England. Folks, I was prayed up when I got there. That's an incredible experience. But they think we drive on the wrong side of the road. Now it really doesn't make much difference, as long as everybody has agreed as to what side you're to be on. But those laws are arbitrary.

But the Ten Commandments are not arbitrary, and neither are they temporary. They're for all time. They don't need to be revised. They're not mooted. No one can think of an eleventh commandment. Everything is comprised in these Ten Commandments. And, in the truest sense of the word, you disregard them at your own peril.

People talk about breaking the commandments. In reality, you don't break them; they stand. *"For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven"* (Psalm 119:89). We don't break them as much as we're broken on them. When a man jumps out of a ten-story building, he doesn't break the law of gravity; he demonstrates it. And when you transgress God's commandments, you are broken on them. The commandments stand for all time, and they apply primarily, not to the school, not to the government, not to

business—though they do apply to all of these; they apply primarily to the home. Now we need to learn this: they apply primarily to the home. They are a perfect ten for homes that win.

The First Commandment that we talked about last week dealt with the *who* of worship, but the commandment today deals with the *how* of worship. The First Commandment forbade false gods. This commandment forbids false worship; and, really, if it forbids false worship, then it enjoins and commands true worship, because every negative has in it a positive, and every positive has in it a negative. You can't have a positive without a negative. You can't have a negative without a positive. And so, when the Bible forbids—as we're going to see—false worship, then it commands true worship. If I say to you, "Don't stay outside," that means, "Come inside," for the only way you cannot stay outside is to come inside. And an injunction against false worship then, as night follows day, it commands true worship.

Listen to me. Listen to God here—not me, but God Himself—in Exodus chapter 20, verse 4: *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me"* (Exodus 20:4–5). Let me tell you something. Beyond the shadow of any doubt, the best thing you can do for your children—beyond the shadow of any doubt—the best thing you can do for your children is to teach them how to worship. Hello? Listen. The best thing, beyond the shadow of any doubt, is to teach them how to worship. The title of our study today is "Learning Family Worship." What a privilege, what a responsibility, to learn family worship, to learn how to worship God together, as a family, because these commands are given primarily to the home!

Some years ago there was an incredibly gifted concert violinist; his name was Fritz Kreisler. Fritz Kreisler had ability like few people ever born to play the violin. He had a Stradivarius violin. A Stradivarius violin is a very rare and beautiful instrument. Let me tell you how he got it. It at one time belonged to an old Englishman. Kreisler heard about it and offered to buy it. The old man said, "The violin is not for sale, sir." Fritz Kreisler was rebuffed. But one day he ventured to the old man's house, and he said, "If I can't buy it, may I touch it?" The old Englishman invited him in. Kreisler picked up that violin, and then he tucked it under his chin and began to draw the bow across the strings. And when he did, you could hear the laughter of little children. You could hear babies crying. You could hear the birds singing in the trees. You could hear the voice of angels. He played, as only the master could play, for about twenty minutes. The old Englishman sat there, and great tears began to well up in his eyes and course down his cheeks. When Kreisler saw that, he thought maybe he'd gone too far. He said, "I'm

sorry, but I would so much like to buy this instrument.” The old Britisher said, “It is not for sale. But it is yours. You may have it. It belongs to you. You are the master. You alone are worthy of it.” That’s what worship is all about. He is the Master, and He alone is worthy of our lives—nothing else!

He alone is worthy, and the very word *worship* means, “worth-ship.” He is worth all that we have and are. And the best thing you can do for your children—beyond the shadow of any doubt—is not a college education, not a legacy in the bank, not vitamin-enriched food—all well and good—but the best thing is to teach them to worship. Why? We become like what we worship. The Bible teaches us that, when a man worships an idol, he becomes like the idol. When we worship God, we become like God. First, the family molds the idol; and then, the idol molds the family. Everybody is going to worship something. Man is incurably religious. Nature abhors a vacuum. How important it is, therefore, that we learn family worship; that we learn to worship as God has commanded.

I. A Proper Conception of God

Three basic things we’re going to see today. First of all, it is our duty, our joy, and our privilege to give our children a proper conception of God—a proper conception of God. If you have a warped conception of God, you’re going to have a warped life. Idolatry, for example, is so wrong, because it gives a warped or false conception of God. An idol is a material thing, and no idol can represent the spiritual God. The Bible tells us, in John 4, verse 24, “*God is...Spirit*”—I know, the King James says “*a Spirit*,” but literally—“*God is...Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (John 2:24).

So what material thing can designate spirit? God is a circle whose center is everywhere, and whose circumference is nowhere. God is Spirit. There is nowhere where God is not, and no material thing can designate God. There’s nothing you can compare God to. There’s nothing that says, “This is what God is totally like.” God asked a question over there in Isaiah chapter 40, verse 25. It’s a good question: “*To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal?*” (Isaiah 40:25). Now we can say one man is like another man; one chair is like another chair; one piano like another piano; one pulpit like another pulpit; one suit like another suit; one fruit like another fruit; but there’s only one God. You can’t compare Him to anything.

That’s the reason why some people have difficulty with the Trinity. They say, “Well, I just don’t understand it.” Well, I wouldn’t have any confidence in a God we could understand. Don’t worry about the Trinity. Don’t ever try to give some illustration that proves the Trinity; you can’t do it. God says. “There is nothing like me—nothing!” So you might—you might—in some way get some weak illustration, but you’ll never find the proof of the Trinity. Somebody’s said, “Try to explain the Trinity, you’ll lose your mind.

Deny it, you'll lose your soul." God says, "What are you going to liken me to? I mean, what kind of an image are you going to liken me to?" And even if you could, even if you could find something that was like God, you ought not to worship it.

Suppose a woman walks into a room, and her husband is in there, and he has another woman in his arms, embracing her. And he sees his wife out of the corner of his eye. "Oh," he says, "wait a minute, honey. Don't get the wrong idea now. Let me tell you what I was doing. This woman is so beautiful she reminded me of you. And so I was really, I was really just, when I was embracing her, I was thinking of you." There's no woman who will buy that in this auditorium, and God won't buy it when you take something else and say, "Oh well, I, yes, I was venerating that; I was worshiping that. But, God, it really just reminded me of you."

That helps us to understand when it says, in verse 5, "*I the LORD thy God am a jealous God*" (Exodus 20:5)—a jealous God.

Now *jealousy* is to us an ugly word. We call jealousy what? The green-eyed monster. But there is a holy jealousy. You see, jealousy can be right or it can be wrong. It all depends on whether it's warranted or not. For example, one athlete has no right to be jealous of another athlete, because he doesn't have a monopoly on athletics. These singers that sang—that was beautiful, wasn't it? Well, none of us have a right to be jealous of them, because we don't have a monopoly on music. I want to tell you something, friend. God has a monopoly on being God. He has cornered the market. There's only one God, and His throne is not a duplex; and He is not a part-time king. He is God, and He is a jealous God. You have no right to worship anything or anybody but Him.

It's so important that we give to our children a proper conception of God. But I want to remind you of something: that all idolatry does not consist of merely sticks and stones. Very frankly, most Americans today don't make graven images; very few of us have some molten god that we worship. But Martin Luther has well said that, "Whatever the heart clings to and relies on, that is your god. Anything you love more than God, anything you fear more than God, anything you serve more than God, anything you value more than God, is, to you, your god."

Did you know that idolatry is the greatest sin—a greater sin than rape or murder? Why? Because the greatest commandment is to love God with all of your heart. That's what Jesus said—to love God with all of your heart (Matthew 22:37–38); and, therefore, idolatry breaks the greatest commandment. It must be the greatest sin. Idolatry is a renunciation of the whole purpose of life. Why did God make us, and why did God set us in families? To love Him. It is in Him that "*we live, and move, and have our being*" (Acts 17:28). That is why we exist.

Now you can have idols in your heart without making them with your hands. In

America, we have made gods of ourselves, and *me-ology* has replaced theology. And Paul warned, in the last days, men would be lovers of themselves more than lovers of God (2 Timothy 3:2).

Some have made a god of money. Many people worship at the shrine of money. Their god is gold. Their creed is greed. Their theology is “get all you can, and can all you get, sit on the lid, and poison the rest.” That’s the way a lot of people are in this world. And, very frankly, they do worship at the shrine of material things. They do. There are people who will not unite with the church, because they think that the church might ask for some of their money. That’s the absolute truth. If you don’t know that, where have you been? The Bible says that covetous people will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10).

Some make a god of the family. You ought to love your family. You ought to adore your family. You ought to sacrifice for your family, but never make a god of your family. The worst thing you could do would be to put your family first. The absolute worst thing you could do would be to put your family first, because whatever is first is god.

My wife knows she is not number one in my life. I know I’m not number one in her life. And I’m glad I’m not, because she loves me with a love that she could not love me with, if I were number one. And, by being number two, I’m loved more that I could ever be if I were number one. Your children will be loved more if God is number one than they can be if they are number one.

Jesus Christ said, “He that loves father or mother, or houses, lands, brothers, sisters more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). That’s what our Lord said. God must be first. To put Him first does not mean that we love our loved ones, our family, less; it means, really, that we love them more. But you can’t make a god out of these things.

Americans have made gods of pleasures. Do you remember what Paul wrote to Timothy about those in the last days who will be “*lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*” (2 Timothy 3:4)? Our sports stadiums, our palaces of pleasure, are filled. There are many who would not be in church this morning because they’ve been down to the casinos last night: poor, pitiful, benighted people, trying so hard to have fun. Now it’s not that you have to choose between God and pleasure. At His right hand are pleasures for evermore (Psalm 16:11), but pleasures cannot come first. If you’re a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God (2 Timothy 3:4), you, sir, are an idolater.

We have a sports-mad world. I was reading about Michael Jordan, recently, coming back to basketball. I’m going to tell you something about Michael Jordan. He’s unique. I mean, you don’t throw the word *great* around lightly. You shouldn’t. He deserves, in the realm of athletics, the accolade *great*. What that man does with a basketball defies physics—incredible! He’s in a class by himself. And he came back to professional

basketball, and the stock market went up; it literally did. It's true, and I don't take that from him. I salute him. I think that's wonderful. But there's a sad part to that: the reaction of some people. You read the newspapers. Little kids were saying something like this: "I have hope again." One sportswriter even talked about it like, he called it "the Second Coming."

You know what's wrong in America today? We have too many idols and not enough heroes. We talk about these sex idols, and these rock stars, and these different kinds of sports idols, and all of that. Where have the heroes gone? Where did we get all of these idols: *"lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God"* (2 Timothy 3:4)? I guess we've deified sex more than anything else in our generation, and the Bible warns against all of this. We're to have a proper conception of God.

Now, let me say this. When the Bible says, "Don't make any graven image" (Exodus 20:4), the Bible is not against religious art. If you believe that, you're going to get yourself in serious trouble. The Bible teaches religious art. The tabernacle was a work of art, and in that tabernacle, in that veil of that temple, were beautifully twined figures; and there over the mercy seat were the cherubs guarding the mercy seat—a representation of angelic beings. When Solomon built the temple, according to the commandments of God, there were images of open flowers, and pomegranates, and palm trees, and oxen, and lions, and cherubim. This commandment is not against art; it's against idolatry.

John Calvin, the great reformer, wrote: "Sculpture and painting are gifts of God." *If art is your master, then you're an idolater. If art is your servant, it becomes ministry.* And God is the Author of beauty. But God hates idolatry. What must we teach our children? A proper conception. And, by the way, I just want to throw this in parenthetically. One of the finest things to do: that is, teach them the names of God and the names of Jesus Christ, to teach them the names of Jesus Christ, the names of God, so they learn the character of God. That's one of the reasons we have these banners.

II. A Persuasive Communication of God

Number two: not only is there to be a proper conception of God, but there needs to be a persuasive communication of God. You need to communicate this to your children. It's not enough for you to be orthodox. Again, I say, the greatest thing you can do for your children is to teach them to worship. And we do teach them by the way that we worship. Why does God give this stern warning? Listen to verse 5: *"Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation"* (Exodus 20:5). God says that wrong worship is iniquity—iniquity! Don't get the idea that you can just choose however or whatever you want to worship. False worship corrupts the minds

of the children, and you reap the result of false worship in your grandchildren.

The iniquities of the father's false worship show up in the sons, the grandsons, and the great grandsons, and daughters of those who worship in a false way. That's the reason it is so terrible. God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children. Now that doesn't mean that God holds the children guilty—oh no, not the guilt of that sin, but the result of that sin. And we see it in the natural realm. When a parent is a user of crack cocaine, the little baby is born with certain impediments, where the sins of the parents are visited upon the children, and so forth. It's a terrible, horrible thing. But you can see it illustrated so much.

I want us to have a little Bible study right here—and take your Bible and find 2 Chronicles chapter 26. I want to illustrate this with a story right out of the Bible. We are talking about the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. There was a man, a godly man, whose name was Uzziah. He was the king. But one day Uzziah was filled with pride, and he decided he would worship God in his own way rather than God's way. Second Chronicles 26, verse 16, tells about it: *"But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense"* (2 Chronicles 26:16). Suffice it to say that it was not his right, his privilege, to burn incense in the temple of God; and it was false worship. He had no right to do it. No matter what his motive was, he worshiped God in the wrong way.

Now fast-forward down to verse 21, and the last part of that verse: *"For he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land"* (2 Chronicles 26:21). Now, here's a father who is worshiping God in the wrong way. Now he has a son who is going to take his place and be the king, and what was this son like? Well, read in 2 Chronicles 27, verses 1 and 2. Verse 1: *"And Jotham was twenty and five years old when he began to reign."* Verse 2: *"And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD,"*—was he a good man or a bad man? Verse 2 says he was a good man—*"according to all that his father Uzziah did:"*—was Uzziah a good man or a bad man? A good man. But now, watch this, and put a circle around this, if you don't mind writing in your Bible—*"howbeit —howbeit—"he"—Jotham—"entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly"* (2 Chronicles 27:1–2).

Now, here was his father, Uzziah, who did not worship God in a proper way, and was cut off from the house of the Lord. Here's his son, who said, "Well, Dad didn't go to church. I don't see why I ought to go to church." And I'm using the word *church* here, synonymous with the temple. You understand there are two different institutions. And he says, "My dad, he had trouble down at that church." "Well, children, listen. Let's go down to the lake today and have a picnic. Bring your Bible along, because we're going

to have Sunday School down at the lake. You know, we don't have to go down there to Bellevue to worship. We don't have to worship God in a building with other people." "My daddy loved God. He was a good man. Now he had some trouble with the church"—"I just think we'll have a little homemade religion"—"so he didn't go to the house of God." A father with false worship, a son with neglected worship.

Now, let's look at the grandson. Now comes a grandson—2 Chronicles 27, verse 9: "*And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead*" (2 Chronicles 27:9). Now, turn to 2 Chronicles 28, verse 2, and let's find out what Ahaz was like: "*For he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim*" (2 Chronicles 28:2). Who was Baalim? The sex god. Ahaz is worshipping Baalim. Then, look, if you will, in 2 Chronicles 28, verse 24: "*And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem*" (2 Chronicles 28:24).

Can you believe this? This is the grandson of good King Uzziah. Here's Uzziah, who's worshipping God in the wrong way. He's cut off from the house of God. Here's his son Jotham, who has no use for the house of God, although he loves God. But here's his grandson, Ahaz, who is worshipping idols, who takes the vessels of the house of God and cuts them in pieces, and cuts them in pieces, and nails the door shut. I wonder if our grandchildren are going to close this place down, nail the doors shut.

But it's not over yet. I want you to see, if you will, in 2 Chronicles 28, verse 3: "*Moreover*"—talking about Ahaz, now—"*he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire...*"—that's Uzziah's great-grandchildren—"*burnt [them] in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD God had cast out before the children of Israel*" (2 Chronicles 28:3). The heathen had a god named Molech with outstretched arms and a hollowed-out belly, and his belly was a great furnace of fire. They would heat him up until he glowed with heat, and they would take their little babies, and sacrifice their babies to that deity, and burn them alive in the fire. "Oh," you say, "no generation would destroy its children." Hmm? We've learned that from the heathen, haven't we? They would offer their little babies to Molech.

Can you imagine? Here's Uzziah. He loves God, but he worships in a wrong way. Here's Jotham. He loves God, but he has no use for the house of God. Here's his son, Ahaz. He hates the house of God; he nails the doors shut. Here's his son: sacrificed to demon gods.

We're going to see that happen to the children in America if we don't get back to true worship of Almighty God. "*I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me*" (Exodus 20:5). I want my children, and my children's children, and my great-grandchildren to love God.

And I'm standing on a verse that says, "*The generation of the upright shall be blessed*" (Psalm 112:2).

Now, every so often, you hear somebody say, "Well, you know, it really doesn't make any difference, if what you do doesn't hurt anybody else, you know. You can do whatever you want, just so long as it doesn't hurt anybody else." You ever heard that? Sure you have! Well, let me tell you something. Sin never hurts just one person. Nobody ever sins solo. We are linked together. Sin never, never, never hurts just one person. There is no such thing as sin only hurting but one person. The hideous result of sin shows itself in the sinner's children.

But there's a good side to that. Go back to our text, and look at it again, in verse 5: "*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;*"—but now, look in verse 6—"*and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments*" (Exodus 20:5–6). Oh, thank God for that! Not just three generations, but thousands. I want to look down the corridor and say, "God, I want to start to something growing. I want to start a fire burning that, dear Lord, will never stop burning." And I want my influence to go on and on and on and on. And we can pass it on.

I love what Paul said to Timothy—2 Timothy chapter 1, verses 5 and 6. He said, "*When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also*" (2 Timothy 1:5). Isn't that great? It started with grandmama, and then it went down to mother, and then it went down to Timothy. That's the way it ought to be.

A woman came to her pastor and said, "When should I start the religious training of my child? When will he be old enough? Is it too late to start at six?" And, by the way, did you know that eighty-five percent of a child's personality and character is formed by the time he is six years old? You've only got fifteen percent left to work with after six. "Shall I start at six?" He said, "No, that's too late." She said, "At three?" He said, "No, that's too late." "At one year?" He said, "No, that's too late." "At six months?" He said, "That's too late." She said, "Then when should I start?" And he said, "With his grandparents"—"with his grandparents."

Oh, friend, listen. This is what we do. We hand it down. We can live for our grandchildren. We can live for our great grandchildren. And, "*The generation of the upright shall be blessed*" (Psalm 112:2). And the greatest thing you can do, the greatest gift you can give your children, is to teach them to worship.

III. A Prayerful Celebration of God

I wish I had more time for that, but I just very quickly am going to touch on the third

thing. There must be a proper conception of God; there must be a powerful communication of God; and then there must be a prayerful celebration of God.

Do your children believe that the most important thing to you is God? I mean, if we were to ask your children, if we were to bring them up here, if we were to bring them up here—I mean, with you sitting out there, just bring them up here and put a microphone in front of them, and say, “What’s the most important to Daddy? What’s the most important thing to Mama?”—I wonder how many children would say, “My dad loves God with all of his heart. My mama, to her, the most important thing on this earth is her relationship with God and her worship of Him.” We must celebrate God in front of our children.

Let me tell you what my children think—what they know. I’ll tell you what my children know. They know that their daddy is imperfect. I mean, they really know that; they know that I am imperfect. But I’ll tell you what they do know also. They know that I love God. They know. I wouldn’t be ashamed for you to ask them that. You could go up to any one of them and say, “What’s the most important thing to your dad and mom?” They would tell you, “The most important thing to my parents is their relationship with God.” I really believe they would say that, and I’m glad that they would say that. And I can’t tell you how blessed I am to see them passing that down to my grandchildren; to see them pass that love down to my grandchildren.

Conclusion

Oh, what a privilege it is to worship God, and to hand our lives over to Him, like that Englishman handed that violin over to Fritz Kreisler and said, “It belongs to you, for you’re the master, and you alone are worthy”! Friend, our God alone is worthy, and we need to teach our children the truth of the Second Commandment, amen?

Graven Images

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:4–6

Outline

Introduction

I. The Meaning of Worship

II. The Manner of Worship

Conclusion

Introduction

Now this morning we're going to continue in our study of the Ten Commandments. You know, we're preaching a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments, and I'd like for you to open your Bibles this morning to the Book of Exodus the twentieth chapter, and we'll read verses 4 through 6: *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments"* (Exodus 20:4–6). How wonderful are God's Ten Commandments!

Did you do your homework that I asked you to do last Sunday when I preached on the first of these commandments? I asked you to go home and sit down, and see if you could write out an eleventh commandment, to see if there was anything as far as moral law that God left out in the ten—and, of course, you could not. Then I asked you to see if you could subtract one, if there was one that was not necessary—and, of course, there was none. What a marvelous code of laws are these laws that God has given us that we call the Ten Commandments!

And I was reading just recently that someone has said—and I suppose he claims to be an authority—that in the history of man, man has made 32,647,389 laws. Now I just wonder how he got his statistics. But even for a man to say that mankind has made 32,000,000-plus laws shows us how much man has endeavored to do what God has done in ten crisp, clear, concise, statements that we call the Ten Commandments.

And every now and then somebody says, "Well, I'm going to break one of the commandments." Well, there's a sense in which you may break one of the commandments; but there's a sense that you are broken on the commandment. For

example, a man says, “I’m going to break the law of gravity.” So he gets up on a forty-story building and steps off. He doesn’t really break the law of gravity; he’s broken on it. He doesn’t break that law; he just demonstrates it. And many times a person may say, “Well, I’m breaking God’s commandments.” But God’s commandments were here when you got here, and God’s commandments will be here when you’re gone. And, until heaven and earth shall pass, not one jot nor one tittle shall fail from the law till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:18)—God’s wonderful law that we call the Ten Commandments.

Now, last Sunday morning, we talked about the person that we ought to worship. “*I am the Lord thy God...Thou shalt have no other gods before me*” (Exodus 20:2–3). Now, this Sunday morning, we’re going to talk about the manner in which we worship this person. The first commandment tells us that we ought to love God inwardly. The second commandment tells us how to love God outwardly. The first commandment deals with the object of our worship. The second commandment deals with the manner of our worship. And the first commandment forbids false gods. And the second commandment forbids false worship. And so it’s not only important that we know God, know who this God is, and that we recognize Him as the Lord God Jehovah of the Bible and the Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; but it’s also important that, after we know this God, we worship this God as the Bible has taught us.

So, first of all, I want you to think with me about the meaning and motive and the importance of worship. And then, next, I want you to think with me about the manner of worship. First of all, the motive for worship, and the meaning of worship; and then the manner of worship, because this is what this commandment deals with—is the worship of God.

I. The Meaning of Worship

Now, to begin with, *worship* comes from a combination of words: *worth-ship*. In other words, God is worthy. When we worship, we recognize the worthiness, the *worth-ship* of God, and we say, “Because thou art worthy, our Lord, we pour out unto thee our praise, our love, our adoration, and all that we have. Our hearts just go up to thee.” And we call this love and this praise and this worship and this adoration that goes up to God, we call this “worship.” And this is important, because Jesus said, “*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God*” (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8). And then Jesus said again, “*The Father seeketh such to worship him*” (John 4:23). My, how important it is that we learn to worship God!

And many people have not learned to worship God. You see, somehow the mistaken idea’s gotten out that the first duty, and the most important thing that the church has to do, is to spread the gospel to the darkest corners of the earth. But this is not so. The most important duty of the church is not the spread of the gospel—as important as that is. And I am not minimizing evangelism. And anybody who knows me,

you know how I feel about evangelism. But, my dear friend, there is something even more important than the spreading of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—and that is the worship of God Almighty. We must learn how to worship before we work.

Now I know that Jesus said, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel”* (Mark 16:15). But the same Jesus that said, *“Go ye,”* said, *“Tarry ye”* (Luke 24:49). And many times people have gone before they tarried. And I believe if we learned how to worship the Lord, if we learned how to adore the Lord, and just praised the Lord and have communion with the Lord, that, when we did go, and when we did witness, it would be so different, because then we would be witnesses in the power of the Spirit rather than in the energy of the flesh. The first commandment is not, *“Go into all of the world.”* The first commandment is this: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment”* (Mark 12:30). That’s what Jesus Christ Himself said. And, oh, if we could only learn to worship the Lord!

How long has it been since you just simply came to the Lord and loved Him and adored Him, and said, *“Dear Father, I love thee; I bless thee; I praise thee”*? How many of your prayers are just simply *give me* prayers? How long has it been since you’ve come to the Lord and said, *“Lord, I don’t want a thing; I just want to spend some time with you; I just want to love you a little bit”*? Oh, so often when we get in trouble, we groan and complain, and come to the Lord and weep, and tell the Lord all of our problems—and He wants us to do that. But Billy Sunday said, *“We need to yank some of the groans out of our prayers and shove in a few hallelujahs.”* And I believe that, my dear friend. I believe that we need to just simply worship God, just simply love God, just simply know God. It’s more important to worship than it is to work—as important as work is.

Now, you know, we Baptists are long on this work deal. We have so many meetings that we almost meet ourselves coming back from the last one. And someone has said that if Baptists had a patron saint he’d be Saint Vitas—because we’re awfully busy. And perhaps a person ought to have a physical examination before he joins a Baptist church—maybe so. And I’m not minimizing these meetings—these meetings are good and fine. And I’m not saying we ought not to serve. I’m not saying we ought not to evangelize. I’m not saying we ought not to work; but, my dear friend, we need to learn to be still and be quiet, and come into the presence of Jesus Christ, and simply love Him. The first and the great commandment is to love God with all of our being. And the Bible says, *“The father seeketh such to worship him.”* This is what God wants. This is even the purpose of evangelism: that others may come and worship and know God.

Somewhere in my reading many years ago I read a story about a little girl who loved her daddy very much. And he loved all of his children, but he especially enjoyed this

little girl, because she had learned the art of crawling up in daddy's lap, putting her arms around daddy's neck, and kissing him. She'd rub his beard a little bit, and pull his ear a little bit, and just say, "Daddy, I love you." And he enjoyed this girl because she expressed her love to her father. And all you parents want your children to tell you that they love you. So this little girl at Christmastime stopped spending time with her father. As soon as she would come in from school, she'd go up to her room upstairs. After supper was over, she'd dismiss herself and go up to her room. And so the father missed this companionship, and he didn't know what had happened, but he decided he'd wait and see. And then, Christmas morning, after several weeks of this, she came down and she presented him with a present. And all of this time she'd been up in her room making a pair of slippers for her father. And she'd made them handmade. And they were beautiful, and he appreciated them. But he said, "Honey, come here and let Daddy tell you something. Daddy appreciates the slippers. But Daddy had rather just have you sit in his lap and love him than even make slippers for him."

And, you know, I think God appreciates the work that we do for Him. I know He does. But I'll tell you the Lord wants more than anything else for you to simply love Him. How long has it been since you crawled up in your heavenly Father's lap, and put your arms around His neck, and said, "My Father, I love you"? I'm not being sacrilegious. The Bible says, "*God has given us 'the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father'*" (Romans 8:15). And that word *Abba* means "daddy"; "father"—"daddy." How long has it been since you told the Lord that you loved Him and just simply let your heart pour out to God in praise and adoration? Oh, we need to love the Lord! And could it be that the very things that you're doing for God are the things that are keeping you from God?

If you're too busy to read your Bible, and pray, and have a quiet time with God, you're too busy. I don't even care if you're singing in the choir, or teaching a Sunday School class: you're too busy. We need to be still and to be quiet and come before the Lord. There is a necessity to worship. Jesus said, "*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God*"; "*for the father seeketh such to worship him.*"

II. The Manner of Worship

And so I've spoken for just a few moments on the meaning and the motive and the necessity and the importance of worship; but now I want to address myself to you on this subject: the manner of worship. How are we going to worship the Lord? This commandment says, "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth*" (Exodus 20:4). God rejects the worship of Him that is not spiritual. God wants us to worship Him "*in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:23–24), and God

does not want us to worship Him in a manmade, mechanical way.

One of the basic questions in the world today is this—and you could sum up all theology and all philosophy almost in this question—here’s the question: Did God make man, or did man make God? The Christian says that God made man. The communist and the atheist say man made God, that man invented the idea of God in his mind. He wanted a god, so therefore he invented a god. Now this is the question: Did God make man, or did man make God and create God? I submit to you that God created man. And yet man has always had a desire and propensity in his heart to create for himself a god: some object, something that he could make and form with his hands that he could bow down in front of and worship. And the Bible says that this is wrong; it’s an abomination to the Lord. And the Bible teaches that you and I should not bow down in front of any image at all.

Our Roman Catholic friends need to hear this message. I believe that this commandment ought to be engraven over every Roman Catholic altar. They bow down before images of Jesus; they bow down before images of Mary; they bow down before a wooden cross; and they say, “But, Brother Rogers, we are not worshipping that image. We are not adoring that image. We are only venerating that image. And when we bow down before a statue, or when we bow down before an image, we are looking beyond that image to the true God that we worship. And we use this only as an aid to worship.”

Well now, that sounds pretty good; but that’s exactly what Aaron said when he built the golden calf. Do you remember the story? Just a little after God gave the Ten Commandments, Aaron made a golden calf, because the people wanted some sort of a god that they could see. They wanted something that they could worship in the flesh rather than worshipping in the spirit. And so Aaron made a golden calf. And Aaron didn’t say it was some pagan god. He says this is your representation of the Lord God Almighty. And you remember how God judged them for this.

And, you see, my dear friend, God does not want you bowing down before any image, whatever it is. It’s an image of Jesus. The Bible says, “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image...of any thing that is in heaven*” (Exodus 20:4). Jesus is in heaven. Mary, the mother of Christ? No. No image of Saint Christopher, or Saint Joseph, or any of these things. God says, “*Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them*” (Exodus 20:5).

Now, why? Why is the Lord so strongly set against this? Because God knows the propensities in the human heart. God knows how prone the human heart is to get off into idolatry. Let me tell you the dangers of having some physical aid in worship, whether it be a statue, whether it be candles, whether it be some ornate building, whatever it may be.

In the first place, there’s a danger that these things can become a substitute for true

spiritual religion. Now, you can walk into a service, and if that service is geared just right with ritualism, if the architecture is just so, if the candles are flickering just so, if the images are just right, you can walk into this building, and your eyes can see something, and your flesh can feel something, and you get a kind of what you feel is a religious experience. But it's not a religious experience at all; it's a bogus religious experience, it's a fleshly experience. But you don't realize it's a fleshly experience, because you get a weird sensation, because all of these things are very impressive to the human flesh. And you walk out of a service like that, and you say, "Well, I certainly feel today that I've been to church." And you have had a feeling; you've been bedazzled, and you've been mystified. But it's not a genuine spiritual experience; it is a fleshly experience. And it has become a substitute for the real religion of the heart. It's a religion of the flesh—no matter how beautiful it may be. It may be very beautiful and still be a religion of the flesh.

And so people don't need religion. They need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ. They don't need ritual, and they don't need these things. And the first danger is they may become a substitute. A person may go through all of his life feeling religious and never have Jesus Christ in his heart because his religion is all one of externals. It's all something that he can see and feel and taste and touch; but it's not a matter of the heart.

The second danger is that, when you use these things even as an aid to worship Jehovah God, they soon become a crutch and a snare. You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, if I had some image, if I had something that would help me to fix my attention and help me to worship, I could pray better."

One man came to his pastor, and he said, "Pastor, it's hard for me to pray to God, because when I pray," he said, "I can't see God." And he said, "It's hard for me just to imagine that Jesus is there. Can you help me?" And the pastor thought he was giving some good advice. But he wasn't giving good advice at all. This is what the pastor said—he said, "Well, get a chair, and put that chair out there; and when you pray, imagine that Jesus Christ is in the chair, and just talk to Jesus. Just put the chair, the empty chair, in front of you." The man said, "I'll do that." And so he got the chair and put the empty chair there, and sat down in front of this chair, and started talking. He said, "Now, Lord, thus and so."

And this helped him so much, because in his mind he could just fix the image of Jesus sitting there in that chair, and he thought this was a wonderful thing. And perhaps it sounds like a good idea to you, but I want to show you the danger. Later on, this man grew gravely ill and was sick. They placed him on his bed with orders not to move. But when they found him, he was dead. He'd gotten out of bed, forced himself to crawl across the floor, and they found him dead with his hand in the chair. He wanted to pray.

He had wanted to talk to God, but he didn't feel that he could speak to his God unless he could get to his blessed chair.

You see, these things, after a while—why, they may start out seemingly harmless and innocuous—before long they become a snare and a crutch. And a person would say, “Well, I just don't feel near to God, because I need this; I need my rosary; I need my crucifix; I need my chair; I need my altar.” My dear friend, you don't need anything but Jesus Christ—and He's everywhere.

And this is what the Bible is trying to teach us: that God is a Spirit, and it's not in this mountain or that mountain, but Jesus Christ is just as close to you as your knees are from the floor. But these things can become a substitute for true religion. They can become a snare.

And, then again, the use of images degrades God, and it lowers God. God says to watch to whom you liken Him.

You wouldn't want a bad picture of you in circulation, would you? I mean, if there was a picture of you with a long nose—about *that* long—and ears that look like doors on a Model-T Ford open, you know, going down the street, and made you look about ten years older than you are, you'd say, “Destroy that picture.” Most people don't even like a picture that looks just like them, and they want it to flatter them a little bit, you know?

But do you think that God wants some image, some picture of Himself, that certainly doesn't do Him justice? There's nothing to which you could liken the Almighty. And any picture that you may have would degrade God, and it wants to bring God down to a lower level. You know, every person is very jealous about the presentation that they make to others, and especially is the Lord our God jealous about that. Who really knows what Jesus looked like? Who really knows? What color hair did He have? How tall was He? What color were His eyes? What sort of physical characteristics did He have? You don't know, and I don't know. And isn't it interesting that, as much as the Bible tells us about Jesus Christ—the words that Jesus Christ spoke, and all of the deeds that Jesus did—not once does the Bible ever describe the physical characteristics of Jesus. I'm talking about His height, the color of His eyes, His hair, His facial characteristics. Suppose the Bible said Jesus had green eyes: do you know what some silly people would do? You'd go in church, and up there at the platform would be a big green eye, and they'd all be bowing down to it. That's right. That's exactly right.

Why, today there are people, you know, they've got some sort of mysticism about the robe of Jesus, and about the cup that Jesus drank from at the Last Supper, pieces of the cross, or anything else. The human heart does not want spiritual religion. The human heart, from the time of Cain right up to this present time, wants some manmade, fleshly religion, something that it can manipulate, rather than the true God. And the picture of any image never does the Lord God Almighty justice.

Some bow down in front of a crucifix that is a dead Christ on a cross. My friend, I'm glad that Jesus Christ died on the cross, but I don't worship a dead Christ on a cross. I worship a living Christ on a throne. And, oh, there's a lot of difference—there's a lot of difference. And this God is a Spirit, and they that worship God must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). And the worst thing about worshipping with some physical aid to worship, no matter what it might be, is that these things may gradually, almost imperceptibly, replace God Himself and become our god; and we may be caught up in gross idolatry.

Now the priest would say, "We don't worship these things; we only use these things as an aid to worship." But I want to ask you about the ignorant man. I'm not talking about the lettered, educated, cultured priest. I'm talking about the average peasant in South America, or somewhere else, who cannot even read his Bible but he has his Madonna, he has his statue. Do you think that he's able to make this difference in his mind? No. This thing to him becomes the object of his praise and his adoration, and he bows down himself in front of this particular thing; and this thing has become a substitute for God Almighty, and it has become idolatry.

There's a parable told about a prince who was a very wealthy and a very kind prince. And he had a lovely princess. And, oh, how he loved his princess! She was so beautiful! And they had a love that was a beautiful love, and they had a joy that was exquisite, and they were so mutually devoted to one to the other. But this princess sickened and died. And the prince was stricken with grief beyond measure, and he said, "What can I do to show the world how much I loved my princess?" And then he hit upon this plan—he said, "I will build for my princess the most beautiful building for a tomb and a mausoleum that the world has ever seen. It will be a shrine. It will be a temple. It will be glorious. It will be magnificent." And so he called his architects, and he called his artisans, and he called his artists, and they planned. And he said, "I don't want another building like this in the world. It's to be built around the tomb of my beautiful, lovely princess."

And so there in the middle of the plot was the tomb, and around this tomb this magnificent building started coming up. Every day the prince would come out. He would check the details. He inspected every rafter. He looked at every marble column. All of the artwork, all the engraving, all of the flowers, everything: he examined it all. He examined from the ground. He examined it from the roof. Every detail had to be perfect, because he so dearly loved his princess. And finally the building came to completion—splendid indeed; gorgeous indeed, magnificent beyond compare. And the prince was making his final inspection. He got up on a high pinnacle of this temple, this shrine, and he looked; and everything that filled his eye was beautiful, until suddenly he looked down and he saw something that didn't look just right. He stood over here, and he

looked at it. Then he called to one of his workman. He said, "There's something in here that's out of place. There's something that's not right. Get that thing out of here." And, of course, that thing was the tomb of his princess. You see, he'd started out to honor her, and to love her, and to venerate her. But in all of this building that he built, this thing had become his god. This thing had become the object of his love and his adoration, and he had forgotten the very purpose to which he started.

And so it is with so many people as they start out breaking the second commandment: it is not long until they break the first commandment. The wrong worship of God leads to worshiping the wrong god. And sometimes I feel like the Lord Jesus Christ is treated just like the princess's tomb.

Now I wonder, in our services with our choirs, and with our sermons, and with our hymns, and with our offerings, and all of the rest of it, I wonder if Jesus Christ Himself is crowded out. And I wonder if the Lord has a hard time finding Himself between the fine print in our church bulletins. Oh, my dear friend, we need to worship Jesus Christ in spirit and in truth.

I had many other things I wanted to say. I didn't get through at 8:00 either, but let me just sum it up. The Bible says, "*The LORD thy God is a jealous God*" (Deuteronomy 6:15). In this same commandment He says, "*For I the LORD thy God am a jealous God*" (Exodus 20:5). You say, "Brother Rogers, somehow that just doesn't seem right: God being jealous." But, you see, you have the wrong conception of the word *jealousy*. The dictionary can help us. The dictionary says that *jealousy* is "earnest concern, solicitude, vigilant watchfulness, and care."

You see, there's something wrong with you if you're not jealous, if you're a married person. Oh, there's a wrong jealousy, to be sure. Just like there's a wrong appetite for food, and a wrong appetite for sex, and a wrong use of anger, there's a wrong use of jealousy. But there's a godly jealousy. There's a holy jealousy. There's a good jealousy, a righteous jealousy.

For example, lady, if you see your husband kissing another woman, and it's not his sister or his mother or his little girl, something ought to happen in your heart. I just kind of believe that, don't you? Now, there's something wrong with you if it doesn't happen. Now, suppose he's kissing some beautiful woman, and you walk in, and he says, "Oh, how you doing?" You say, "Well, how are you doing?" And he'll say, "Well now, I know what you're thinking, but don't get the wrong idea. The whole time I was kissing her, I was thinking of you." I bet you some guys use that for an excuse. I'll bet you somewhere down the line some guy thought that thing up. And he says to her, "Now the whole time I had her in my arms, I was just thinking how much I love you. Since you weren't around, I was just loving her instead." You wouldn't buy that, would you, lady? If you would, you're dumber than I think you are. I don't think you're dumb, either; I think you're

smarter than I am.

All right now, listen. Suppose you come to the Lord, and you're worshipping one of these idols, or one of these images, or anything else, and you say to the Lord, "The whole time I'm doing this, I'm thinking of you." God won't buy it either. You see, "*I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.*" And God wants this love reserved to Him. And *Jesus Christ must be Lord of all if He's to be Lord at all.* You see, is God first place in your heart?

Conclusion

Now, as I close, let me tell you something wonderful—oh, glorious! It's wonderful! You don't need an image before you if you have Jesus within you. You see? I don't have to bow down before any image, because Jesus Christ is in me the hope of glory. And if I'm in a beautiful church, I can worship; but if I'm out in the woods, I can worship—no matter where it is, because God is a Spirit. Oh, do you have Jesus in you? Are you saved? The most wonderful thing in the world is to know Jesus. If I had a thousand lives, I'd want Him to have every one.

The Name Above All Names

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 7, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:7

Outline

Introduction

- I. Don't Take His Name in Vanity
 - A. Personality in That Name
 - B. Power in That Name
 - C. Protection in That Name
 - D. Provision in That Name
 - E. Praise in That Name
- II. How Do We Take God's Name in Vanity?
 - A. Profanity
 - B. Frivolity
 - C. Hypocrisy
- III. How Do You Take God's Name in Victory
 - A. Wear the Name
 - B. Share the Name
 - C. Bear the Name

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word, find Exodus chapter 20, and in just a moment we're going to read the Third Commandment. It's found in verse 7. But let me say that God's plan for your home is not failure but victory. God wants your home to be vital, and He wants it to be victorious. But it breaks my heart to say that many homes in America are falling apart, disintegrating—and it has become a national disaster. That's the reason we've chosen this theme: "A Perfect Ten for Homes That Win." These are God's commandments, and they're given primarily to the home. And don't think negatively about the commandments. Some of the commandments are negative, and some of the commandments are positive. But it takes the negative and the positive together to give the power.

I was talking to Dr. James Dobson. We were having dinner one night, and he said to me, "Adrian, you know the battery in your car has negative and positive poles." He said, "If you put your hand on the negative pole, it won't bother you. Put your hand on the

positive pole, and it won't bother you. But," he said, "connect them together, and grab hold. It will curl your hair." And that is true. That is true. It is the negative and the positive together. And that's the reason that God has given these commandments as they are.

But the bottom line of all of them is this: that God loves us. And these are not rules to make us squirm like a worm in hot ashes trying to keep them. Oh no, not at all! These are laws for our good and for our welfare. And, as we've said before, *every time God says, "Thou shalt not, He's simply saying, "Don't hurt yourself." And every time God says, "Thou shalt," He's saying, "Help yourself to happiness."* And if God says, "Don't do the negative," He infers, "Do the positive." If He says, "Do the positive," He infers, "Don't do the negative."

Now, with that in mind, look, if you will, please, in verse 7: *"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain"* (Exodus 20:7). So He tells us not to take the name in vanity. That infers we are to take the name in victory. So I want you to listen today as we're talking about the negative—don't take the name in vanity; and then the positive—do take the name in victory.

I. Don't Take His Name in Vanity

By the way, what's in a name? What's so important about a name? Now, in Bible times, when children were born, the parents would pray over those children, and they would give the child a name, and that name would encompass a prayer and a prophecy. That's the reason we see so many in the Bible who had names that match their character. It goes all the way back to the parents who named those children.

As a matter of fact, Jesus was to be the Savior of the world, and so the angels said, "Mary, call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people" (Matthew 1:21). The name Jesus means, "Jehovah saves." Names had meaning in the Bible, and so it's very important that we understand what is in the name of Jehovah.

A. Personality in That Name

Now, first of all, there's personality in that name. The God that we serve is not some abstraction, some "force," as you might see in Star Wars or something. He is a real person, so He calls Himself, in this passage, *"the Lord thy God."* And when he uses the word *Lord*, He uses the Hebrew word *Jehovah*. "I am Jehovah,"—or Yahweh, as some would give it—"thy God,"—that's the name Elohim. So "I am Jehovah, thy Elohim." And here He's not just saying, "I am an abstraction." "I am a person. Let me introduce myself to you." And what He is doing by giving Himself names, He's saying, "This is who I am, and my name tells about my personality. It tells what I'm like."

For example, what does the name Jehovah mean? Well, it speaks of the everlasting God who is a covenant keeper. It is God's personal relationship to His people, the God who keeps His word. And what does the name Elohim mean? "I am the Lord thy God, thy *Elohim*"—well, what does that mean? Well, it speaks of the Mighty One. It speaks of His strength and His power. Now, put them together, and He says, "I want to meet you. I am a covenant-keeping God, who has power to perform His word. I am the God who will never break my promises to you. I am the Lord your God. Don't take my name in vain."

B. Power in That Name

There's personality in that name, and I'll tell you what else there is: There is power in that name. Over and over again, the Bible speaks of the power of the name of our God. Remember when David came against Goliath? I was reading about Goliath yesterday. Goliath—over nine feet tall: I couldn't even scratch the top of his head, even standing on tiptoes. And he wasn't just skinny. He was the original Bigfoot. I mean, friend, he was big! And there he was. And everybody else was afraid to fight Goliath, and little David came out against Goliath. And you remember David came out of that tin can called Saul's armor, and took just that sling, those stones, and he went out there to meet Goliath. When Goliath saw him coming, Goliath was so angered, because it was a putdown to Goliath; it was an insult to Goliath that they sent this little boy out there. He thought he was a boy, just a lad—I guess a teenager. The Bible says he was ruddy and of a fair countenance. I take that to mean he had a little peach fuzz on his chin. He hadn't started to shave yet—just a teenage boy. And here he comes, a little shepherd boy with that sling.

Now, listen to what Goliath said to David. First Samuel 17, verse 42: "*And when the Philistine looked about and saw David, he despised him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.*" That's just a teenager. "*And the Philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said to David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field*" (1 Samuel 17:42–44). Loose translation: "Sonny boy, when I get my hands on you, I'm going to break you in pieces and feed you to the pigeons."

Now I want you to listen to what David said—we're talking about power in the name: "*Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee*"—now, listen—"*in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied*" (1 Samuel 17:45). And you will remember that David hit him in the head with that stone. Goliath was surprised: it was the first time anything like that had ever entered his head. He hit him right there. He went down. And David took Goliath's sword and cut off his head. Now, how did it

happen? In the name of our God.

There is power in the name of our Lord as well as personality. Jesus said, in John 14, verse 14, “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it” (John 14:14). Colossians 3, verse 17: “*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Colossians 3:17). Everything we ought to do in the power of His name. Go to work in His name. Do your homework in His name. Rear your children in His name. You ask, “Literally?” Well, that’s what the Bible says. “*Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.*”

C. Protection in That Name

All right, not only is there personality in His name, not only is there power in His name, but there’s protection in His name. Put this verse down—Proverbs chapter 18 and verse 10: “*The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe*” (Proverbs 18:10). Is Satan after you? Head into the name of Jesus. Take refuge in the name of Jesus.

*Take the name of Jesus with you,
Child of sorrow and of woe;
It will joy and comfort give you,
Take it then where'er you go.*

—LYDIA BAXTER

There is protection. It’s like running into a strong tower in the name of Jesus. And, by the way, you can see things from that tower that you couldn’t see any other place, because you have a wonderful perspective.

D. Provision in That Name

There is provision in the name. Listen to this—John 16, verse 23. Jesus said, “*And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you*” (John 16:23). That means, “Anything that you can sign my name to, you can have. Anything you can sign my name to—not in your name, not your simple desires—but anything that I have ordered, sign my name to the order slip, and God the Father will give it to you.”

E. Praise in That Name

There is personality in His name. There is power in His name. There is provision in His name. And that’s the reason there ought to be praise in His name. Haven’t you enjoyed the music today, praising the name of the Lord Jesus? The Psalmist said, in Psalm 8, verse 1, “*O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!*” (Psalm 8:1). And the Bible teaches, “*O...let us exalt his name together*” (Psalm 34:3). There is praise in His name.

So, with that in mind, I want you to think now about two things: first of all, how to teach our children not to take His name in vanity; and, to teach our children how to take His name in victory. If you will teach this in your home, you'll have a home that wins.

Now, what does the word *vanity* mean? We're not to take the name of the Lord our God in vain. What does the word *vain* mean? Well, it's the Hebrew word *shav*. And what it means is, "meaninglessly; empty of content; carelessly; thoughtlessly." The word *shav*, the word literally has its root in the word *tempest* or *storm*. They would see a storm, and it seemed so random; it seemed to have no rhyme or reason; erratic—just a worthless thing, a nonproductive thing. And, after a while, that word became to mean the word *vain*.

II. How Do We Take God's Name in Vanity?

How do we take God's name in vanity?

A. Profanity

Well, of course, one thing you need to teach your children is to never use profanity—never! Never! Pardon me, but that's one of the most ignorant things a person could ever do, is to profane the name of God. When you take God's name in profanity, it shows two things: an empty head and a wicked heart—both together. You see, somebody has said that profanity is a feeble mind trying to express itself. And that's true, but also out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34), and a profane mouth shows a profane heart. And what profanity is, it is an insult flung into the face of God. It's so needless and, therefore, it's so excuseless.

I'm not saying a person ought to commit murder for revenge—but at least he gets revenge! I'm not saying that a person ought to steal if he has a need—but at least he gets what he steals! What does a person get when he takes God's name in vain? Only judgment! It's like a fish that bites a hook that has no bait on it. I'm not trying to say kill or steal—but what an excuseless sin this is, to take God's name in vain! What contempt it shows to Almighty God! Sometimes we hear people asking God to damn another person, when Jesus suffered in agony and blood to save people. What a profane prayer, to ask God to send somebody else to hell!

Around our house we don't even use secondhand cussing. What I mean is the word *darn*, *dang*, *gosh*—oh, no! *Gee*—no sir! "Well," you ask, "why?" Well, those are just euphemisms. You know, they're just substitutes for God. *Gosh* is a substitute for *God*; *Gee* a substitute for *Jesus*; *darn*, a substitute for *damn*. A lot of people would be surprised if they knew what they were saying when they say, *gosh darn*. You know, be careful. Just be careful with your speech. Don't use even secondhand cursing.

Profanity is one way you can take God's name in vain. But this commandment is not

primarily about just cursing. That's about as far as most of us go with it. By the way, I have a friend who recently died. His name was Paul Anderson. Paul Anderson was the strongest man on earth. As a matter of fact, in 1956 Paul Anderson was the Olympic gold medal winner. And he's in *The Guinness Book of World Records*. Paul was only five-feet-nine, but weighed 375 pounds. Can you imagine a guy five-feet-nine, and 375 pounds? He looked a little pudgy, but he was like polished steel. He wasn't a weightlifter, primarily. He was just absolutely, incredibly strong. He did something no other human has ever done and probably never will do. He lifted with his back—listen—three tons. When we had him speak for us at Merritt Island, he had a table built—a great big table. And he got twenty of the biggest people there and said, “Get on top of that table.” And he got under it and lifted it with his back. This man was incredibly strong. He loved God with all of his heart.

One time, Paul Anderson was in the airport and he heard a man with an angry voice say, “Jesus Christ.” Paul came up from behind and put a hammerlock on him and lifted him up in the air and said, “He's my best friend. Where is He? Where is He?” This guy looked down. He said, “Oh my God!” He said, “That's Him! That's Him!” I don't know what happened to that fellow, but I'll bet you he thought a long time before he took God's name in vain again. One of these days God's going to put His arms around you and say, “Why did you take the name of my God in vain—your God, the God of the universe?”

B. Frivolity

Profanity is one of the ways you can take His name in vanity. But I'll tell you another way you can take His name in vanity—and that's frivolity. And more of us do this than profanity: that is, just taking the name of God carelessly or lightly. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 3: *“But fornication, and uncleanness, or covetous, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints...nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which is not convenient”* (Ephesians 5:3–4).

What does he mean by *foolish jesting*? This is the sin that I've heard preachers commit—teachers and deacons. They have little sayings, little witticisms that include the name of God. His name is holy. Never ever use that name, unless you're serious. I hear preachers sometimes when we're out to dinner, and somebody will say something the other preacher said—he'll say, “Bless him, Lord.” Well, if they mean it, that's fine. But if it's just a little witticism, a little offhanded remark, or some kind of a story... A man told a story about the Lord Jesus playing golf in heaven and always making a hole-in-one. I didn't think it was funny. Jokes about God are not funny. Now if you use humor to illustrate something, that's fine. But I'm saying, using the name of God in frivolity—the Bible so warns against that. It's repugnant to the holy name of God. And never ever

allow your children to use God's name in profanity, or in frivolity.

C. Hypocrisy

Here's a third way that God's name is often used in homes in vain—and that's in hypocrisy. I don't believe that anything turns teenagers off more than hypocrisy in the home—when Mom and Dad teach Sunday School, or when they're deacons or pastors or whatever, but they do not live the name they profess. Put this verse down—Isaiah 48 and verse 1: *"Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the LORD, and make mention of the God of Israel,"*—now, listen to this—*"make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness"* (Isaiah 48:1). Oh, they make mention of His name, but not in truth and not in righteousness.

This is why so many teenagers say, "I'm sick and tired of the church. My dad goes down there. He teaches a Sunday School class. He leads in prayer. He takes the offering. He sings in the choir. My mama does this or that. But at home they are phonies, taking His name in hypocrisy." Jesus said, *"Many will say to me in that day,"*—talking about the judgment day—*"Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:22–23).

If you're going to live for God anywhere, live for God in your home. And when you name the name of Jesus, do not take that name in hypocrisy. Let your yes be yes, your no, no (Matthew 5:37). And let your children know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, that you love the Lord. When you pray in the name of Jesus, don't just forge His name to the end of the prayer. That's a hypocritical prayer. When you praise the Lord, praise Him with all of your heart.

Do you know I think that sometimes we're such hypocrites when we come to church, even when we sing? We sing, "My Jesus I love thee. I know thou art mine. For thee all the follies of sin I resign." Do you sing that, and still keep sin in your heart? We sing, "Take my silver and my gold, not a mite would I withhold." And we hold it with all of our might. We sing, "Faith of our fathers, holy faith. We will be true to thee till death," and think nothing of skipping church if company comes. We sing, "All to Jesus I surrender. All to Him I freely give." Now if you don't mean that when you sing it, you're in the same category with a man who curses and swears. You are taking the name of God in vain.

You can do it by profanity. You can do it by frivolity. You can do it by hypocrisy. Now that's taking the name in vanity. I don't want to spend any more time on that, except to say this: that God will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain (Exodus 20:7). Let's just turn it over though, because in the negative there is a positive.

III. How Do You Take God's Name in Victory

How do you take His name in victory? I'd much rather you teach your children how to take His name in victory, because, when they learn to take His name in victory, they'll certainly be afraid to take His name in vanity. Now, remember Colossians 3, verse 17: *"Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of Jesus; giving thanks to God the father by Him"* (Colossians 3:17). That's taking His name in victory. Do you know what the last name for God in the Bible is? The last name for God given in the Bible is Jesus—Jesus! And do you know what the name Jesus means? It means, "Jehovah saves." It is the most precious word to me in all of the Bible.

Carolyn Higginbotham brought a poem into my office and gave it to me. It's by my door. Just before I come out to preach, I stop frequently and read this poem. I'm going to share it with you. I don't know it by heart, but I'm going to read it to you. It's one of the most beautiful things I've ever read. Listen to it:

*There is a Name, a wondrous name,
Of infinite and endless fame,
By God beloved, by saints revered,
By angels and archangels feared,
Ordained of God 'fore world began,
Revealed by angels unto man,
Proclaimed by men, believed, adored,
By hearts in prayer and praise outpoured,
The theme of prophet, priest, and king,
The word of which sweet psalmists sing,
By pilgrims blessed, by sufferers sung,
The last word breathed by martyr's tongue.
The name most precious and sublime,
Supreme in space, supreme in time,
Destined to live and conquer all
Till all knees everywhere shall fall
And tongues confess—what God proclaims—
This name to be the Name of names,
The name which in high heaven will be
The One Name of eternity;—
Then, O my soul, its praise forthtell,
Jesus—the name ineffable!
—HENRY WESTON FROST*

Don't you love that? That's about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It's by my door. I stand sometime and just read it out loud, and I'm not ashamed to tell you that

sometimes the tears pop out of my eyes as I think of the wonderful, wonderful name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. All of the names of God are compressed in that one name: Jesus.

Now, what do you need to teach your children if you'd have a home that would win? Three things, very carefully, I want to share with you, but very quickly, about taking the name in victory; three things I've tried to teach my children, and I want you to teach your children.

A. Wear the Name

Number one: Teach them to wear the name—teach them to wear the name. Acts 11, verse 26: *“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch”* (Acts 11:26). When we call ourselves Christians, we are wearing the name Christ Jesus. Second Timothy chapter 2, verse 19, says this: *“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”* (2 Timothy 2:19). When you wear the name, you've got to walk the talk.

When my children were little, I used to drive them to school. I always looked forward to taking the children to school and letting them out. I'd try and get my work done, breakfast done, quiet time over, put the kids in the car. We'd have that special time, as I would drive them to school and let them out. And just as they would get out of the car, over and over and over and over again every morning, I would say to them, “Children, remember who you are, and whose you are.” And I didn't mean, “You belong to me.” “You belong to Him. Remember, children. Remember who you are. You're a Christian; and whose you are—you belong to Jesus Christ. You're not your own. You were bought with a price.” We are to wear the name.

B. Share the Name

Secondly, teach your children not only to wear the name, but teach your children to share the name—to share the name. Oh, how I was blessed by this verse! I want you just to turn to it. It's easy to find. Turn to Malachi chapter 3, and verse 16. The last book in the Old Testament is Malachi. This is one of the grandest verses—it just energized me as I looked at it this week—on the name of our Lord. Malachi 3, verse 16—listen to it: *“Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him”*—now, listen—*“for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name”* (Malachi 3:16).

God has three books. He has the book of revelation—that's the Bible. He has the book of redemption—that's the Lamb's Book of Life. And then He has the book of remembrance—and God is up there just writing down. He sees people talking. He sees us today fellowshiping around the Name, and God just remembers that. He, God,

writes a book of remembrance for those that fear the Lord and think about His name.

Now, look what all is involved in this verse. This is the character that we should build into our children: to fear the Lord. Oh, when a person takes God's name in vain, it's because he doesn't fear the Lord! The greatest mark of character is the fear of the Lord. The beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7). A nation is on its last legs when it no longer fears God. That's the character and the contemplation that you should teach your children: *"them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name."*

You want to teach your children something wonderful? Teach them the names of God. Teach them that *Jehovah Tsidkenu* means, "the Lord, our righteousness." Teach them that *Jehovah Shalom* means, "the Lord, our peace." Teach them that *Jehovah Nissi* means, "the Lord, our banner." Teach them that *Jehovah Shammah* means, "the Lord who is present." Teach them the names of God, that they might think upon His name. "As a man thinketh, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Psalm 9, verse 10, says, *"And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee"* (Psalm 9:10). What a wonderful study for your family devotions: the names of our God!

And then, notice also the conversation they spoke one to another. Now, what were they speaking about? Well, they're speaking about His name. When you come to church, you know, we need to share about the Lord Jesus—not sports, not weather. The Bible says, *"Let us exalt his name together"* (Psalm 34:3). When we come to church, the Bible says, in Hebrews 10, verse 25, we're to be exhorting one another (Hebrews 10:25).

You'll come today, and somebody will be down, but somebody else will be up. Somebody will have a question, but somebody else will have an answer. Somebody, friend, will be discouraged, but somebody else will be encouraged. And we exalt His name together. We exhort one another. We sing about our Lord, and in our conversation so many people are putting His name down. Let's teach how to exalt His name.

C. Bear the Name

And then the Bible says we're to do it one with another. So teach your children, teach your children, a) to wear His name; b) to share His name; and c, and finally) to bear His name. It won't be easy. Did you know that the name of Jesus is hated more than any other name on the face of this earth—more than any other name? Can you believe that: loved more than any other name, but hated more than any other name?

And don't get the idea that when you wear the name and share the name you won't have any reproach. Here's a verse I want you to put in your margin—Acts chapter 5, verses 40 through 42. It talks about the apostles. The apostles had been preaching in

the name of Jesus. And the Bible says, “*And when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. And they departed from the presence of the council,*”—who? The apostles—“*...departed from the presence of the council,*”—listen to this—“*rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.*” Did you hear that? They departed from the presence of the council after they had been beaten, not complaining, but rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. “*And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ*” (Acts 5:40–42). Now there’s a concerted effort against His name, but you must bear His name.

One of the men that I admire deeply is George Beverly Shea. You know George Beverly Shea, because he has been the baritone soloist for Billy Graham for so long. Many, many years ago, I was at a breakfast at an Air Force base. I was sitting at the dais, and I was sitting there, and George Beverly Shea was sitting right next to me. We were elbow to elbow, and a man came up and said to George Beverly Shea, “Would you sing for us?” He said, “I’d be happy to.” He said, “Could you sing that song ‘How Great Thou Art’?” George Beverly Shea is a very humble man. He said, “I’d be happy to sing that song. Thank you very much.” Then the man leaned in, and he said, “You know, we have some here today who are not Christians. Could you leave out that verse that says, ‘God, His Son not sparing’?” I was sitting right next to him. I was wondering what George Beverly Shea would say—I was eavesdropping; that’s what I was doing: I was leaning in. The man said, “Could you leave out that verse about ‘God, His Son not sparing’?” And in the sweetest way, George Beverly Shea said, “Oh no.” He said, “I couldn’t leave that out.” He said, “That would be to deny my Lord.” He said, “It’s all right. I won’t sing.” Oh, I love that. “Oh,” the man said, “well, it’s all right. You can sing about Jesus.” He said, “Thank you very much.” Then he stood up there and sang about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Teach them to bear the name, to unfurl the banner, and to march under the bloodstained banner of Prince Immanuel. Don’t be ashamed of the One who died for you.

*Am I a soldier of the cross,
A follower of the Lamb,
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His name?*

—ISAAC WATTS

Conclusion

What a name! Bear the name in victory. Teach your children to wear the name. Teach them to share the name. Teach them to bear the name, and never be ashamed of that

Name above all names.

I read somewhere years ago about General William Booth, that great godly man who founded the Salvation Army. He was on his deathbed. He was dying. His family was gathered around. An attorney or somebody said, “There’s a document that would make it so much easier if General Booth would sign before he dies. It’s just a business matter; but if he doesn’t sign it, we’ll have a lot of legal and technical difficulties.” And the family came to him and said, “Daddy, you could do something that would help a lot. If before you go to see Jesus, if you’d just sign your name here for us.” The old man said, “Fine.” And they put it before him, put a pen in his hand, and he signed, and not long afterward he stepped into glory. And when they opened that document and looked, do you know what they saw? He had not signed his own name. He had just written, “Jesus.” That was the name that was on his heart more than his own name—was the Name above all names—Jesus.

One of these days, soon and very soon, we are going to see the King. And the Bible says that God has given Him a name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:9–10). I’m going to be there,

*At the name of Jesus bowing,
Falling prostrate at His feet,
King of kings in heav’n we’ll crown Him,
When our journey is complete.*

*Precious name, O how sweet!
Hope of earth and joy of heav’n.
Precious name, O how sweet!
Hope of earth and joy of heav’n.*

—LYDIA BAXTER

Thou Shalt Not Cuss

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:7

Outline

Introduction

- I. Why Is It a Sin?
 - A. It Shows Rebellion Against God
 - B. It Shows Contempt for God
 - C. It's a Fool's Sin
- II. How Can This Sin Be Committed?
 - A. Cursing
 - B. Second-Hand Cussing
 - C. Empty and Ritualistic Prayers and Worship
 - D. Swearing
 - E. Flippant Conversation
 - F. Hypocrisy
- III. What Is God Going to Do About This Sin?

Conclusion

- A. Love the Name of Jesus
- B. Spread the Name of Jesus

Introduction

I direct your attention to the book of Exodus the 20th chapter, the 7th verse: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." The message this morning is the third in a series of sermons on the Ten Commandments. The one that we have this morning deals with taking God's name in vain. This sin is a sin that comes either from an empty head or a wicked heart or both.

Now if you have been committing this sin willingly, I'd hate to be in your shoes. If you have been committing this sin ignorantly, you need to listen. Because whether it comes from a wicked heart or whether it comes from an empty head, God has said, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." And people swear and people curse because they have a profane heart. Jesus said, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Socrates said, "Speak that I may see you," not that I may hear you but that I may see you, because when we speak we show what kind of people we are.

Now I want us to think this morning about God's commandment that says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

I. Why Is It a Sin?

In the first place, why is it a sin to take God's name in vain?

A. It Shows Rebellion Against God

For several reasons, number one it shows rebellion against God. God says, "Thou shalt not," and you do it anyway. God says, "I don't want you to do it." You say, "Yes God, I know what you want me to do and what you don't want me to do but I'm going to do what I want to do whether you want me to do it or not." You see, this sin is nothing but sheer rebellion against almighty God.

I talked to a man one time about becoming a Christian and he said, "Well I don't need to be a Christian, I'm not such a bad fella." He said, "All I do is kill a few people." No, he didn't say that, he said, "All I do is swear," but he might have well as said, "All I do it kill a few people." For the same Bible that says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," says, "Thou shalt not kill." And the Bible says if we keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, we're guilty of all. And when you commit this sin, this sin of taking God's name in vain, you boldly, braggingly shake your fist in the face of God. It's the sin of rebellion and defiance against God.

B. It Shows Contempt for God

Secondly, it's a sin because it shows contempt and utter disrespect for God. Some people say, "Brother Rogers, when I take God's name in vain I don't really mean anything by it. I'm not rebelling against God. It's just a habit with me. I just say it and why, I don't mean a thing by it." And that's the thing that condemns you. The word *vain* means "meaninglessly, emptily," and you take God's name and don't mean anything by it. God's name means no more to you than any other word. And you can take His name in vain and mix the precious name of the thrice Holy God of Israel with the slime of the sewer and take it upon your tongue and not even know that you've done it. This is the thing that condemns you, that God is so mean, God is so low, God is so contemptible in your sight, that you can take His name upon your lips and not mean anything by it.

So many times after a person has sworn or cursed and you rebuke them for it, they say, "Who me? What'd I say, tell me what'd I say wrong?" Have you ever had someone do that? And they don't even realize that they have taken the name of God in vain and it shows contempt and utter disrespect for God.

C. It's a Fool's Sin

The third reason that it's so sinful and that it's so mean is that it's the fool's sin. It's a sin that is absolutely unnecessary. Now at least there's a benefit and a bliss to some sin. For example, when a man steals at least he gets the thing that he steals. When a man commits adultery, at least he satisfies his biological urges. But what does a man get

when he takes God's name in vain? Absolutely nothing, it's the fool's sin. He gains nothing by it, nothing is furthered by it, he's not helped one whit by it, it's like a fish biting a hook with no bait on it. Now it's bad enough to bite a hook but at least if you can get a worm. But I mean, I'm talking about a fish that doesn't even get a worm. He bites the hook with no bait on it. It's the fool's sin. It's absolutely useless. Therefore, it is so mean and so contemptible that a person would break one of God's Ten Commandments and gain absolutely nothing from it. What particle of good has swearing ever done? How black is the heart of those that despise the name of God for no reason whatsoever under the sun.

II. How Can This Sin Be Committed?

Now secondly, how can this sin be committed? What does a person do when he transgresses God's commandment that says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain?"

A. Cursing

In the first place, it can be done by cursing or as they used to say when I was a boy, "cussing." This is one way that you can do it. Just simply opening your mouth and letting some black vile venomous oath come out. Cursing is an unholy, devilish prayer, that's what it is. When you look a person and you're so angry and you're worked up and you say, "God damn you," you're saying, "God send him to hell." It's a wicked prayer. You say to a person, "Go to hell," this is a prayer. A prayer that God would deliver that person to the fiery caverns of hell to which Jesus died on the cross to save men and to deliver men from. Yet you want to confine them to hell.

You say, "Well I never take God's name in vain, I just say, 'Go to hell.'" My dear friend, there's only one that can send someone to hell and that's Jehovah God. In a real sense we send ourselves. You just say, "I never take God's name I just say, 'Damn it.'" There's only one who can damn and that's God. If there are just two of us in a room and I say close the door, I don't have to call you by your first name nobody else could do it, you know I'm speaking to you. And when we use these words, even though we may not even mention the name of Jehovah God, we take God's name in vain. And my dear friend, this sin is a terrible, horrible sin and God is going to judge you for it. And in my estimation, the man who will whip his child for using the same language that that child has heard his father use around the house is nothing but a no-good, low down, garden-variety hypocrite. Amen? Amen, that's right. I'm telling you the truth.

If some of you were to get converted, you'd lose half your vocabulary. And someone has said swearing is nothing but the attempt of a feeble mind to express itself forcibly. And when you pray this wicked profane prayer, when you take the precious name of

Jesus upon your lips, or the name of Jehovah God upon your lips, God says, “I’m going to judge you for it. I will not hold him guiltless that taketh my name in vain.”

B. Second-Hand Cussing

Then I’ll tell you another way that many people in this congregation have broken the spirit of this commandment, and it’s not by some open vile oath, but it’s by what I call, “second-handed cussing,” or “second-handed swearing or cursing.” Let me tell you, many of you ladies when you’re working in the kitchen and the pot boils over you say, “Oh Lord,” or “Heavens,” or “Goodness,” or “Gracious.” Who is goodness? God is goodness. Who is graciousness? God is graciousness. Who dwells in the heavens? God dwells in the heavens. Who is your Lord? Do you really mean it when you say, “Oh Lord?” Don’t look down your nose then at the other person who opens his mouth and lets out some vile oath.

Many of us would be surprised if we knew about these by-words that we use—what they really stand for. Webster’s New International Dictionary says that “gee” is a form of “Jesus” used in minced oaths, and “golly” is a euphemism for “God” used in minced oaths. When a person says, “Gee” that’s short for Jesus. When he says, “Golly” that’s just another form of God. And the dictionary goes on to say that “gosh” is a substitute for God. Darn, darned and darnation are colloquial euphemisms for damn, damned and damnation. And many a person who has said, “Gosh darned” would be surprised to know what he’s really said. This is nothing but second-handed cursing and we ought to watch our lips that this thing does not come upon our lips.

C. Empty and Ritualistic Prayers and Worship

I’ll tell you another way that many people break that spirit of this commandment, it’s through empty and ritualistic praying and worship. When you come into a worship service and you freely and glibly use the name of Jehovah God and the name of Jesus Christ and yet you do not think what you’re doing but these words idly fall from your lips, you have taken God’s name in vain. Jesus said in Matthew 6, verse 7: “But when ye pray use not vain repetition as the heathen do.” Now God says, “Don’t take my name in vain.” Jesus said when you pray don’t use vain repetition. So many people come into a service and a prayer is uttered and they mumble on through the prayer or so forth, they’ve taken God’s name in vain if they haven’t prayed with all of their heart. If they haven’t meant this thing, if they have not reverently used the name of Jehovah God, they’ve taken God’s name, the name of Jesus, in vain.

So many times people say to me, “Brother Rogers, say a prayer for me.” I don’t say prayers for anybody. I’ll pray for you but we don’t say prayers, we pray prayer. So many people just say a prayer, so many “our fathers,” so many “hail Marys,” so many this, so many that, you don’t say prayers. Suppose you and I were sitting at your kitchen table

having a cup of coffee and you looked over at me and you said, “Say a conversation,” that’d be silly wouldn’t it? You don’t say a conversation, you’d say, “let’s talk,” and we’d talk. And I don’t say a prayer, we pray. And if you’re in any kind of a congregation where people just get up and say prayers, you may be using God’s name in vain.

Jesus said, “When you pray use not vain repetition.” And this thing that many call the model prayer, The Lord’s Prayer, was never meant to be given in a public assembly by a group of saved and unsaved people together where we rattle it off in rote like that. Jesus never did say, “Pray this prayer”; Jesus said, “In this manner pray ye, our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name,” and so forth. Jesus was giving us the way to pray, not the exact words to pray. Now there may be times where you would want to pray the model prayer—the Lord’s Prayer, some call it—and it would fit the desires and the needs of your heart but you would not want to do this in mere vain repetition. This is taking God’s name in vain—empty and ritualistic prayer and worship.

I wonder how many times when you’ve been in a prayer meeting and your mind has been wondering, you’ve been wool gathering and making business deals and sewing dresses and polishing your automobile and everything in your mind while the prayer service was going on and then at the end you mumble a prayer, “in Jesus’ name, Amen.” You’ve taken His name in vain. How many times when you’ve prayed and you’ve said, “For Jesus’ sake,” when really it was for your sake and you forged the name of Jesus Christ to the end of your prayer and you have taken His name in vain.

D. Swearing

I say that you can take His name in vain by some vile oath, you can take His name in vain by second-handed cursing, you can take His name in vain by empty and ritualistic praying. And I’ll tell you another way that you can take His name in vain and that’s by swearing. Matthew 5, verse 34, Jesus said, “But I say unto you, swear not at all.” Now there’s a difference in cursing and swearing. Swearing is taking an oath with the name of Jehovah God to prove anything is true. In other words, you’re talking to a man and you say, “Is this thing true?” And he says, “Yes, I swear to God it’s true.” Jesus said, “Swear not at all, don’t swear by heaven, don’t swear by earth, don’t swear by your own head.” Jesus said, “Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay.” That means if a person asked you a question, you have the type of character that when you give them an answer it can be “yes” or “no” and they’ll believe you.

As a matter of fact when I’m talking to a man and he says, “Preacher, I swear to God it’s so, you can ask my wife and so on.” I don’t believe him then, in other words, the minute he starts swearing. I want a man to have the kind of character that where he can just say, “Yes” and I’ll believe him. I’ll say, “Is this true?” And, he’ll say, “Yes.” “Is this false?” And he’ll say, “Yes” or “No,” whatever the case may be. This is what Jesus

meant. He said, “Swear not at all.”

E. Flippant Conversation

Why do we have to bring God into these things? So many times we bring our Heavenly Father into these things, empty and ritualistic praying and worship, swearing, loose conversation, and joking about God Almighty, even preachers are guilty of this. God comes into their jokes and their jesting. And a joke that involves the Almighty, unless there’s some point to illustrate or something that would glorify Jesus as a result of the thing, is not funny. It’s not funny.

And many who would look down their noses at those who curse and use gutter language are guilty themselves of using God’s name in such a flippant way. How many of you have gotten in the habit when someone sneezes of saying, “God bless you”? Well, do you mean it? I mean have you thought about it? Do you really mean God bless you my dear friend or is this some little ol’ habit that you’ve gotten into, some good luck charm or something, and you just say flippantly, “God bless you,” like you might say anything else? Loose use of the name of God.

Sometimes when these ungodly entertainers sign off a television program with a big, “God bless you,” after their beer commercial it makes me almost want to throw up, and yet, they do it. Jane Russell, supposed to have gotten a little religion, she got in this Hollywood group, you know, and started singing these choruses and then she said when someone interviewed her and asked her about her religion, “Oh,” she said, “I think God is a living doll.” My friend God is no living doll. God is the thrice holy God of Israel, that’s who He is. No, these use the name of Jehovah God so flippantly and they sing their songs, “Have you talked to the man upstairs.” And I’ve heard a man talk about the “old man upstairs,” He’s no old man upstairs, He’s Jehovah God. He said, “I’m the Lord, no man,” yet how flippantly and how loosely people use the name of God.

The pious Jew in the Old Testament was so careful about the name of God that when they were writing the Old Testament manuscripts and writing the scriptures, even though a man may have been writing for months or even years, if he made a mistake, even copying the name of God, he was not allowed to erase that mistake and start again, the whole manuscript was destroyed and he started again at the first to copy that manuscript. He would not even step on a piece of paper on the ground less per chance that the name of Jehovah God might be inscribed upon that piece of paper. And yet, how carelessly, how flippantly do we speak of God in such an oft-handed term that one of these so-called entertainers who was asked about Jesus Christ said, “Yes, I’m real hep on that cat Jesus Christ.”

F. Hypocrisy

You can take God’s name in vain by cursing, you can do it by second-handed cursing,

you can do it by empty and ritualistic praying and worship, you can do it by swearing, you can do it by loose flippant conversation and joking, and you can do it without ever opening your mouth. You can do it by hypocrisy. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2, verse 19, “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” God says if you have the name of Jesus upon you then quit living like a pagan, quit living like an unsaved person. “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ,” in other words, don’t take my name in vain.

When you become a Christian you take the name of Jesus. You are a Christian. Christ plus i.a.n. And the i.a.n. stands for I am nothing. Christ and I am nothing. That’s not really what it stands for but that’ll be a good thing for you to remember. A Christian: Christ and I am nothing. I’m a Christian, I have taken the name of Jesus Christ, I am now a Christian. Now the Bible says, “Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” In other words, don’t take His name in vain. Don’t profess to be one thing and live another thing.

Alexander the Great conquered the known world by the time he was thirty-three years of age and in many respects he was a contemptible man, selfish and egotistical, but he had some principles about him. One thing that Alexander the Great hated more than anything else was a sneak thief and a coward. And it was reported to Alexander the Great that one of his soldiers in his army was a sneak thief. He’d been pilfering things from the knapsacks, and so forth, from the other men and from their barracks and so Alexander asked that the man be brought to him. And this soldier came and stood before Alexander the Great, the great warlord, the great general who had conquered all the known world of his time, and Alexander looked at him and in order that he might address him, Alexander said, “Sir, what is your name? And the man grinned a little and he said, “Why sir, my name is the same as yours. We both have the same name. My name too is Alexander.” When Alexander heard that the blood rushed to his face and he grabbed this man by his lapel and pulled him up closely and said, “Sir, change your ways or change your name.” And I believe that’s what Jesus Christ would say to many people who are flying under the banner “Christian.”

Are you a Christian? If you are a Christian, or if you go by the name of Christian, Jesus would say, “Change your name or change your ways. Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” Aren’t you a little jealous over your name? Do you like to see your name abused? Do you like to see your name written in public places where it ought not to be? Would you like to have your name forged to the bottom of some checks? Aren’t you a little careful your name is spelled right and how it’s used and what people say about you after they use your name? Jehovah God is jealous of His name.

In a community where I used to preach not many miles from there, there was a man

by the name of, believe it or not, Adrian Rogers. Not me but another fella named Adrian Rogers. He was my same age. And people who have seen us both say we look enough alike to be brothers and he lived just a few miles from there. Now this is no story, I'm telling you the truth—Adrian Rogers. But the thing of it is one day this fella was arrested for gambling. Adrian Rogers arrested for gambling. Put in the paper and you know what the papers say, "If you don't want it printed don't let it happen." Another time this fella shot a turkey out of season. Adrian Rogers shot a turkey out of season. Well, I never shot a turkey, I was glad to get credit for that, but the out of season part was the part that I didn't like. One time he was sick, put in the hospital, lot of people went up there to see me and saw him. I think perhaps he could use a few visits. But the point is that I felt like seeing that fella and if I ever get the opportunity I'm gonna have a good long talk to him about the use of that name.

Now I believe the Lord would say to many of us who go by the name of Christian and we represent the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island and all that Jehovah God stands for, "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." And my dear friend, if you do not intend to live for Jesus Christ then for God's sake announce that you're an infidel and don't smear the name of Jesus Christ. Get out! Don't be half in and half out. Get in for Jesus and stand up for Jesus and be true to Jesus. But when you parade under the banner, the blood stained banner of our Prince and our King the Lord Jesus Christ, and yet you're a scoundrel and you have named the name of Jesus, you take His name in vain.

III. What Is God Going to Do About This Sin?

You can do it by hypocrisy, by ungodly living while you profess to be a Christian without ever opening your mouth, you can take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. But what's God going to do about this sin? God's going to judge this sin. God's word thunders in Exodus 20, verse 7: "For the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." And God's word says in Matthew 12, verse 36: "That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Now you may think it's a small thing to take God's name in vain but God says you're going to answer for it. Every idle word, every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

You know men can record what we say. Every time I preach, there's someone up there recording what I say. This message is being recorded. I've preached sermons sometimes that I've had no idea were being recorded. Maybe as much as a year or two later I'd come back to a certain community and someone would say, "Do you remember when you were here in our community?" Said, "You preached thus and such a message," and they'd put it on the recorder and I listened to it. There it is, every word,

every syllable, every mispronunciation, they're all right there. Everything I said. I can't say, "I didn't say it," it's there.

Now I want to tell you my dear friend if puny man can do that, what can God Almighty do? And every word that you've spoken has been recorded with a pin of iron and letters of flame and rocks of lead. The Bible says God is keeping books and one of these days you're going to face the record. One of these days you're going to stand before Jehovah God and the time you thought it was cute and the time you mixed the name of Jesus with that slime and took that precious name upon your lips, the time you cursed your creator and the time you cursed your fellow man, you're going to stand before God and you're going to give an account.

You can laugh at it and smirk at it if you want but I'll warn you, my dear friend, the Bible says, "As the Lord liveth every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God." And so then, every one of us shall give an account of himself unto God. We're going to have to answer. Oh I know there's some wise acres, you know, there's some people who'd make fun of this message and they'll continue to swear but Mister you're just a coward that's all you are. You curse God behind His back but I want to see you stand at the judgment bar of God and curse Him to His face. You'll not curse Him then. You'll not curse Him then when you stand face-to-face with Almighty God, you'll fall on your face and scream and say, "Oh God have mercy." You'll beg for mercy then and it'll be too late. You've cursed Him behind His back; I wonder will you curse Him to His face?

The Bible says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain for God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." God will judge this sin but I'll tell you something else He'll do, He'll forgive it. And though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow and though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool. And God has also promised that if we have been guilty of doing this, if we will come to the Lord and confess our sin to the Lord, the Lord will do two things for us. Oh praise God, in the first place, every sin that we've ever committed, everything including swearing and cursing and all of the rest of it, Jesus will wash it and make it whiter than snow and every stain, every blot, every blur, that ever came across a human soul Jesus can wash it and bury it in the deepest sea. That's good isn't it, that all of our sin is gone.

But He'll do something even better. He'll do what He did for me because I had a profane heart and therefore a dirty mouth. He'll do something better. Not only will He forgive what you've already said, but bless His name, He'll come into your heart and give you a new heart. And you see what's down in the well will come up in the bucket, you see. And if you've got a profane heart you're going to have a profane mouth. But when Jesus gives you a new heart then He's going to put His praises upon your lips. And this is the wonderful thing, you want me to tell you how to quit cussing, just get all

the cuss out of you. That's all, just get the cuss out. Get Jesus in, and this is the thing, not only does He forgive the past but Jesus Christ comes into your heart and the Bible says, "If any man be in Christ Jesus he's a new creature."

Conclusion

I must close, but let me strike a positive note before I close. Let me mention some things that we should do with the name of Jesus. We've said what we ought not to do with the name of Jesus but we can't leave it there. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain," but what *should* we do?

A. Love the Name of Jesus

Oh my dear friend, let's love the name of Jesus, let's love it. Isn't it a beautiful name, Jesus. Oh I appreciated while our brother prayed about the most beautiful name that could ever be formed on human lips. It fits just right on your tongue doesn't it? Jesus, oh how sweet the name. Jesus, let all saints proclaim. Jesus, every day the same. The blessed name of Jesus. Let's love the name of Jesus. If you spend time loving Him and praising Him, you won't spend time cursing Him.

B. Spread the Name of Jesus

And then secondly, let's not only love the name of Jesus but let's spread the name of Jesus. Let's tell others about this name. Take the Name of Jesus with you, child of sorrow and of woe, it will joy and comfort give you, take it then, where'er you go. Blessed name, precious name, take the name, let the name of Jesus go from this place to the darkest corners of the earth. Let's spread the greatest name in the world, the name of Jesus. Let's love it. Let's spread it. Then, let's defend it.

Some of you, if someone were to say something about your mother in an oath, you'd say, "Let's fight. You can't talk about my mother that way." Well, let's not let them talk about our Lord. I don't mean let's fight them but, my dear friend, let's defend the name of Jesus. Let's not let the character of our Lord be sullied and us go there by default and sin by our silence. And when somebody takes the name of Christ in vain, let's say, "Do you know who you're talking about?" Or, "Careful there, you're talking about my best friend," or, "Let me tell you about the person you just mentioned," or, "Do you know Him that well," or, "You shouldn't do that my dear friend. Oh you ought not to do that. Let me tell you about the person to whom you're talking to." But we ought not to be sinfully silent when the Lord's name is taken in vain.

I heard of a man, I don't know whether I agree with his tactics or not but I certainly admire him, in Detroit. Don Loney tells about this man in Detroit. In a great civic auditorium an after dinner speech was being given and the man who was the keynote speaker, this was not a religious gathering at all it was a gathering of businessmen, and

the man who was the keynote speaker was telling some very interesting things but he couldn't keep the name of Jesus and cursing out of it. And he cursed and profaned the name of Jesus over and over again in this speech until finally one man who had some character about him sitting out there couldn't take it any longer. He got up out of his chair there by the dining table and stood on his chair and said, "Wait a minute." And everybody looked at this man standing on his chair in the middle of a speech and this man pointed his finger at the face of the man on the platform and he said, "Let's leave Jesus Christ out of this." At the close of that speech more people came by to shake his hand than came by to shake the hand of the man standing up there giving the speech.

I believe that somehow we ought to let people know where we stand and no longer be ashamed of our Christ. And we ought to love the name and we ought to spread the name and we ought to defend the name, but we ought to confess the name. Have you confessed Jesus as your Savior, have you? Have you openly and publicly, unashamedly, boldly, stood up in a congregation like this and confessed the name of Jesus? Jesus said, "If you'll confess me before men then I will also confess you before my Father which is in heaven. But if you deny me before men then I'll deny you before my Father who's in heaven." I wonder how many people who have never done it before this morning will come down this isle and confess the name of Jesus.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. We're going to sing an invitation hymn and I'm going to ask you in just a moment, don't turn to it now, I'm going to ask you when we sing to leave your seat and openly and publically come to Jesus.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Every head bowed, every eye closed and I want us to be in a spirit of prayer. While we're praying, if you're not saved, would you ask Jesus to save you now? Would you ask Jesus to take out the old heart and give you a new heart? The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Right where you are, if you'll turn from your sin and open your heart and say, "Jesus, come into my heart and save me," Jesus will save you. I'll guarantee it. I promise it on the authority of this Book that if you'll ask Him, if you'll mean it, if you'll be sincere, if you'll be judgment day honest, and say, "Jesus come into my heart and save me," Jesus Christ will come into your heart and save you. I know He will. He's never turned anyone down. He'll not turn you down.

Jesus said, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Right where you are won't you say, "Lord, I'll trust you. And if you'll just give me the strength when that song is sung I'll be down that aisle. I'll openly confess the name of Jesus." Will you do it right where you are, ask Him to save you, promise Him that as soon as we start to sing that

you'll step out and say, "Yes." There are others of you who need to move your letter, I'm going to pray for you too as we pray.

God, bless these who are lost. Help them, dear Lord, this morning to love and confess the name of Jesus, to take His name, to be called by His name, to be called a Christian. Help them to come and openly, publically, without any shame, confess the Lord Jesus. These who need to move their letter, send them, dear Lord, willingly down this aisle to take a stand with Christ and with His church and with His people. Holy Spirit of God, have thy way in the invitation we pray. Amen.

How to Make the Rest Day the Best Day

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 21, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:8–11

Outline

Introduction

- I. Creation Rest
- II. The Covenant Rest
- III. Calvary Rest
 - A. Nine Facts About the First Day of the Week
 1. Jesus Rose from the Dead on the First Day of the Week
 2. Jesus Met with His Disciples After His Resurrection on the First Day of the Week
 3. Jesus Met with the Disciples Eight Days Later, on the First Day of the Week
 4. The Apostles Were Commissioned to Preach the Gospel on the First Day of the Week
 5. The Holy Spirit Was Imparted to the Apostles on the First Day of the Week
 6. The Church Was Born on the First Day of the Week
 7. The Book of Revelation Was Given upon the First Day of the Week
 8. The Early Church Met for Worship upon the First Day of the Week
 9. They Took Their Offerings on the First Day of the Week
 - B. How to Keep the Lord's Day
 - C. Three Principles to Help You Keep a Wonderful Lord's Day
 1. Take Time to be Holy
 2. Take Time to be Healthy
 3. Take Time to be Happy

Conclusion

Introduction

And may I say that, in this day, when we're supposed to have so many devices to save time, I've never seen so many hurried and restless people. If the computer is to save time, and the cellular phone is to save time, and the calculator, and all of these things, are to save time, why are we so behind time? It seems like, with all that we've done, really, about all we have added is speed and noise. We get there faster, but we don't know where we're going. And when we get there, we're out of breath.

I read one time about a man who swallowed an egg whole, and he was afraid to move. He was afraid it would break. But he was afraid to sit still. He was afraid it would

hatch.

And there are a lot of folks who are like that today. I mean, we're just running around so frenetically. And the pressure is on the family—so many restless homes today.

Now God has given us a recipe to deal with restless homes. You are going to learn something very wonderful today, if you'll pay attention. And these commandments relate directly to the home. Homes, today, are a place of upheaval. There used to be a time when a man would come home, put his hat down, wipe his brow, and say, "Boy, it's good to be home! There's a jungle out there." Well, folks, today, the jungle is on the inside.

Now, what do we do about that? What is God's cure for restlessness in the home, and therefore for peace outside the home? Well, we're going to think about that today. God has given us a day of rest. Many of us don't use it. We don't even really know much about it. But I want to speak to you today on this subject: "How to Make the Rest Day the Best Day."

Now, let's look at it, in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 8: *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it"* (Exodus 20:8–11).

Now God gave to His ancient people, the Jewish nation, a wonderful gift: it was the Sabbath Day, and it was a gift. Jesus told us, in Mark chapter 2 and verse 27, that *"the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath"* (Mark 2:27). And all of the commandments of God were made for us. You see, even when we honor the Lord, it doesn't make Him any more holy; it just makes us more holy. All of these commandments were made for us—even the ones that give God glory and cause us to love other people. I reminded you before, and I'll remind you again. *God did not make these Ten Commandments to make us squirm like a worm in hot ashes trying to keep them.* God's laws are for our welfare. Man was not made for the Sabbath; the Sabbath was made for man. *And every time God says, "Thou shalt not," He just simply says, "Don't hurt yourself." And every time God says, "Thou shalt," He says, "Help yourself to happiness"*

Now God gave the Old Testament Sabbath to Israel. It was a wonderful gift to them. God has given to us something even better. It is the Lord's Day, which is the transformation of the Sabbath into something even more wonderful, and it is a fulfillment of the Sabbath. We're going to talk about that in a moment. But you as a Christian family have been given a day; and if you'll use it properly, and enjoy it as you should, it

will be one of the best treasures, the richest treasures, in your treasure chest of family values.

Now the very word *sabbath* means, “rest”—that’s what the word means. It’s a transliteration of a Hebrew word *shabat*; and it means, “rest.” It doesn’t mean, “seventh”; but it means “rest.” It’s a transliteration of a word; it’s a word taken from Hebrew, and we just put it into English. Now there are three primary rest days. Now, get this—if you get this, you’ll keep your traces straight. First of all, there’s the creation rest; secondly, there’s the covenant rest; and, thirdly, there’s the Calvary rest. Got ’em? Now, let me explain to you.

I. Creation Rest

What is the creation rest? Well, when God created the world, when He finished creating the world in six days, then He rested.

Put this in your margin—in Genesis chapter 2, verses 1, 2 and 3: *“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the hosts of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he”—God—“rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made”* (Genesis 2:1–3). God made it in six days; and then He rested.

“Pastor, was He tired?” Of course not! He doesn’t get tired. Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 28 says God never gets weary (Isaiah 40:28). “Well, why did He rest, then?”

Well, why do we have a rest in music—because the musicians are tired? Because they want to have a pause for emphasis and reflection, and to rejoice in what has just gone before, and to let it sink in. And so God now is resting, like a musician would rest in a musical score.

But listen to this. God’s rest has been disturbed. God has been interrupted. What disturbed God’s rest and put God back to work? Sin! Did you know that God’s rest has been interrupted? Put this verse down—John chapter 5 and verse 17. Jesus had just healed a man on the Sabbath day, the day of rest; Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees, in whom the milk of human kindness had curdled—the Pharisees condemned Him for working on the Sabbath Day. And this is what Jesus said—listen to it: *“Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work”* (John 5:17). God’s rest had been disturbed, and the rest of God’s first creation has been disturbed. But there was creation rest.

II. The Covenant Rest

The second rest is the covenant rest—the creation rest that pertained to God Almighty; the covenant rest that pertains to the nation Israel. When God had a special people, the

Jews, God gave them a special day, and it was the seventh-day rest, which is yesterday, the last day of the week.

Put these verses in your margin—Exodus chapter 31, beginning in verse 13: *“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel...”*—now, notice— *“the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you”*—between God and the children of Israel—*“throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you”* (Exodus 31:13). And then verse 16: *“Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for”*—listen—*“a perpetual covenant.”* It is a covenant Sabbath. *“It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever”* (Exodus 31:16–17). So there was the creation rest; and then there’s the covenant rest. God gave the Old Testament seventh-day Sabbath to the Jew—to the Jew. It was a covenant between God and the children of Israel.

Now we have people today who say they want to keep the Sabbath like the people in the Old Testament kept it. Well, be very careful, because if you think that you are keeping the Sabbath today, or if you think that you kept the Sabbath yesterday, be very, very careful. To break an Old Testament Sabbath law meant sudden death. For example, in this passage that I just read in Exodus chapter 31, in verse 15, it says, *“Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD:”*—listen to this—*“whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death”* (Exodus 31:15). Do you know what the Old Testament penalty for breaking the Sabbath was? Death—if you did any work. For example, if you built a fire on the Sabbath, you would be put to death. Exodus chapter 35 and verse 3: *“Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day”* (Exodus 35:3). Now if you say, today, “I’m going to keep the Sabbath like they did in the Old Testament,” you’ve got a lot of trouble, because if you start a fire, you are worthy of death.

Did you start your engine today—your automobile? You started a fire in every one of those cylinders. Did you turn on an incandescent bulb today when you flicked a light switch? You started a fire in that light switch. Did you adjust your thermostat, if you thought it was a little cold, and your furnace went on? You started a fire. You committed a crime worthy of death, if you put yourself under the Old Testament covenant Sabbath that was between God and Israel when there was a theocracy.

Now to make matters worse, there are thirty-nine words in this commandment, in the Hebrew language, that talk about the Sabbath. And so the Jews added to the Word of God, and they found thirty-nine ways that you could break the Sabbath. But they weren’t content with that, so they took each of these thirty-nine ways and broke them down into thirty-nine divisions. And when they finished, they had 1,521 ways you could break the Sabbath. As Jesus said, “You made vain the law of God with your tradition” (Mark 7:9).

They had all kinds of things. They said, for example, if you got a tack in your shoe, you'd better take it out on Friday night before sunset, or you'll be carrying a burden on the Sabbath—you broke the Sabbath. If you got a flea on you, you'd better get him off before sunset on Friday. If not, and you try to kill him on Saturday, you are hunting on the Sabbath day. Seriously, they would not eat an egg that was laid on Saturday, because that hen was working on the Sabbath day. You could put vinegar in your mouth and swallow it, for it was all right to eat on the Sabbath day; but don't hold it in there very long, if you have a toothache, for that was healing on the Sabbath day.

They had taken this Sabbath day, and they'd made all these little minute laws about the Sabbath day. And one of the things that they hated Jesus for was, they said, "He has broken our Sabbath." It didn't matter that He was going around healing and doing works of mercy, and love, and so forth.

But let me say there was creation rest. When God created the world, He rested. Then, there was the covenant rest. God gave the Sabbath to Israel, and it was supposed to be a blessing to Israel. But they so contorted it, that they made it—what was to be a blessing—a burden.

III. Calvary Rest

Now, here's the third rest, and this is what applies to you—remember, the word *Sabbath* means, "rest": there is a Calvary rest. That's the fulfillment of the Sabbath for us, and that's how we apply this command to us today. You see, the Old Testament Sabbath, as were all of the Old Testament ceremonies, they were also prophecies; they pointed to something even more wonderful. And I'm going to show you in a moment that the Bible says that the Sabbath was a shadow that pointed toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

When did God rest? After His first creation. When did Jesus rest? After His new creation. You know, the Bible says, "*If any man be in Christ, he is*"—what?—"a new creature" (2 Corinthians 5:17). So, remember, Jesus said, "*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*" (John 5:17). Remember that Jesus said, "I must finish the work of Him that sent me, while it is day" (John 9:4). Jesus came to do a labor. What was that labor? To create a new race, a new creation. "*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Now Jesus said, "*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day*" (John 9:4). He says, "I've got to get this work done." When He bowed His head on the cross and died, He said what? "It's finished." "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). "My work is done." And then the Bible tells us, thank God, in Hebrews chapter 10, verse 12—listen to this—"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:13).

Jesus did His work. It's finished. And now He is sitting down. In the Old Testament Temple, the priest never had a place to sit, because his work was never done. But

Jesus' work is done. It is finished, and He is resting from His work. What work? The new creation. He has made a new creation.

Now, take your Bibles, and let me show you something that will bless you. Turn to Colossians, if you will—chapter 2—and look with me—Colossians chapter 2, verse 13: *“And you, being dead in your sins”—all of us were dead without Christ—“and in the uncircumcision of your flesh,”*—that is, we have this sinful nature—*“hath he quickened together with him”*—what does that mean? When Jesus rose from the grave, hallelujah, we rose with Him—*“having forgiven you all trespasses;”*—glory to God! We were dead; now we're alive. We were in sin; now we are forgiven. Here's what else He did—*“blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”*—well, in Bible times, if a man committed a crime, and he was adjudicated guilty, the court clerk would write down the crimes that he had done, and when he would be put in prison, they would nail that certificate of debt to the prison door. And it was called a *certificate of debt*, or *the handwriting of ordinances*. Well, look. Jesus just took that handwriting of ordinances that was against us as criminals against heaven's King, and He blotted it out. He took it out of the way. He just stamped on that, *“It is finished.”* The words *“it is finished”* mean “paid in full,” paid with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He stamped “paid in full,” and ripped it from the door, and set the prisoners free—*“and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it”* (Colossians 2:13–15). Satan hounded Jesus to the cross. It was the worst thing he'd ever done, because Satan's seeming victory was his biggest defeat. And Jesus, through death, destroyed *“him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14).

That's verse 15. Now, look in verse 16: *“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday...or of the sabbath days...”*—literally, *the Sabbath*. The word *days* is supplied in the King James Version of the Scripture—*“the sabbath days:”*—verse 17—*“which are a shadow of things to come”* (Colossians 2:16–17)—the *“shadow of things to come.”* Coming events cast the shadow before them. The Sabbath days were a shadow of things to come. Don't ever let anybody say, “Oh, you started a fire on the Sabbath day; you ought to be stoned.” Don't let anybody say, “You took a Sabbath day's journey; you transgressed and went too far. You ought to be stoned.” Don't let anybody judge you. That was the covenant Sabbath. That was the covenant rest. It was between God and Israel. It was a shadow of things to come.

Now there's my shadow down here on this platform. The light is up there, and the shadow is down here; and here I am. Well, is that me? or, is this me? Well, here I am. That's the shadow. No, here I am. Here I am. Now, listen to me—listen to me. Have you ever seen a dog chasing the shadow of a bird on the ground? *Ruff, ruff, ruff, ruff.* He's chasing the shadow, and the bird is up there. These people who are still trying to keep

the covenant Sabbath, the Old Testament Sabbath, are chasing shadows. They're chasing shadows.

Jesus is the body. The Sabbath is only—the Old Testament Sabbath—was a shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ. The body is of Christ. The Sabbath is the shadow that pointed to the body. Don't miss Jesus! That's the reason Jesus could say, in Matthew chapter 11 and verse 28, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"* (Matthew 11:28). "I will give you rest. I am your rest. I have made a new creation. I am now sitting at the right hand of the Father. It is done. It is finished. It is paid in full." And now the Lord Jesus is our finished rest.

Now, let me let me point out some things to you. This is why we celebrate the first day of the week. This is the Lord's Day. Sunday is the day that we're here today to worship. Why? Because Jesus burst asunder the bonds of death and came out of that grave upon the first day of the week. And it is called in the Bible, in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 10, *"the Lord's day"* (Revelation 1:10). The Sabbath is never called *"the Lord's Day"*—not the Old Testament covenant Sabbath. But the new creation Calvary Sabbath is called *"the Lord's Day."*

A. Nine Facts About the First Day of the Week

I want to give you nine facts, and listen to them very carefully. I don't have time to dwell on them.

1. Jesus Rose from the Dead on the First Day of the Week

Jesus rose from the dead the first day of the week. Mark 16:9: *"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week."*

2. Jesus Met with His Disciples After His Resurrection on the First Day of the Week

Fact number two: Jesus met with His disciples after His resurrection on the first day of the week (Mark 16:11).

3. Jesus Met with the Disciples Eight Days Later, on the First Day of the Week

Jesus met with them eight days later, upon the first day of the week. John chapter 20, verses 19 and 20: *"Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you"* (John 20:19).

4. The Apostles Were Commissioned to Preach the Gospel on the First Day of the Week

They were commissioned to preach the gospel on the first day of the week. John 20, verse 21: *"Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you"* (John 20:21).

5. The Holy Spirit Was Imparted to the Apostles on the First Day of the Week

The Holy Spirit was imparted to them upon the first day of the week. John 20, verse 22: *“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost”* (John 20:22).

6. The Church Was Born on the First Day of the Week

Later, on the Day of Pentecost, the Church was born on the first day of the week. The Day of Pentecost was on Sunday, the first day of the week—Acts 2 and verse 1 (Acts 2:1).

7. The Book of Revelation Was Given upon the First Day of the Week

The Book of the Revelation was given upon the first day of the week—Revelation 1, verse 10 (Revelation 1:10).

8. The Early Church Met for Worship upon the First Day of the Week

The early church met for worship upon the first day of the week. Acts 20, verse 7: *“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them”* (Acts 20:7).

9. They Took Their Offerings on the First Day of the Week

On the first day of the week, they took their offerings. First Corinthians 16, verse 2: *“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him”* (1 Corinthians 16:2)—on the first day of the week, the first day of the week.

Remember this about today. This is not—listen—this is not the weekend. It is the first day of the week, and you started it right by being in the house of God. *“Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread”* (Acts 20:7). Upon the first day of the week, they preached. They had the Lord’s Supper. They took their offerings upon the first day of the week, for our Lord has taken the Old Testament Sabbath, and He has fulfilled it. He has transformed it. And there was the creation rest. There was the covenant rest. But, thank God—hallelujah—for the Calvary rest, when Jesus said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30)—“it is paid in full.”

What is the difference? The first, the covenant Sabbath, speaks of the finished work of creation; the believer’s rest speaks of the finished work of redemption. The first deals with natural life; ours deals with supernatural life. The first dealt with life in Adam; ours deals with life in Christ. The first commemorated the work of God’s hands; this commemorates the work of God’s heart. The first was a display of God’s power; this is a display of God’s grace. The first was given to Israel; this is given to the Church. The first was a day of law; this is a day of love. And those who insist on keeping the Old Testament covenant rest are on the wrong side of Calvary. They’re still chasing shadows. I hope you understand that.

B. How to Keep the Lord's Day

So Jesus is saying, "Come unto me, and I'll give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Now that brings the question—the rest of the time I have is this: "Pastor, if we're not under those Old Testament laws of the Sabbath, how do we, then, keep the Lord's Day? What are the laws? What are the regulations for keeping the first day of the week?" I cannot give you any rules, because the Bible does not give any. Hello? The Bible doesn't give any. Now, be careful that you don't try to take the Old Testament rules concerning the Sabbath and apply them to Sunday, the Lord's Day, because, if you do, you'll get in trouble in a skinny minute, because you're going to find out that you're going to be breaking the Old Testament Sabbath every time you turn around—that covenant Sabbath with Israel. That doesn't mean that we've jettisoned the Ten Commandments that say, "*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy*" (Exodus 20:8). That is, we simply see it in its ultimate fulfillment as it applies to the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Is it a holy day?" Absolutely, it's a holy day—the Lord's Day, because it is the Lord's Day. But it's a day of love and not legalism. "Pastor, is it all right to watch television on Sunday? Is it all right to go to a ballgame on Sunday? Is it all right, pastor, to eat out on Sunday? Is it all right to read the newspaper on Sunday? Could I play softball on Sunday? Could I go out in a boat on Sunday? Could I go to the grocery store, if we're out of milk, on Sunday?" Good questions. You know the only thing wrong with those questions? You asked the wrong man. It's not my day; it's the Lord's Day. It's the Lord's Day. Ask Him, "Lord, how can I honor you on this day? How can I take this day and give you glory, and give you reverence, and give you praise, so at the end of that day, I'll say, 'Lord, that was your day?'" I know what some of you are going to say: "Well, pastor, every day's a holy day with me." Yeah, that's true, but the Lord's Day is extra special.

Now we're to "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). But Jesus said also, when you pray, enter into your closet and pray (Matthew 6:6). That's extra special. We know that all of our possessions belong to God, but He also says bring your offering to God on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:2). That's extra special. When we bring our offerings, that's a token that all of it belongs to God. And when we keep the Lord's Day, that's a token that every day belongs to God. Yes, every day is a holy day. And every place is a sacred place. But yet He said, "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Hebrews 10:25).

C. Three Principles to Help You Keep a Wonderful Lord's Day

Now in our remaining time, I want to give you three principles to help you to keep what I consider to be a wonderful Lord's Day. Do you know what the Lord's Day is? It's just a time-out for God. You ever been playing a ballgame, and just a needed time-out? It is a time-out for God. And here are three things I want to suggest to moms and dads

that God will give to you to make your home a home that wins as you keep the Lord's Day. We say, "Time out for God." How to make the rest day the best day.

Now you ought to make this day a holy day, a healthy day, and a happy day. You got it? If you keep those words in mind, you'll make this day, the Lord's Day, a holy day, make it a healthy day, and make it a happy day, as you take time out for God. Now so, take time to be holy and worship on the Lord's Day. Now the Bible commands New Testament Christians to come together to worship. Hebrews 10, verse 25, says we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We are not to do it. We are commanded to come as brothers and sisters to worship. Now, when do we do it? The early church did it on the first day of the week. Remember Acts chapter 20: *"Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them"* (Acts 20:7). So one day—on every Lord's Day—set aside time to come to church and worship.

Fathers, listen very carefully to your pastor. One of the best things you can do is to make church attendance on the Lord's Day a regular habit in your home. Little eyes are watching. Little ears are listening. Psalm 145, verse 4: *"One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts"* (Psalm 145:4). Isaiah 38, verse 19: *"The father to the children shall make known thy truth"* (Isaiah 38:19). Dads, make church attendance the highest priority. More important than your work on Monday is your worship on Sunday.

Do you know, we kind of insult God, don't we? Try this on your boss sometime. Just say, "I didn't come in this Monday, because we had unexpected company come." See how he likes that. Or just say to your boss someday, "You know, I was just so tired, I slept in this morning." See if he likes that. Or just say, "You know, things have been pretty hectic, so we just all decided to go to the beach today. I'm sorry I didn't come in." Do you know what you say to your children when you don't make church attendance a regular habit? You're saying, "That's nice, but it's not a necessity. Now, when I go to work, hey, that's important." Teach your children what is important.

What we are doing here today is very important. And when you get up and go to worship on the Lord's Day—the Lord's Day—do you know what you're saying to your children? You're saying, "God is important to me; my church is important to me; and these, my brothers and sisters in Christ, are important to me." And when you take time out for God, take time out to be holy. And it's not necessarily easy, but how can you teach your children? Pay the price. How can you teach your children to love the Lord's Day? I discussed this with Joyce. We thought about it. And how have we tried to teach our children?

1. Take Time to be Holy

Number one: with anticipation. Start getting ready on Saturday for Sunday. The

evening and the morning are the first day. Your day begins at sunset, so save Saturday nights to get ready for the Lord's Day. Get your shoes polished Saturday night. Get those clothes laid out Saturday. Find the Sunday School lesson. Go over the lesson Saturday night. Get your offering out on Saturday night and have it ready. You know, Sunday mornings can be frenetic. Say *amen*. Hey, it's harder to get ready for Sunday School than it is for regular school. You have to get ready. And husbands—Joyce told me to say this part—husbands, help get the children ready.

I heard about one woman who said to her husband, "Look, if you'll come in here and help get the kids ready, I'll go out, sit in the car, and honk the horn."

Now, have a nice breakfast on Sunday morning. Have time for special prayer for the services, and the Sunday School teachers, and so forth. Joyce and I try to have breakfast together, and hold hands, and pray for our pastors in this town. We pray. I pray for a number of pastors most every Sunday in this town. And then I pray for pastors around the world, and especially across America, on Sunday. I pray for you. I pray, Jim, for you on Sunday morning, that God will bless you. Let your children enter into that. Give your children a special offering, so, when they come to church, they are giving something—not something you gave them to give, but something that they earned or something out of their own allowance.

Be positive about church. Parents, please listen to me. Say a good word about the church before your children. Don't criticize the church before your children. If you have a word of criticism, say it at the right time, in the right spirit, to the right person. You know why some kids don't go to church? Because their parents never set a priority. They never really get ready. And then, you know what they have for dinner? Roast preacher, or roast deacon, or roast choir director. And they begin to talk about these kinds of things. Oh, friends, bring your children to church, and your teenagers, and when you sing, let them see you singing. Encourage them to sing. Get them a Bible they can read. Take your school-age children, and teach them how to make notes, and to keep their notes. Discuss these things in the house of God. Make church attendance a very wonderful and a happy thing. And so, take time to be holy.

2. Take Time to be Healthy

Number two: Take time to be healthy—not only worship on this day, but rest on this day. Rest on this day. Rest on this day. Now you need to teach children to work, because this commandment not only tells us to rest, in the Old Testament, but it tells us to work. And while the ceremonial part may be gone, the principle is still there: "*Six days shalt thou labour*" (Exodus 20:9).

I heard about one kid who was just used to his dad giving him everything. His dad finally got tired of it. He said, "Dad, I need some money. I need to hit the flick." He wanted to go to the movie. "Can I hit the flick?" His dad said, "No," but he said, "you can

flop the mop, and swish the dish, and spread the bed, but you can't hit the flick.”

Now what we need to do is to teach not only industry, but teach children tranquility. Take the Lord's Day and rest. Take a nap on the Lord's Day. Just simply go take a nap. I like what a French philosopher said. He said, “I have so much to do I must go to bed.” I've been hearing that “Rush is right”—“Rush is right.” Friend, rush is wrong. Slow down. Just now, the man may be right, but the activity is wrong. Just slow down. And *if you're burning the candle at both ends, you're not as bright as you think you are*. You say, “Well, the ox keeps falling in the ditch.” Well, maybe you need to kill the ox or fill up the ditch. Arrange your life, if you can. I'm not trying to give you a rule, but I'm trying to give you a principle.

Make this day a holy day. Make this day a healthy day. You will do more in six days, if you'll learn to rest one day, than you'll do in seven days without rest. You will—just like you'll have more money to spend with nine-tenths with God as a partner than you'll have with ten-tenths by yourself. Slow down. Slow down. Take a day; let it be the Lord's Day, but it's made for you and rest. If a man's chopping wood, he doesn't waste time when he sharpens the ax. You'll chop more wood if you'll learn how to make this day a holy day. Make it a healthy day.

3. Take Time to be Happy

Last of all, make it a happy day. I believe Sunday ought to be the happiest day of the week. Do you know why the early church met on Sunday? Because Jesus came out of that grave on Sunday. I'm going to say this to you: that after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there's not a pessimistic or negative note in the New Testament—after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's a celebration; it's a joy. Every Lord's Day is Easter. Now we get all happy about Easter. Friend, we ought to come in here with the light of the noonday sun on our faces every Lord's Day. He's alive! He's risen! We rejoice. And take this day, and worship on this day. Take this day, and rest on this day. Take this day, and rejoice on this day. It is the Lord's Day. *“This is the day which the LORD hath made”* (Psalm 118:24)—a day of gladness, not of gloom; of love, not legalism. So, let there be joy in your home today. What happened to old-fashioned Sunday dinners, where the family gets together, and they have dinner, and they laugh, and they talk, and they love? Take this day for music, and books, and conversation.

Conclusion

Well, I wish I had more time; but, friend, *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy”* (Exodus 20:8). Remember it—not as a day of legalism that God gave to the Jews so long ago. Listen to me now. Remember it as a day of liberty, where Jesus has set us free—not free to do our thing, but free to do His thing.

In the back row, in the balcony, may I have your attention? Down here, may I have

your attention? All of this will mean absolutely nothing to you unless you understand the truth behind it: that Jesus is your rest. You must come to Jesus. Jesus said, in Matthew 11, verse 28, *“Come unto me”*—come unto me—*“all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). Now, notice what He said: *“Come.”* It’s your move—it’s your move. It’s your move right now. Jesus says, *“Come.”* You’re not waiting on Him. He’s already invited you: *“Come unto me”*—not to Pastor Rogers, not to Bellevue church, not to some denomination. *“Come unto me”*—not when you are ready and rested, all ready, but come as you are: weak and weary and worn and tired. *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* You don’t have to wait till you go to heaven to find rest.

And it takes more than a tombstone to bring rest. Sometimes they put on a tombstone, *“Rest in peace.”* There won’t be any peace until you find peace in the Lord Jesus. Just as there’s the righteousness of God and the peace of God, there’s the rest of God that’s found in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I wish I could give my heart to Jesus on your behalf. I wish somehow I could sit out there and pray on your behalf, and say, *“Lord Jesus, I receive you into my heart. Now, Lord Jesus, I’m going to make it public. I’m going to let people know that I love you. I’m going to come forward today; and, Lord Jesus, I’m going to take a public stand for you and enter into rest with you.”* I wish I could do that for you. But I can’t. I’ve preached as best I know how; but now it’s your decision. And Jesus is saying to you right now, *“Come unto me...and I will give you rest.”* If you’re tired of trying, why don’t you start trusting? If you’re tired of laboring and trying to be right with God, and failing and failing, why don’t you just come to Jesus and give it to Jesus, and enter into rest? I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you’ll trust Jesus Christ today, you’ll find rest unto your soul. He’ll do it. I’ve come to Jesus, and He gave me rest. And He’ll give you rest.

Darwin, Dinosaurs, and Devilish Deceptions, Part 1

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 22, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:11

Outline

Introduction

I. Fiction: The Delusions of Darwin

A. Reasons for its Rejection

1. Intellectual Reasons

a. Four Bridges over which no Evolutionist can Cross

i. The Origin of Life

ii. The Fixity of the Species

iii. The Second Law of Thermodynamics

iv. Nonphysical Properties in Life That Have Nothing to Do with the Law of Survival

2. Moral Reasons

3. Theological Reasons

II. Fact: The Disappearance of the Dinosaurs

Conclusion

Introduction

Exodus chapter 20.

I'm told that one day a monkey was seen coming out of the public library, and he had under one arm Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, and under the other arm, and in the other hand, he had a copy of the Word of God, the Bible. Somebody asked him what he was doing. He said, "I've been doing some research. I've been trying to determine whether I am my brother's keeper, or my keeper's brother."

And there are those who would tell us with a straight face that, somehow and some way, it all began with nothing and it evolved into what we have today.

You know, there's really one big question—only one question. Everything else sort of filters out from that one question. Here is the question: Did God make man or did man make God? That is, are we in the image of God or is God in the imagination of man? Well, let's see what the Word of God says about it—verse 11: "*For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it*" (Exodus 20:11). I want you to think with me this morning on two basic points. The first one deals with a

fiction; the second one deals with a fact.

I. Fiction: The Delusions of Darwin

Fiction. What is the fiction? The fiction is the delusions of Darwin. Now Darwin and erstwhile scientists and philosophers would have us believe that somehow we evolved out of some primordial slime. And this is being infused into the hearts and minds of boys and girls across America and around the world.

Time magazine had this ad—it's for the *Time-Life* book series. The title of this book series is called *The Emergence of Man*, and, by the way, it will be found in most all public libraries and many school libraries, where, especially, elementary and junior high school kids go to pick up this kind of material and read. Now, let me tell you what the ad for this series says, and I want you to listen to it—quote: “Today, that creature who first began to raise himself above other animals no longer exists. He has become you: unique, set apart from the two million other species living on the planet by a thumb that makes your hand a precision tool, by a knee that locks you into a comfortable upright position, and by your capacity for abstract thought and speech. All this, and more, has enabled your species to dominate the earth. And yet you share with every other creature that ever lived the same origin, the same accident, that led to the spontaneous generation of the first one-celled slimy algae one-half billion years ago.”

Now, think of that for a moment. The main accident that led to one-celled slimy algae: that same accident happened to you. Now, think about it. If we're an accident, what about morals? What about meaning in life? What about purpose in life, if we came from slime? I mean, that's what this *Time-Life* says. They go on to ask, “How did it all happen? What was the evolutionary process that led to man and his conquest of a harsh and hostile environment? You'll find the amazing story in *Time Life's* series, *The Emergence of Man*, your introductory volume, *The Missing Link*.” And I'm going to show you, the whole chain is missing. “*The Missing Link* shows the stranger-than-science-fiction world of ape-man. You will feel a sense of immediacy and individual adventure in an incredible, lifelike pictorial-technical photo-painting.” Man, they even have pictures. It must be real. They've got lifelike paintings of all of this.

But just what is this thing called evolution? What is the Darwinian delusion? Well, Darwin tell us himself in his book *The Origin of the Species*, on page 23: “Analogy would lead me to the belief that all animals and plants are descended from some one prototype.” It goes on to say, “All organic things which have ever lived on the earth may be descended from one primordial form.” To put it very succinctly and very simply, mutation plus natural selection plus time: slime to man. I mean, we began as some primordial slime, then some primitive protozoa, and then some segmented worm, and then a fish, and then an amphibian, and then a reptile, and then a bird, and then a

mammal, and then a man. And what you do is, you take nothing after time plus chance, and amoebas become astronauts. That's it. I mean, that's what they want you to believe. It is a fairy tale for adults. When you think about it, they believe time plus chance can turn frogs into princes—just give it time.

*Once I was a tadpole beginning to begin;
Then I was a frog with my tail tucked in;
Then I was a monkey in a banyan tree;
And now I'm a professor with a Ph.D.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Just give me time.

A. Reasons for its Rejection

Folks, this is monkey mythology! Friend, I reject it for three basic reasons.

1. Intellectual Reasons

Number one—let's just leave the Bible out of it: I reject it for intellectual reasons, logical reasons. Well, you say, "What do you know about it? You're a Baptist preacher. They don't know anything." Well, I want to quote some people who are not Baptist preachers, and I want to show you that many great eminent scientists living now, and in history, totally reject this. I'm talking about men—learned men—with degrees. Of course, you won't get this in the average high school or junior high school. They won't tell you this.

Dr. Newton Tahmisian, a physiologist for the Atomic Energy Commission, said this—and I quote: "Scientists who go about teaching that evolution is fact of life are great conmen, and the story they are telling may be the greatest hoax ever in explaining evolution. We do not have one iota of fact." That's a scientist. Dr. Etheridge, of the British Museum, said, "Nine-tenths of the talk of evolution is sheer nonsense, not founded on observation, and wholly unsupported by fact. This museum is full of proofs of the utter falsity of their view." Dr. Ambrose Fleming, president of the Philosophical Society of Great Britain—I mean, we're talking about eminent people—said this: "The evolution theory is purely the product of imagination." Dr. Cecil Wakely, leading British surgeon, and the late president of the Royal College of Surgeons, protested, saying, "When I was a medical student, I was taught the theory of evolution. I never believed it"—"I never believed it." A Swedish embryologist, Soren Lovtrup, wrote in *Darwinism: The Refutation of a Myth*, "I believe that one day the Darwinian myth will be ranked with the greatest deceits in the history of science. When this happens, many people will pose the question, 'How did this ever happen?'"

If you'll study the history of great scientists, you will find that many of the greatest scientists who've ever lived were not evolutionists; they were creationists. Michael

Faraday, Lord Kelvin, Joseph Lister, Louis Pasteur, Isaac Newton, Johannes Kepler, Sir William Ramsay, Lord Francis Bacon, Samuel Morris—all of these believed in creation. And among the better-known, recent scientists who were creationists, Carl Jung, Albert Einstein, Nobel Laureate physicist Max Planck, Robert Jastrow, who was the founder of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, and thousands and thousands who have Ph.D.'s and Master's degrees in science, reject evolution. Don't think, dear friend, that you have to reject it on religious grounds. You can reject it on logical grounds.

Some say that Isaac Newton was the greatest scientist who ever lived, and this is what he wrote: "The most beautiful system of the sun, planet, and comets could only proceed from the council and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being." Isaac Newton said, "To think that it all came about by chance is sheer nonsense."

a. Four Bridges over which no Evolutionist can Cross

There are four bridges over which no evolutionist can cross, and I want to name those four. And we're just talking about the logical reasons.

i. The Origin of Life

Number one: the origin of life. Where did life come from? The evolutionist is reduced to guesses. One even went so far as to say, "Well, perhaps life came from some meteor that was in outer space, that struck Planet Earth, and some form of life was left." That just moves the question back. It doesn't answer the question of where that life came from. Most evolutionists believe in life by spontaneous generation—that is, that somehow the chemicals were right, and there was a flash of lightning, and some green scum, and then life appeared. Any scientist will tell you that biogenesis is absolutely, totally, against every dictum of known science. And yet scientists will accept this because they don't have any other answer.

Dr. George Wald, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Harvard University, said—and, by the way, he won the Nobel Prize in Biology in 1971; this man, I mean, here's a man who's supposed to be respected—now he wrote, in *Scientific American*, on the origin of life, and here's what he said—listen to it; if you don't hear anything else, I want you to listen to this. He said, "There only two possibilities as to how life arose. One is spontaneous generation, arising to evolution. The other is a supernatural creative act of God. There's no third possibility. Spontaneous generation, that life arose from non-living matter, was scientifically disproved 120 years ago by Louis Pasteur and others. This leaves us with only one possible conclusion: that life arose as a supernatural creative act of God." Now before you say *amen*, I'm not finished. He said, "There are only two possible answers to the origin of life. One is spontaneous generation—scientifically impossible. The other is the direct creation of God."

Well, sounds pretty good. But now, listen to what Dr. Wald went on to say: "I will not accept that philosophically"—that is, creation by Almighty God. "I do not want to believe

in God. Therefore I choose to believe in that which is scientifically impossible: spontaneous generation, arising to evolution.” He said, “There are only two choices: one is an impossibility, and the other is God. I choose the impossible, because I do not want to believe in God.” I am telling you that evolution is not a science; it is science fiction. It is a philosophy; it is not a science.

Evolutionist Sir Arthur Keith confessed this: “The only alternative to some form of evolution is special creation, which is unthinkable.” How’s that for science? He says, “The only alternative is special creation.” He said, “That’s just unthinkable,” so he just dismisses that. Scientist D. M. S. Watson displayed the same prejudice when he wrote that, “Evolution is a theory universally accepted, not because it can prove biologically coherent evident to be true, but because the only alternative, special creation, is clearly incredible.” He said, “We don’t accept it because it can be proved to be true; we just accept it because the only other alternative is to believe in God.” No scientist can explain origin apart from God. He can’t cross that bridge.

ii. The Fixity of the Species

The second bridge he cannot cross is the fixity of the species. What I mean by that is this: that, when God created man, God built into man and into nature a locked-in likeness; that like produces like. Genesis 1, beginning in verse 11: *“And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good”* (Genesis 1:11–12).

If you read the creation story ten times, God gives us this phrase: *“after its kind”*—that is, like produces like. You don’t see life evolving from one species to another in the description of creation, nor do you find it in nature. There may be mutation, but not transmutation. There are all kinds of cats, all kinds of dogs, all kinds of roses, but a rose is a rose is a rose, and a dog is a dog is a dog, and a cat is a cat is a cat. And you don’t find roses becoming cats, and cats becoming dogs. You just don’t find that. There’s a locked-in likeness. Everything comes after its kind.

Now for evolution to be true, you must be able to show some transitional form. Do you know what’s wrong with the evolutionist? He has no transitional form to show you. You say, “Well, what about all of these pictures we see?” Well, you just told me: pictures. You just told me: pictures. What you have told me is plaster of Paris. You say, “But what about what the fossils, *teach’?*” That’s what I’m going to tell you. There are millions and millions, and billions and billions, of fossils, and not one transitional form from one kind to another can be found.

Now you think about it. Can we believe this? You can’t find the transition between amoeba and man—not one! That’s the reason I told you, “It’s not the missing link; it’s

the chain that is missing.” You say, “But what about the cavemen?” There have always been cavemen. “But these half-men and half-apes!” That’s all imagination.

We had here in Tennessee a very famous trial called the Scopes Trial; some call it the Monkey Trial. William Jennings Bryan argued for a special creation. Clarence Darrow argued for evolution. That took place not so far from here, not so long ago—1925. Clarence Darrow, to prove evolution, brought out as an example the Nebraska Man. Now what happened was this. There was a man named Harold Cook, and he was supposed to have discovered on earth a race of men that lived a million years ago. And he asked William Jennings Bryan, “What do you have to say about that?” Bryan said, “Well, I don’t think you have enough evidence.”

Now, what had Cook discovered? Well, let me tell you what he had discovered. He found a tooth. You didn’t misunderstand what I said: a tooth. And with that one tooth an artist created a race of people and said they lived a million years ago. As a matter of fact, you can go to the University of Nebraska, and if he’s still there—and he was until recent vintage—you can still find Nebraska Man at the University of Nebraska in their museum. One man who was a creationist and was feeling a little sporty and a little mean walked in there, and he said, “I want to see Nebraska Man.” So they took him in and showed him the skull and skeleton of Nebraska Man. He said, “Is this the real skull and the real skeleton?” “Well,” he said, “no, this is not the real one; this is a replica of Nebraska.” He said, “Well, where could I find the actual bones?” He said, “Well, we don’t have the bones. These are a plaster of Paris cast of Nebraska Man.” “Well,” he said, “didn’t you have to have the bones to make the cast?” They were embarrassed, and they had to admit what they had done, which was to take plaster of Paris and make a head, a body, put some hair on it, then make a whole civilization; and they made it out of one tooth. And there they are.

The Java Ape-man. Dr. Eugene Dubois found in Java the top of the skull, the fragment of a left thigh, and three molar teeth, and he announced that he had found a race of people 750,000 years of age. Now the bones were not found all in the same place. They were found over a space of a year. But they got twenty-four eminent scientists together to say, “Is this an ape-man: half-man, half-ape?” Well, of those scientists, ten said they were the bones of an ape, seven said they were the bones of a man, and seven said they were the missing link. Do you know what happened? Later, Dr. Dubois himself had to confess that what he had was simply the remains of an ape. Well, you say, “Well, okay, he was honest.” But if you go to the museums today, you can still find this ape-man in the museum.

The Piltdown Man. When I was in school, we studied the Piltdown Man. And Charles Dawson, in Piltdown, England, was in a gravel pit. He found a piece of a jaw. He found two molar teeth and a piece of a skull. He announced that it was the missing link, the

Pittdown Man. Later on, it was shown to be a colossal hoax, and *Reader's Digest* wrote an entire article entitled, "The Great Pittdown Hoax." What he had found was the remains of an ape less than fifty years old—its teeth had been filed down and artificially colored. Somebody was trying to play a joke on Charles Dawson, and they did a great job. "Well," you say, "yes, but now it's been shown to be a hoax." Yeah, I know that, but what I'm trying to show you is this, dear friend: that, until it was proven to be a hoax, everybody said it was a wonderful proof. What I'm trying to show you is how anxious man is to make a monkey out of himself.

That's what I'm trying to show you—not that these can be disproved. Of course they can be disproved! You say, "Well, those are some of the worst cases." That's true. I mean, that is true. I've pulled out some of the most absurd cases. But now I want you to listen to what a biologist at the Smithsonian Institute said. I quote—listen: "There is no evidence which would show man developing step by step from the lower forms of life. There is nothing to show that man was in any way connected with the monkeys. He appeared suddenly and in substantially the same form as he is today. There are no such things as missing links." That's not a Baptist preacher talking. This is a Smithsonian. "So far as concerns the major groups of animals, the creationist appears to have the best argument. There is not the slightest evidence that any one of the major groups arose from any other." It's a bridge the evolutionist cannot cross; that is, the fixity of the species.

iii. The Second Law of Thermodynamics

Here's the third bridge that he cannot cross—and it's the Second Law of Thermodynamics. You say, "Now, wait a minute; hold on. What on earth is that?" It's just simply a law, that energy cannot be created; it can only be changed; and it tells that everything tends to wear out, to run down, and to disintegrate. Now a law of life is change, but change, according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, is never toward organization, but toward disorganization; never upward, but downward. And we know that. I mean, you don't have to be a scientist to know this. Leave your garden alone, and what happens to it? It disintegrates. Don't take care of your body. What happens to it? It disintegrates. Park your car out in the woods, and leave it alone. Let the weeds grow, and the rust and oxidation takes over. It disintegrates. Or, don't make your kid clean up his room. All right, everything just has a built-in tendency to disintegrate. And yet the evolutionist wants us to believe that there's something that causes things to come together, to go from disorganization to organization.

Why do things tend to wear down? Why do things tend to deteriorate? It is a law of God. It is the curse of God upon nature. Romans chapter 8, verse 22: "*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*" (Romans 8:22). Death, disease, decay, disintegration are locked into society. But, you know, they want

us to believe that what was slime is now the complexity of your eye, your ear. They want you to believe that somehow all of this just organized itself. It is totally against the Second Law of Thermodynamics.

They say, “But you have to have enough time.” They say, “Give it time.” The greater the time, the greater the disintegration. If you were to take all of the parts of your automobile, put them in an airplane, fly 5,000 feet, and take them all apart, and pour them out of that airplane, do you think they would assemble themselves into an automobile before they hit the ground? Obviously not! “Well,” the evolutionist says, “you need more time, okay?” Let’s take them up to 25,000 feet and drop them out. What do you have with more time? You don’t have more integration; you have more disintegration.

The evolutionist cannot cross this bridge.

iv. Nonphysical Properties in Life That Have Nothing to Do with the Law of Survival

Here’s something else he cannot cross—and that is the bridge that tells us that there are properties in life—nonphysical properties—that have nothing to do with the law of survival. For example, we listened to music this morning. Where did music come from? Where did the love of music come from? We’re talking about God. Where does the hunger for God come from? Where does a love for art and beauty come from? It comes from God, for we were made in the image of God.

2. Moral Reasons

I want to say that, not only do I reject it for logical reasons; I reject it, friend, for moral reasons. Do you know why we’re in the moral mess that we’re in today? Because we have bought in to this colossal lie. There were two people who lived in the age of Darwin. One was a man named Nietzsche; he was the father of Nazism. The other was a man named Karl Marx; he was the father of communism. And millions have been butchered, because we have believed that men are like animals—fit to be butchered.

Here’s a quote that you won’t often hear from Charles Darwin, but it’s a quote from him: “At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace savage races throughout the world.” You understood why Hitler liked that, didn’t you? That’s the superiority of the Aryan race. And he goes on to say some things about black men that I will not repeat here. Well, I will. He goes on to say, “At the same time, the anthropomorphic apes will no doubt be exterminated.” I’m not saying that he was calling them apes. Now, listen: “The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope, even the Caucasian and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of, as now, between the Negro or Australian and the gorilla.” Well, you talk about politically incorrect speech—that’s Charles Darwin.

Friend, why don't you read about that in high school today? I mean, what he's saying is that one day the superior races will eliminate those who're not superior, as a result of evolution. It's only a hop, skip, and a jump to the gas ovens! Friend, I want to tell you, red and yellow, black and white, we are precious in God's sight. The Bible says, "With God there is no respect of persons" (Romans 2:11). We've been taught—children have been taught—that they're animals on their way up. That's the reason, friend, that we're in the mess that we're in. Man did not spring from the beast; he is headed to the beast—the Antichrist; and it's because he has refused to listen to the Word of God.

And you think of the conflicts we're in today. I mean, if man is an accident, as *Time-Life* said, there is no fixed standard of right and wrong. There is no intrinsic value to any human being. Do you wonder why our boys and girls who are taught evolution are also taught in school Values Clarification? We're trying to determine what is right or wrong over euthanasia, over abortion, over homosexuality, over fornication, about marriage, and all of the rest of it. Why? Because we are an accident and an incident rather than the direct creation of Almighty God. We bought in to a lie.

3. Theological Reasons

I'll reject it not only for logical reasons, and moral reasons; but I reject it for theological reasons. Friend, the Bible doesn't teach it, and I believe the Bible is the Word of God. H. G. Wells, the historian, wrote, in *The Outline of History*—listen to this—“If all animals and man evolved, then there were no first parents, no paradise, no fall. And if there had been no fall, then the entire historic fabric of Christianity, the story of the first sin, and the reason for the atonement collapses like a house of cards.”

He wasn't a Christian, but he had it right. Friend, if there's no creation, there's no fall in the Garden of Eden. Then, why are we preaching what we're preaching—that man has to be born again? Do you know what the evolutionist believes sin is? Just a stumble upward—just a stumble upward. He does not believe that there is an inherent evil in the hearts of men caused by something called sin. He wouldn't call it sin. He believes that your mind and your reactions are just chemicals working together: cause and effect. He doesn't believe that there is such a thing as sin that needs blood atonement. And so *if you're an evolutionist, you believe that man needs a boost from beneath. If you are a Bible-believer, you understand that he needs a birth from above.* You see, I reject it. I reject it for logical reasons. I reject it for moral reasons. I reject it for theological reasons. It is a Darwinian delusion.

II. Fact: The Disappearance of the Dinosaurs

Now we'll call that a fiction. Now, let's talk about some facts—facts. Dinosaurs are a fact—a fact. The disappearance of the dinosaurs is a fact. *Jurassic Park*, like *Star Wars* and *The Sound of Music* and other movies, has been a box-office smash. They tell us

that there are other movies now coming on about dinosaurs. *Dinomania* is here! I have not seen *Jurassic Park*, but I understand that somehow they found the genetic code of dinosaurs and some amber, and some men have cloned some dinosaurs and begun a park. And the dinosaurs get loose and run amok, and there's blood and gore. And that's it. All right, see, you don't even have to go!

Are there dinosaurs? Yes. When were they created? The same day God created man. God created all things. The text that I read: "He made the heavens and the earth, and everything that in them is" (Exodus 20:11). They were made—man and dinosaurs—the same day.

You can go to Zimbabwe, and also Arizona, and go into caves, and find cave drawings, what they call pictographs, showing dinosaurs and men. Now if dinosaurs did not coexist with men, where did these primitive people get ideas of dinosaurs?

Does the Bible speak of dinosaurs? I believe it does. Where? Job chapter 40—Job chapter 40, verse 15: "*Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee;*"—that is, "the same day I made man"—"*he eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. He moveth his tail like a cedar...*"—now most commentators, or many of them, tell you *behemoth* is an elephant. Have you ever seen an elephant's tail?—"He moveth his tale like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. He is the chief of the ways of God:"—that is, he is a *big'un*—"he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him." That is, "I can destroy him if I want to, because I made him. God said, "*Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about.*" He goes in and out of the water. "*Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.*" He's a big drinker. "*He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares*" (Job 40:15–24).

You ever see an elephant's nose? They don't pierce through any snares. Listen. What we're talking about here is some incredible creature. "Well," you say, "then, if there were dinosaurs, what happened to them?" They became extinct. There are a number of species that have become extinct, and they're telling us all the time, "Don't mess with Mother Nature or we're going to lose a lot of others."

When did they become extinct? I don't know, and you don't know. We don't have to know. I'll tell you when I think they became extinct. I think they became extinct, primarily, in the flood. There is great geological evidence to show there was a universal flood. Of course, the Bible teaches it, beyond a shadow of any doubt or peradventure, and you can find the fossilized remains of sea creatures on the highest mountains on earth. Try and figure that out apart from a universal flood!

You say, “Well, were the dinosaurs on the ark?” Yes, of course, if they were still living in Noah’s time. And I believe they must have been. You know, dinosaurs can be from the size of a cat to a five-story building. All you need is one pair of dinosaurs on the ark. The Bible teaches that there was a climactic change. You know, the Bible says the canopy that was over the earth broke up and the waters came out of the earth. When we had that little eclipse here just the other day, in just a few moments the temperature dropped—just like that! Remember that?

What happened to the dinosaurs? I don’t know; you don’t know. But I’ll tell you this much—I do know this: that God created them the same day He created man. He made it all: the beasts, the creatures.

Conclusion

Oh, you see, Satan is very clever. He is behind this whole thing, because, as H. G. Wells said, if there was no fall in the Garden of Eden, then you don’t need to be born again. There is no sin. There is no God that you’ll have to face. There is no accountability. But I’m here to tell you that you’re not an accident. You didn’t come from slime. God made you in His image. And I’m here to tell you that God loves you, and God has a wonderful, wonderful plan for you. And when God made everything, in the text that we read about, how did He make it? He just spoke. He just spoke, and it came to be. Universes drip from His fingertips.

He made it all with a word. By the word of His power He spoke it into existence. But there’s another creation. The Bible calls that a new creation: “Behold, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17). He didn’t make that new creation with a word. He had to hang on a cross to do that, in agony and blood, enduring unspeakable torture, because of His love for you. Jesus died for you, that you might have your sins forgiven, that you might be rightly related with God, that you might know that you know that you know when you die you’re going to heaven. The Bible says, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*” (Acts 16:31). You become a new creature, a new creation: “*Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

And if you’re not saved today, let me invite you to do what I told you earlier I was going to invite you to do—and that’s to open your heart and say, “Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin; save me, Lord Jesus.” He’s already paid for your sin, but He cannot become your Savior until you receive Him by faith. The Bible says, “*As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name*” (John 1:12). Receive Him now. “Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Now I want you by an act of faith to thank Him. If you meant

business, pray this way: “Thank you for saving me, Jesus. I receive it by faith, like a child, and that settles it. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, and my God. And, Jesus, because you died for me, I’ll live for you. And, Lord Jesus, help me today not to be ashamed of you. Give me the courage right now to make this public. In your name I pray. Amen.”

Darwin, Dinosaurs, and Devilish Deceptions, Part 2

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 22, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:11

Outline

Introduction

- I. Fiction: The Darwinian Delusion (Review)
 - A. We Reject It for Logical Reasons (Review)
 1. Four Bridges That No Evolutionist Can Cross (Review)
 - a. The Origin of Life
 - b. The Fixity of the Species
 - c. The Second Law of Thermodynamics
 - d. Propensities in Human Nature That Cannot Be Explained by Evolution
 - B. We Reject it for Moral Reasons (Review)
 - C. We Reject It for Theological Reasons (Review)
- II. Fact: Dinosaurs Are a Fact (Review)
- III. Fraud: The Deception of the Devil
 - A. Ten Questions for Your Child to Ask an Evolutionist in School
 1. How Did Time, Space, and Matter Originate?
 2. From Where Did Energy Originate?
 3. If the Universe Is as Old as You Say It Is, Why Is There Not Dust on the Moon at Least a Mile Thick?
 4. Why Have We Seen Hundreds of Stars Die, but Have Never Seen a Star Born?
 5. How Did Life Begin?
 6. Why Is There Not at Least One Transitional Fossil?
 7. Why Aren't Fossils Being Formed Today?
 8. Why Has Evolution Suddenly Stopped after Millions and Millions of Years?
 9. Where Does the Love of Beauty Come From?
 10. How Did Males and Females Arrive at Sexual Maturity at the Same Time and in the Same Place?

Conclusion

Introduction

Exodus chapter 20 and verse 11—and this is really the continuation of the Bible message this morning that we talked about when we talked about “Darwin, Dinosaurs, and Devilish Deception.” And the Bible says here, in Exodus 20:11, *“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested*

the seventh day.” That one verse is enough to tell us, without equivocation, stutter, or stammer, that what people call evolution is a lie. The Bible says, “*Let God be true, but every man a liar*” (Romans 3:4).

We talked this morning under three headings. We only really completed two of them. First of all, we talked to you about a fiction, or a fable—and that was Darwinian evolution; the fiction is the delusions of Darwin. Then we talked to you about a fact; the fact is the disappearance of dinosaurs. There have been dinosaurs here. They have disappeared from the face of the earth. And then we wanted to talk to you about a fraud—and that was devilish deception. What is the devil doing with this delusion and this fact? He’s deceiving many people. And many of these children here in this choir are in danger of being deceived unless we parents and Christian leaders wake up. Now I want to review just a little bit with you.

I. Fiction: The Darwinian Delusion (Review)

First of all, why do we say that evolution is a delusion—a Darwinian delusion? What is evolution?

Well, Darwin himself, probably the most famous of all evolutionists, wrote in his book *The Origin of the Species*, “Analogy would lead me...to the belief that all animals and plants have descended from some one prototype.” “All organisms start from a common origin.” “From such low and intermediate form, both animals and plants may have been developed.” “Probably all the organic beings which have ever lived on this earth have descended from one primordial form.” That is, we all came from this original blob of protoplasm, whatever it was. It’s very simple when you think about it. It is mutation that is changing from one species to another species on the basis of natural selection over many, many years. And so as we’re going to find out we began as some sort of ooze, some sort of primordial soup, and we’ve gone from soup to nuts. Out of this primitive protozoa, they tell us, came un-segmented worms; and out of these un-segmented worms came fish; and out of these fish came amphibians; and out of these amphibians came reptiles; and out of these reptiles came birds; and out of these birds came mammals; and out of these mammals came we. And it’s all just time plus chance plus nothing equals everything. We told you that we rejected that.

A. We Reject It for Logical Reasons (Review)

And, just by way of review, we reject it—number one—for logical reasons. You don’t have to be a Bible-believer to reject evolution. As a matter of fact, I gave you a list of very famous scientists, many of them you would not call Bible-thumpers, who reject evolution, simply because it does not fit with logic, within intelligence.

I remember when I was a little boy hearing a man talk about why he did not drink

beverage alcohol. The Bible had nothing to do with it. He said he was watching a man trying to get in an automobile, and the man was drunk, and the man had one leg outside the automobile door and he kept slamming the door on his leg. And the fellow said, “I looked at that, and I thought, anything that could make a man so stupid I’ll never do.” Religion had nothing to do with it. It was just absolute stupidity. As Shakespeare said, “What fools men are to put in their head that which will steal their brains away.” And there are many people who don’t accept the Bible as the Word of God who still do not accept evolution.

And I gave you a list of scientists—former scientists and present scientists—who do not accept evolution. These are men with PhDs in science: learned men, respected men, men of genius.

1. Four Bridges That No Evolutionist Can Cross (Review)

And, remember, we told you there are four bridges that no evolutionist can cross.

a. The Origin of Life

Number one: the origin of life. He cannot explain the origin of life. I told you of Dr. Wald, a Professor Emeritus at Harvard, who said of biogenesis—that life just simply began by spontaneity, by spontaneous generation—he said, “It is an absolute impossibility that life could have begun that way. But,” he said, “the only other alternative is to believe in God.” He said, “I don’t want to believe in God, so I will accept an impossibility.” Now it’s strange, isn’t it? But the origin of life is one bridge that the evolutionist cannot cross.

b. The Fixity of the Species

The second bridge is the fixity of the species, that God, when He created things—when He created people and plants and animals—He said, “Everything is to bring forth after its kind.” In Genesis 1:11–12, and other verses, at least ten times God says, “after its kind.” Now, please put this down big and plain and straight. There is no provable fossil record that shows that one species ever migrated into another species. Anybody who tells you that has been proven is lying to you. There is not a missing link; the chain is missing. It is not because we do not have the fossil records. There are billions and billions of fossils.

c. The Second Law of Thermodynamics

What are the bridges they cannot cross? The origin of life. The fixity of the species. Another bridge that they cannot cross is the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which tells us that things tend to disintegrate; to wind down into death, decay, and disintegration. It is the Second Law of Thermodynamics. And these people who tell us that if you have enough time everything will organize itself are going against a strong and known law of science.

d. Propensities in Human Nature That Cannot Be Explained by Evolution

The fourth bridge—and this is why we just told you this morning we rejected it for logical reasons—is there are certain qualities and properties and propensities in human nature that cannot be explained by evolution: the love of beauty, the love of art, love itself, the desire to know and to follow God. Where did these things come from? How do they fit in with a theory of the survival of the fittest, which is fang and claw and tooth and blood? No, no, no! There's no way to explain the hunger for God except that we're made in the image of God.

B. We Reject it for Moral Reasons (Review)

And then we reject evolution for moral reasons. You see, when we teach these boys and girls—if we do—that they came from animals, we ought not to be surprised if they act like animals. Animals live for three things: self-propagation, self-preservation, and self-gratification. And we have a generation of young people who are doing just that. And when you believe in evolution, then you believe that man is an accident rather than an incident. He came by happenstance and therefore is really no more valuable than an animal. And we're seeing this today, this animal rights movement. I mean, today we are killing babies in the womb, and protecting spotted owls and bald eagles and snail darters. Now I have nothing against it, legitimately and in a balanced way, protecting nature, but what you can see is that we have in a way devaluated man and elevated animals and somehow put them all on the same plane. Man is distinctly different from the animals.

When I was in Israel—and, Brother Bob, you were there with us—we had a guide, a very brilliant young man. His name was Robert. He was an archeologist. He was the curator of the Rockefeller Museum there, and he walked us around the ruins of the Temple Mount. We spent a day with him—handsome, witty, charming. Finally, late at night, we sat around in the hotel. I wanted to speak to this young Jewish man about Jesus Christ. I wanted to witness to him. So, finally, we talked, and finally we got around to it. I said, “Robert, I want to ask you a question. Do you believe in God?” He said, “No, I don't.” I said, “Well, why don't you believe in God?” He said, “I used to believe in God. But,” he said, “the Holocaust, the destruction of six million of my people by Adolf Hitler, by the Nazis,” he said, “I cannot reconcile that with the idea that there is a God. I don't accept the fact of God.” I said, “Well then, let me ask you a question, Robert. If you don't believe there is a God, then do you believe that man is different from the animals?” Of course he couldn't believe that. I said, “What do you believe about man?” He said, “Man is the highest of the animals.” I said, “Well, what makes man different from another animal?” “Well,” he said, “his intelligence. He can feel more deeply. He can think more clearly. He is more sensitive than the other animals.” I said, “Is that the

difference?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Basically, what you’re saying, then, is that man is superior to the other animals?” I said, “Robert, do you eat chicken?” “Yes, I do.” “Do you keep a dog for a pet?” “Yes, I do.” “Do you do this, and this, and this? Would you slap a mosquito?” “Yes, I would.” I said, “Then, you believe that you as a human being, because you’re smarter and more sensitive, have the right to use your fellow animals. Is that right?” “Well, yeah. I guess so.”

I said, “Robert, you know what you believe? You believe that might makes right. You believe that the stronger has the right to subjugate the weak.” I said, “That’s exactly what your friend Hitler believed also. And the very Hitler that has caused you to not believe in God has put you in the same bed with him—in your beliefs.”

Friend, if there is no God, then Stalin was right, and Hitler was right, and these others are right, who say that human life has no real intrinsic value. But, friend, we are made in the image of God. And it’s only a hop, skip, and a jump, as I said this morning, from the belief in evolution to Hitler’s gas ovens or any kind of morality by majority that you may conjure up. And that’s why we’re in a battle today about euthanasia—and it’s coming.

We said, you begin to murder the babies in the womb, and it will not be long before we’re doing away with the older people. Remember when we said that? “Aw, no, don’t worry about that.” See what’s happening now, and see the gathering steam now, to take the older people and say, “Well, you’ve been here long enough”?

Remember how we used to put the little dogs to sleep? When I was a little boy, we had a dog that got real sick, and one day my dad told me, “We had to put Chum to sleep.” That sounded so good: “put him to sleep.” Well, you know, we could put Chum to sleep, because he was a dog. Pretty soon, friend, they’re going to be putting you to sleep. “Put him to sleep” sounds so good, sounds so nice.

But, you see, evolution makes no intrinsic difference between man and the animals. And if you believe that man is only an animal, then you believe somehow if we have a right to subjugate the animals, that might makes right, then you are just exactly in the same philosophy that Hitler said.

C. We Reject It for Theological Reasons (Review)

We reject evolution not only for logical and moral reasons; we reject it for theological reasons. If man evolved, then there was no Garden of Eden, there was no fall in the Garden of Eden, and there was no original sin; man is not a sinner by nature; every little child that is born is not necessarily born with a sinful nature; they may not need to be saved. As a matter of fact, what is “being saved”? There’s nothing to be saved and no one to do any saving, anyway. It makes the whole Bible thing of salvation a moot question.

And I read to you what H. G. Wells said—and, certainly, you know, H. G. Wells was no Baptist evangelist. But he said this in *The Outline of History*: “If all animals and man evolved, then there were no first parents, no paradise, no fall. And if there had been no fall, then the entire historic fabric of Christianity, the story of the first sin, and the reason for the atonement collapses like a house of cards.”

II. Fact: Dinosaurs Are a Fact (Review)

Then we talked about the second thing: not only the fable, but the fact. Dinosaurs are a fact. I’ve seen the dinosaurs in the Smithsonian. I have seen dinosaurs in other places. Don’t ever try to defend the Bible by saying dinosaurs are the figment of imagination. They are not; dinosaurs were created. On the sixth day, when God created man, He created the dinosaurs. I believe that Job was describing a dinosaur—or the Book of Job describes them—in Job chapter 40. I’ll read this scripture again—verse 15: “*Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee;*”—that is, “on the same day I made man”—“*he eateth grass as an ox. Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly. He moveth his tail like a cedar...*”—that’s the reason why *behemoth* is not an elephant—“*He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together. His bones are as strong pieces of brass; his bones are like bars of iron. He is the chief of the ways of God:*”—that means he is—I take it to mean he is—the largest of the creatures—“*he that made him can make his sword to approach unto him.*” That is, the God who brought him into being certainly is the God who can bring him into extinction. “*Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play. He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about.*” And we know that dinosaurs, many of them, went in and out of the water and the brooks. “*Behold, he drinketh up a river, and hasteth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth. He taketh it with his eyes: his nose pierceth through snares*” (Job 40:15–24).

When did dinosaurs become extinct? I don’t know, and you don’t know; but we do know that there are many species that have become extinct. God created these. They become extinct. There are other animals and species that may become extinct. Extinction is not anything that is new. We’ve learned that the mastodon, the saber-toothed tiger, and other species, including the dinosaurs, became extinct. I believe that dinosaurs became extinct in the events surrounding the flood. When the flood came, it would have been very, very hard, especially for the larger creatures—well, as a matter of fact, for all the creatures—to escape the judgment of the flood, and they would perish. And there was, I believe, a cataclysmic natural change in conjunction with the flood. The Bible tells us, in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 6, that in the early earth there

was a mist that went up from the earth and watered the earth (Genesis 2:6). And many believe there was a canopy of water—of mist—that filtered the sunlight and made the entire earth like a great hot house. It must have been incredibly beautiful. They tell us now—geologists tell us—that the North Pole and the South Pole were once tropical areas. They can go down and find the remains of ferns and other tropical plants there at the poles—the entire earth. We did not have the Ice Age. Something happened that caused a great change of temperature.

Remember, when the flood came, the Bible says that the fountains of the deep were broken up, and that the heavens, as it were, seemed to melt, and all of this water suspended there—this vapor—poured down there, upon the earth (Genesis 7:11). And when it did, there were climatic changes; perhaps, the places where the dinosaurs used to romp and play, all of that was changed. The food chain, perhaps, was changed. And, perhaps, the dinosaurs that came out of the ark did not live very long and became extinct. I would not argue the point with you. I don't know. I don't think you know. If you ever find out, you come and tell me; but don't write me too long a letter. But I want you to know it makes no difference. What do we know? We know that the dinosaurs were created there, the sixth day.

III. Fraud: The Deception of the Devil

Now the fraud: the deception of the devil. Remember that evolution is not science; it is science fiction. It is really the devil's religion. And the public schools have become the Sunday School classes to teach these boys and girls that they are an accident, that they have come from ooze, from slime, and what it is, is man's way of hiding from God.

I want to give you a confession by Aldous Huxley. Now if you're in college, you're going to read Aldous Huxley: a humanist, a thinker, a brilliant man, an evolutionist, and a God-hater. And I want you to hear what Aldous Huxley admitted in his book *Ends and Means*. Listen to it very carefully. He said—and I quote—“I had motives for not wanting the world to have a meaning. For myself, as, no doubt, for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality, because it interfered with our sexual freedom.” That's quite a confession, isn't it? They were saying, we want to say that man is an accident, because, if we say that man is an accident, then we're not bound by laws of morality; and, therefore, we can have our sexual freedom. “The liberation we desired was simultaneously the liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality, because it interfered with our sexual freedom. We objected to the political and economic system, because it was unjust. The supporters of these systems claimed that, in some way, they embodied the meaning—a Christian meaning, they insisted—of the

world. There was one admirably simple method of confuting or confronting these people, and at the same time justify ourselves in our political and erotic revolt. We could deny that the world had any meaning whatsoever.”

Now, isn't that quite a confession? Aldous Huxley said, “All we have to say is, ‘It all just happened. Therefore there is no meaning. Therefore there's no God to face in a judgment. Therefore we can do whatever we want to do.’” Evolution is simply a way of telling God to get out of the way. Evolution *is simply a way of telling God to get out of the way.*

I clipped this from a magazine. I want you to listen while I read it: “The following is one idea of how truly modern parents could approach *Jurassic Park* if they wanted to finish the job the media have begun for them and which they have drowsily accepted.” I want you parents to listen to this: “Junior, we're going to treat you to an important event in your life. We're going to see *Jurassic Park*. We know you're going to love it; every kid does. You have come along in an age which is seeing the consummation of history. Man has reached heights of accomplishment our ancestors never dreamed of. We have computers which can do thinking we couldn't do for ourselves in a million years. We've sent men to the moon. Why, science knows how to use sight and sound to make you feel like you're in Africa, or on another galaxy, or a jungle of twelve million years ago. It's almost better than real life. We are leaving ignorance and superstition behind, and are almost becoming masters of the universe. And you are about to experience the most spine-tingling thrill of all: movies—the endeavor to which people have devoted the best of what they've got. We expect you'll feel changed when you come out of the theater. If you feel positively bowled over by the dazzling blending of music, color, beautiful people saying clever things, and special effects we could never possibly explain, terrific! We can't wait to see the delight and amazement running across your face. We know that this delight is the most intense feeling you've come across in your young life. You may not believe this, but a long time ago people didn't have movies, or even electricity. They had nothing like we do today. They sat around and talked a lot. They read books, too—mostly with no pictures. These people spent a lot of time reading the Bible—almost as much time as we spend enjoying movies, television, CDs, Monopoly, and our Disneyland vacations; likewise, your scouts, piano lessons, Little League, after-school clubs, soccer, and all. They didn't have the U.N., or think tanks, like now, so they even made up their own laws and government from the Bible. There was less crime and mayhem then, but that's only because there were fewer people, and they were as dull as dishwater. You don't know how lucky you are, Junior. Sunday morning, we watched your team play a terrific game of soccer at the field, and went to Burger King. Well, people used to spend all their Sunday at church. They sat without talking, while the preacher went on for hours. By the way, don't forget: no talking during

the movie, just like at home, when a good show is on. There were no commercials or intermission, and no refreshments. Today, church is only an hour, but, as you remember from the last time we went, it's still boring."

Don't you laugh. "And as you know, science has proven religion a bunch of nonsense. Actually, the movie we're about to see is quite religious, in its way, in the proper sense. It upholds a very important original principle that has always made our country great: freedom of expression. The movie has a PG-13 rating, meaning that you're about to hear some dirty words, or, perhaps, see some scenes that you don't quite understand. Now, don't be alarmed if that happens. Just as when we watch TV, we'll discuss it fully with you later. Just remember that movies have foul language and nudity for a reason: if nothing else, to keep freedom of expression alive in an age when censorship threatens to cut it off. Tonight, you will be learning about the history of our earth. This sense of history will show you how far life forms have come from our humble beginnings hundreds of millions of years ago. You'll sense what a terrible thing it would be if man should kill off all life on the planet.

As you know, all the experts now say that we've all got to pull together to save the planet, as humankind's number one goal. So if you have any ideas for how to do that while watching the movie, try to remember them. We know how upset you have been by the scenes of war, rioting, and whatnot that you've seen on TV, but think of it this way: As long as there are movies coming out, there is hope. The world has somehow gone on another day. There's no need to worry or trouble yourself about the affairs of the world. They'll take care of themselves; they always have. We know, because there were wonderful movies when we were small too—not like today, of course. You're a terrific kid, and we want you to be happy. Just remember, nothing really matters now, except that you have a good time."

Now, friend, I don't know whether you caught the drift of that or not. You may think that's a parody, but it's too close to reality to be a parody. Our kids are slowly and surely and systematically being seduced by this age. And it is time that you parents said—when they go off to school, and they begin this evolution—to say, "Look, there is an answer. You don't have to check your brains at the door." And you can give an answer.

A. Ten Questions for Your Child to Ask an Evolutionist in School

And, by the way, not only should you give an answer, but I'd like to give you ten questions for your child to ask when they go to school, and for you to ask. And when you meet an evolutionist, I want you to ask them these ten questions, and see if he has the answer.

1. How Did Time, Space, and Matter Originate?

Ask him—number one—how time, and space, and matter originated. Ask him how

the thing that evolved got started. It evolved from what? How did time, space, and matter originate?

2. From Where Did Energy Originate?

Ask the second question: From where did energy originate? What is the First Law of Thermodynamics? That energy is not now, in our universe, being formed or destroyed. Energy can be changed. But every scientist will tell you that energy is not being created nor destroyed; it's simply being changed from one form to another. So ask these people, "Where did this energy come from?"

3. If the Universe Is as Old as You Say It Is, Why Is There Not Dust on the Moon at Least a Mile Thick?

Third question: If the universe is as old as you say that it is, if it's at least five billion years old—our galaxy and our solar system—why is there not dust on the moon at least a mile thick? As a matter of fact, when they sent our men to the moon, they had the idea that they would be bogged down in thick, thick dust; but they found very shallow dust on the moon.

4. Why Have We Seen Hundreds of Stars Die, but Have Never Seen a Star Born?

Fourth question: Why have we seen hundreds of stars die, but have never seen a star born? I'm not talking about Elvis now.

5. How Did Life Begin?

Fifth question: How did life begin? Ask him that: How did life begin? And don't let him flim-flam you. Ask for an answer. You say, "Nobody has an answer." Of course they do! You have an answer. God created life. God did it. You have an answer. He doesn't have an answer.

6. Why Is There Not at Least One Transitional Fossil?

Sixth question: Why is there not at least one transitional fossil, out of the billions that have been found? Why not at least one?

7. Why Aren't Fossils Being Formed Today?

Seventh question: Why aren't fossils being formed today? But why is it—this is still a part of that question—on every mountain range on earth, the highest parts of those mountains are rich in fossilized sea life? And don't let him talk to you about flying fish, either. Why is this? If there were no universal flood, how does he explain that?

8. Why Has Evolution Suddenly Stopped after Millions and Millions of Years?

Number eight: Why has evolution suddenly stopped after millions and millions of years? I mean, if man evolved, why aren't some still evolving? Why don't we say, "Hey, there's one right there. He's an ape-man. He's half-ape." I know you think you know some, but I mean, for sure. Why has evolution suddenly stopped?

9. Where Does the Love of Beauty Come From?

Number nine: Where does the love for beauty come from? Where does conscience come from? Where does the ability to blush, to weep, and to laugh—where did that come from? Where does the love of music come from? Explain that.

10. How Did Males and Females Arrive at Sexual Maturity at the Same Time and in the Same Place?

Number ten: Ask him how male and female of the human race, or any other species, evolved over millions of years, and how male and female arrived at sexual maturity at the same time, in the same place. Think about it. I mean, the race cannot reproduce without male and female, and sexual maturity. But how could they possibly evolve over millions and millions of years without the ability to reproduce? And how is it? Did they suddenly, *ipso facto*, just like that, come? Well then, if you believe that, you believe in creation.

Conclusion

Well, folks, let me just wrap all this up. But now, listen—listen. Darwin wrote a book on the origin of the species. I have one on the destiny of the species—the destiny. I'm telling you, no matter how we argue, where you've come from is a matter of fact. That is settled. But where you're headed may not yet be settled. And we need to learn God's truth about the origin of the species. You see, backward we look for a long, long time. But let me tell you this. Eternity is not a long way off. We look backward to billions of years, but eternity is only heartbeats away. Think about it. Eternity is only a heartbeat away. When God created this world, He did it with a word. He spoke, and it stood fast. But in order to redeem you, Jesus suffered and bled and died on the cross. You are not an accident; you are valuable. You're made in the image of God. Jesus died for you. And He would have died for you, I sincerely believe, if you had been the only human being ever to live. He would have died for you, and you only. That's how much you're loved.

Has the Nuclear Family Bombed?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 14, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. How Do We Live in Such a Way That Our Children Can Give Us Honor?
 - A. By Loving Them
 1. By Touching Them
 2. By Blessing Them
 3. By Comforting Them
 4. By Listening to Them
 5. By Loving Them Steadfastly and Consistently
 6. By Prayer
 - B. By Lifting Them
 - C. By Limiting Them
 - D. By Leading Them
 - E. By Laughing with Them

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word this morning and turn to Exodus chapter 20, and be finding verse 12. When you've found it, look up here. And let me say that we're going to transpose two of the commandments. The one that would come normally in the series is the one that deals with keeping the Sabbath. But we're going to fast-forward to the next one, because it's Mother's Day. And I want us to look, if you will, in verse 12—Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12: *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee"* (Exodus 20:12). And this, as you know, is the first commandment with promise: "Honor the Lord, and honor your father and your mother, that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God has given to you."

Past Vice President Dan Quayle was speaking to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, and he was talking about families. And the vice president began to talk about the problem of absentee fathers. And in the midst of that address to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, he inserted a little paragraph. It wasn't very long, but you've never seen such a violent reaction to a little paragraph. Now he was talking about the

rise in crime and the terrible disintegration of the home; and then this is what he said, and I want to quote what he said. This is what brought a firestorm; this is what caused the media to come down on him like a junkyard dog would attack somebody coming into places that were off bounds. This is what he said: “It doesn’t matter when primetime television has Murphy Brown, a character who supposedly epitomizes today’s intelligent, highly paid, professional woman, mocking the importance of fathers, by bearing a child alone, and calling it a lifestyle choice.” That’s all he said. Let me let you listen to it again: “It doesn’t matter when primetime television has Murphy Brown, a character who supposedly epitomizes today’s intelligent, highly paid, professional woman, mocking the importance of fathers, by bearing a child alone, and calling it another lifestyle choice.” By saying that, they said, “He’s antiquated; he’s idealistic.” And they made him look like a fundamentalist buffoon.

Why was he treated with such scorn? Well, I’ll tell you why: because of the values of Hollywood. What he said ran antithetical to their values and the values that they are trying to cram down our throats.

It’s always been an amazement to me when they say, “These evangelical Christians are trying to cram their values down the throats of other people.” Of course, I want to ask this question: Who was it that redefined when life begins? Or, who is it that is doing that? Who is it that has changed the way Americans think about premarital sex? Who is it that is telling us what is decent and what is not decent? Who is it that is helping us to decide who lives, and who dies, and when you can pray, and when you can’t pray? We have people out there who are trying to remold and remake society in its image, and it’s time God’s people said, “Enough is enough.”

God created the nuclear family. We have to ask, “Has the nuclear family bombed?” I mean, is there hope? And there is. Why did God give us families? Well, first of all, for living—so we could live together. Your family is a little part of the Garden of Eden that we have carried with us. And children need families. You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to understand that. But not only for living, but for learning. These Ten Commandments were given primarily to the home: not to the school, not to industry, not to government. They apply there, but they’re given primarily to the home. As I have told you before, we need to stop complaining about the Ten Commandments not being displayed on the walls of the classrooms of public schools if we ourselves don’t display them and teach them in our very own homes. The home is given for living; the home for learning, and for lasting. He says, “That you may live long in the land.” Look, if you will, in verse 12: “*That thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*” (Exodus 20:12). When the home begins to decay—it follows as night follows day—the nation begins to decay.

I want to talk to you today not so much about honoring your father and mother as to

being the kind of fathers and mothers that the children can honor, because, very frankly, I cannot from this pulpit teach your children to honor you. That's your responsibility. So I want us to look at it primarily from the parents' point of view: how parents can honor their children, so that the children might honor their parents. I want to talk to you primarily about being the kind of mom and dad that is worthy of honor.

Now, whether you're worthy or not, there's a sense in which all children ought to honor all of their parents. But, oh, how much better when we live honorable lives before them! And I want to say a word, just put a little caveat here, before we go more deeply into the message, and relieve you from the burden of perfectionism. Let's just go ahead and admit it. There has not been a perfect parent on this earth since Adam and Eve—and they failed. Don't get the idea that you have to be a perfect parent. You're not a perfect parent, and your children are not perfect children.

And I want to say something else. You cannot guarantee the way your children will turn out. Some people have almost put themselves in an early grave because they've had a wayward child. And they have prayed and sacrificed and loved and taught—and that child has done wrong. And somebody has taken Proverbs 22, verse 6, and beat that person over the head with it, and said, "Doesn't the Bible say, 'Train up a child in the way he should go and when he's old he'll not depart from it'" (Proverbs 22:6)?

Friend, that is a proverb. If you read the Book of Proverbs and try to turn the proverbs into promises, you'll lose your faith. A proverb is a proverb. A promise is a promise. A precept is a precept. A parable is a parable. A prophecy is a prophecy. And when you understand the Bible correctly, it's a wonderful book. But you'd better be careful. I mean, there are proverbs that tell you the way to be wealthy. Does that mean that everybody that follows one of these proverbs is automatically going to be wealthy? Then, why are there godly people who are not wealthy? A proverb is a general principle, generally applied, which brings a general result. Even our normal, natural proverb is a short sentence based on long experience. We use proverbs today like, "Early to bed and early to rise will make you healthy, wealthy, and wise." Well, I suppose that's true. But you might get hit by a truck. I mean, it's a proverb. It's a general principle. Now, indeed, it is a promise that this is a principle.

I'm not trying to say the Bible is not true, or not to be taken seriously. It is. But you have to understand this: that God gave your child a will. God gave your child a will. God had two children in the Garden of Eden, and they didn't turn out too swift. Why? Because God gave them a will. That's the reason that you ought not to have goals for your children. I don't have goals for my children. I have desires for my children. Do you know whom I have goals for? Me—for me. Why? Because I can't control them. I can control me, by God's grace. So my desire is that I will have godly children. My goal is I will be a godly dad. You understand the difference? I will—God helping me—I will be a

godly dad. I have a desire for godly children, and I do believe there is a principle, a proverb, that, if I will train my child in the way that he should go, he or she will not depart from it.

So I just... what? I'm not trying to put you under a guilt burden today. Really, I'm trying to encourage you. But in it all you must understand that your children do have a will of their own. And I want to relieve you from the burden of perfectionism—to think, if your child fails, it's because you weren't perfect. Well then, if their success depends upon your perfection, they will fail, because none is perfect. I'm not. You're not. It is of the grace of God that any of us survive this thing called parenthood. Amen and amen. And about the time we get enough experience, we're out of a job. I mean, we enter the thing totally inexperienced. And then when we get the experience—we're unemployed! So thank God for grandchildren! Play it again! When we get it, we get a second chance. And I'm so grateful that grandparents can teach parents what to do.

But don't pretend to your children you're perfect. Number one: They already know you're not—they already know it. They don't want to know if you are perfect. They want to know if you are real. Are you real? Are you genuine? If they know you're real, and they watch you handle your mess-ups and your failures and your problems, they will learn far more from that than they'll learn from your phony perfectionism.

I. How Do We Live in Such a Way That Our Children Can Give Us Honor?

But now the Bible says we are to honor our fathers and our mothers (Exodus 20:12). Well, how do we live in such a way that our children can give us honor? Let me give you some ways.

A. By Loving Them

Number one—and I'm going to give you about five ways—number one: by loving them. But now, listen carefully. Love *is not* giving *your* child *what he* wants *or what she wants*; *it is giving to the child what that child* needs. That is love. Let me say again, love *is not* giving *to the* child *what the child* wants; *it is giving the child what the child* needs.

Now, let me tell you how to love a child. And you're talking to, looking at, a bona fide granddaddy, right here. I mean, I am a grandfather. I've got the credentials and the scars. I can prove it. All right, now, let me tell you how to love a child.

1. By Touching Them

Number one: by touching them—by touching them. I like the bumper sticker that said, says, “Kids need hugs, not drugs.” That's a good one. And don't get the idea that you're not supposed to touch and hug your children—even your grown children. I was

reading this morning about the prodigal son when he came home. And in Luke chapter 15, verse 20, the Bible says his father “*fell on his neck, and kissed him*” (Luke 15:20). Now this is a grown man, and a grown son, who had been away living in riotous living. His father “*fell on his neck, and kissed him*”—and Jesus gave that with approval. That’s the way a father is supposed to do.

Do you know how to keep your girls and your boys from growing up to be sexually impure? Hug them often. That’s one of the ways. Don’t let them get the idea that—Hollywood has given that—the only way to get hugs is sexual intimacy. Hug them often. Hug them affectionately. Hug them supportively. Hug them tenderly. Hug them playfully. And even when that old teenage boy acts like, “Oh, Mama,” he still wants you to do it. Just go ahead and hug him; and, dads, hug him. And let the children see the parents hug one another.

Joyce and I were locked in a tight embrace when our grandkids came in the other day, when they walked in the kitchen. They just stood there and looked a while, and then walked away. Oh well, you know. What are they up to? Well, that’s okay. They need to see us loving one another. They need to understand that in order to be huggable and lovable they don’t have to be into sexual intimacy.

Charles Swindoll said this—he said, “Many a young a woman who opts for immoral sexual relationships does so because she can scarcely remember a time when her father so much as touched her. Unaffectionate dads, without wishing to do so, can trigger a daughter’s promiscuity. All of this leads me to write with a great deal of passion.”

Dads, don’t hold back your affection. Demonstrate your feelings of love and affection to both sons and daughters, and don’t stop once they reach adolescence. They long for your affirmation and appreciation. They will love you for it; more importantly, they will emulate your example when God gives them their own family.

2. By Blessing Them

Now you love, therefore, by touching them. You love them another way by blessing them. Did you know the Bible teaches that we have an awesome weapon? It’s called a blessing. We can bless our kids in such an incredible way. When you give the gift of the blessing, there are few things in life that give them more peace and confidence. They need strokes, not pokes. They need you to bless them, to say, “In the name of Jesus, my child, I bless you.” Can you imagine what that does to a child, when a dad just picks a child up, and puts that child in his arms, and says, “Billy, I bless you out of heaven.” They’ll never forget it. My daddy blessed me. I wonder how many children have been blessed by a daddy.

3. By Comforting Them

By touching them. By blessing them. By comforting them. Little children hurt. Don’t

ever laugh at their pain when the doll is broken, or when the lizard dies, or the turtle does a bottoms-up and floats to the top. Hey, they hurt, and their pain in their world is just as real as yours. We've had several funerals for dogs in our family—I mean, the full thing. We're out there, flowers and everything, burying that hound, and, you know, holding hands. And, hey, it's real to the child. Sometimes it's real to the adults, if we would admit it. And we need to give comfort to these kids, and pick them up, and say, "I understand, and I hope it'll feel better later," and kiss away those tears. I know what it is to hold a grown child in my arms. And when her heart was so broken, and my heart was broken, both of us cried like babies.

4. By Listening to Them

I'll tell you another way to love them: that's by listening to them. We think we listen. I wonder how many times do we ever let them get a full sentence out of their mouth before we begin to tell them, "Uh huh. Now, here's what you need to do... Here's what you need to do... Here's what you need to do..." We don't listen. One of the finest forms of communication is saying nothing, but just simply listening. And, if you have a teenager, you have to wait till the right time, because I'll guarantee you there comes a time when they just clam up and close up, and, generally, it's when you're so sleepy you want to go to bed; at about eleven o'clock, they'll start talking. Let 'em talk. Just say, "I'm going to pay the price. If I don't sleep, I'm going to listen." And especially if that teenager has a problem in his or her love life, or if they are having problems about their own feelings about themselves, sit down and listen.

5. By Loving Them Steadfastly and Consistently

Love them steadfastly and consistently. You know, they need to know mom and dad love regardless. And, folks, listen. Give your kids time to go through all these different stages. They're in all kinds of stages. We live in an age where we want everything, and we want it now. We've got computers, and fax machines, and call waiting, and beepers, and everything else. Give the kid time. Just be consistent.

6. By Prayer

Love them with your prayers. Pray for them, pray for them, and pray for them some more. Last night, when I got—Joyce is away today, and this is the first Mother's Day she's ever been away. She's with our children down in Florida—but last night, before I went to bed, I got on my knees by my bed, and I called every one of our children and grandchildren by name. That's our practice in our home. It's our practice when Joyce is there, every morning, for Joyce and I to hold hands and call our children by name, call our grandchildren by name, and lift them to the Lord. The most loving thing you can do is to call your children before the throne of grace in prayer.

B. By Lifting Them

So the first thing I'm saying—number one—is this: You must love them. You show you're the parents, worthy of honor, by loving them. Number two—all that's number one—number two: by lifting them. Listen to this verse—Colossians 3:21: "*Fathers, provoke not your children to anger,*"—now, listen to this—"*lest they be discouraged.*" Wise encouragement. Here's the principle. The first principle was: Real love gives them what they need, not what they want. Here's the second principle: Wise encouragement is better than lavish praise. Learn the difference between praise and encouragement. A lot of people think there is no difference, but there is a vast difference between encouragement and praise. Children need encouragement.

I walked up to our house yesterday and I looked out. And I got a basket of impatiens—I bought them for Joyce for eleven dollars—of impatiens. They're beautiful—a hanging basket. But you should have seen them just all over, just like *that*. I thought they'd never come back. I went and got the hose and sprinkled them. When I woke up this morning, they were all just like *that*—just like *that*. Children need encouragement like a plant needs water. Let me say that again. Children need encouragement like a plant needs water. They need it over and over again. And you need to catch them doing something right, and let them know through your encouragement that you believe in them. Let your speech affirm them. Be positive and constantly affirm them.

"Pastor, what is the difference between encouragement and praise?" Well, encouragement is twice as powerful as praise. For example, if your child comes home, and he has straight A's, you say, "Oh, that's wonderful! You're brilliant! You're a hard worker! You did all of these things! Daddy is so proud of you, because you got straight A's!" or, "Mama's so proud of you, because, look how clean your room is! I can see the rug"—some of you mamas need a riding vacuum cleaner—"I can see the rug. Look how clean you cleaned your room! I'm so proud of you! You did so good! You cleaned your room!" Do you know what that says? It says, "I get approval when I do good. I can earn approval. If I will do good, then they will approve of me. When my performance is good, the approval rate goes up. When my performance is bad, then my acceptance goes down, and my self-image goes down with it."

Praise says, "You are great, because you did something." Now there's nothing wrong with praise, but I'm just saying that encouragement is twice as strong as praise. Praise says, "You're great, because you did something." Encouragement says, "It is great that something was done, and I really appreciate it." Now there's a real difference there. Listen. Encouragement looks at a child, not primarily for what the child achieves, but for who the child is—who is achieving it—and saying, "You can do it! Thank you! I'm so grateful for you!" It's a fine line, but you think about it.

C. By Limiting Them

How do you love them? How are you worthy? By loving them. By lifting. Thirdly, by limiting them—by limiting them. Now, here's the principle. It takes firm restrictions to set children free. Hello? It takes firm restrictions to set children free. It is your responsibility to liberate them by limiting them. First Samuel 3, verse 13—here's what God said to Eli: *“For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not”* (1 Samuel 3:13). He didn't set limits. Your child needs some limits.

When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, He gave them all they needed, but He also gave them some limits. God said, “There are some things you shall not do.” Now when you give your child limits, these limitations will be tested over and over again; the restrictions that you give your child will be tested by that child. He's going to push against them, and if they move, that child will have no security. But if you set limits, and those limits are firm and reasonable, and you love—remember what Josh McDowell says. He says, “Rules without a relationship bring rebellion.” But they know you love. You've got those rules; they push against those rules, and those rules don't move—then they have security. If you don't place limitations on your child, to the child it implies rejection.

Now, let me tell you something. We all inwardly desire limitations. We want them. And if you don't conquer your child's will, somebody else will. I'm telling you, if you do not conquer them, they will allow someone else to conquer them.

Now society looks upon setting rules as something bad, but I want to say, for most families, it's one of the toughest and one of the most needful things to do. And do you know what's wrong with many of our church kids today? I'm talking about in evangelical churches. There are no more *thou shalt*s and *thou shalt not*s. Today, we think, perhaps, we've gone past the Ten Commandments.

Here's what Josh McDowell said. I was reading a book that he's written, *The Right and Wrong*, and he said this—they've surveyed the kids in evangelical churches, and he tells about this survey, and I want you to listen to it. He said, “We included seven statements in our study of church youth about objective standards of truth and morality.” Now, notice this is church youth—your kids. “We included seven statements in our study of church youth about objective standards of truth and morality. Their responses indicate that, for the most part, our children echo the world's view. For example, fifty-seven percent of our young people cannot even say that an objective standard of truth exists.” That's church folks. That's church kids. Fifty-seven percent did not even believe there was an objective, fixed standard, and eighty-five percent of our kids are liable to this reasoning: “Just because it's wrong for you, it doesn't mean it's wrong for me.” Do you see what a job has been done on our kids? And then Josh went on to say that “over

half—fifty-five percent—agree that everything in life is negotiable. Their idea of distinction between right and wrong is something that is subject to change.” Now Psalm 11 and verse 3 says, “*If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?*” (Psalm 11:3)—if we don’t have foundational truth. That’s the reason why we’re preaching this series on the Ten Commandments of God.

Ted Koppel, who is ABC’s Nightline personality, was addressing the 1987 graduating class at Duke University. And if he never ever says anything else right, he said a mouthful to those students graduating from Duke. Now I want you to listen to what Ted Koppel said. I’m talking about the idea of limiting kids. He said, “In the place of truth, we have discovered facts. For moral absolutes, we have substituted moral ambiguity. We now communicate with everyone, and say absolutely nothing. We have reconstructed the Tower of Babel, and it is a television antenna, a thousand voices producing a daily parity of democracy in which everyone’s opinion is afforded equal weight, regardless of substance or merit. Indeed, it can even be argued that opinions of real weight tend to sink, with barely a trace in television’s ocean of banalities.” And then here’s what he said. Now, listen to this. “What Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai were not ten suggestions; they’re commandments. They are, and not were, commandments. The sheer brilliance of the Ten Commandments is that they codify in a handful of words acceptable human behavior—not just for then, or now, but for all time.”

Now, keep that in mind, and I think what Ted Koppel said there is brilliant. There was a Christian who went out to Hollywood, and he was a Christian in that business. And he was listening to Hollywood producers talk, and these were producers of situational comedies—what we call *sitcoms*. And he said—and this is his report: “One of television’s most successful producers stated his sincere conviction that, in any television script that is to be commercially successful, it must violate at least three of the Ten Commandments.” I mean, it’s built in, he said, if you wanted to be successful. Isn’t the devil clever? Do you know what a situational comedy is? It’s to cause you to laugh at something. Now when you laugh at something, you don’t take it seriously anymore. And if the devil can get you to laugh at the transgression of the Ten Commandments, you see what he’s done? He says, “You don’t have to take that seriously. That’s comical.” So we have a generation that’s laughing its way into hell, and they’re being systematically seduced. Listen to that again: systematically seduced.

Madonna was being interviewed by a homosexual publication, and she spoke about the impact that homosexuality in its imagery in music videos is having upon straight America. Now, here’s what Madonna said—listen to this: “They”—that is, the American public—“digest it on a lot of different levels. Some people will see it and be disgusted by it, but maybe they’ll be unconsciously aroused by it. People keep seeing it and seeing it and seeing it; eventually, it’s not going to be such a strange thing. Just keep soaking

them in it.” Now that’s the reason you as parents need to set some limits. You need to say this thing called *MTV* is just out of bounds. We don’t watch it. *Hell’s Box Office—HBO*—is not coming into our home. I mean, you just *amen* or *oh me*. I don’t care. You are foolish, my friend, if you think that you can watch that and it will not affect you. Can a man take a fire into his bosom and be not burned? (Proverbs 6:27). You need to set some limits in your home.

D. By Leading Them

How are you an honorable parent? By loving them, by lifting them, by limiting them, and by leading them. Here’s the next thing. Now again, let’s go back to that proverb that I mentioned to you—Proverbs 22 and verse 6: “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it*” (Proverbs 22:6). What is that word *training*? Now, what is the key word? It’s *train*—“to teach.” Here’s the principle: To teach without training is to fail in your task.

Can anybody learn to play football by reading books? No. What happens when a man goes to training camp at football? Do they all go to the library? I’ll guarantee you not. Watch a man as he trains his hunting dog. It’s amazing. We train our dogs, and don’t train our kids. Then we tie the dog up at night, and let the kids run wild.

We are to train them—listen—lead them. What do you want your children to be? Do you know what all of the emphasis is today? It is on sports, and grades, and physical health, and popularity, and ability, but not on character. Let me give you some words: contentment, courage, courtesy, discernment, fairness, friendliness, generosity, gentleness, helpfulness, honesty, humility, kindness, obedience, orderliness, patience, persistence, self-control, tactfulness, thankfulness, thriftiness, wisdom. Who is teaching those things? Mom and dad, it needs to be you. Learn to compliment character more than talent. Train them.

We have a member of our church. I hope I don’t get in trouble by using this illustration, but it’s so great. He has two fine boys. They are two of the most godly kids I know anything about, and one of the most godly mamas in this church, beyond the shadow of any doubt. But one of those boys kind of lipped off to his mother, and that dad in our church said to that boy—he said, “Son, I want to tell you something. When you lipped off at your mother like you did, you sinned against God, because God says you are to honor her. And you’re going to have to answer to God for that. And not only that, but you sinned against her. She went down into the valley of the shadow of death to bring you into life. How ungrateful you’ve been to speak to your mother that way, and you’re going to have to answer to your mother for that.” He said, “I want to tell you something else. Not only is she your mother; she’s my wife. You’re not going to talk that way to my wife.” And he just said to him, “You are not going to talk that way to my wife.

And now not only do you have God to deal with, and her to deal with; you've got me to deal with, because you have disrespected my wife."

What kind of a lesson is that to a kid? I think it's one of the greatest I have ever heard in my life—to see a husband come to the protection of his wife, even if he has to take sides with her against his own child. *"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife"* (Mark 10:7). That's the kind of teaching that I'm talking about. That's the kind of training that we have.

E. By Laughing with Them

Now, here's the last thing, and I wish I had more time: not only by leading them, but by laughing with them. Oh, I hope that you will let your home be filled with joy and let it be filled with happiness. We need to lighten up. We need to learn how to laugh in our homes. The Bible has so many wonderful things to say about a merry heart. God puts laughter, God puts joy, God puts sunshine, in the home. Did you know—did you know—that the human species is the only creature of God that can do three things: laugh, and weep, and blush? Think about it. Animals don't blush, animals don't weep, and animals don't laugh.

God made us in His image, and God has given us the gift of laughter. And the Bible says, *"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh"* (Psalm 2:4). Of course, there, it speaks of the laughter of irony, but it is God that has that wonderful sense of humor. In Genesis 21, verse 6, Sarah said, *"God hath made me to laugh"* (Genesis 21:6). Jesus said, *"Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh"* (Luke 6:21). And what Jesus is saying is that laughter is a blessing. Thackeray said that, "laughter is like sunshine in the house." Let your kids see you laugh. Let them see you laugh. Let them see you laugh at yourself, at your mistakes.

Here's the principle that I'm talking about right now, friend, when I'm saying, laugh. Serious situations call for a lot of laughter. That's the principle. Serious situations call for a lot of laughter. Back in 1953, Eddie Fisher was singing a song. It was called, "Oh, My Papa." How many of you remember that song? You kids, never; you don't know. Hey, here's what Eddie Fisher was singing—it was the most popular song:

*Oh, my papa, to me he was so wonderful.
Oh, my papa, to me he was so good.
No one could be so gentle and so lovable.
Oh, my papa, he always understood.*

*Gone are the days when he would take me on his knee,
And with a smile he'd change my tears to laughter.*

*Oh, my papa, so funny, so adorable,
Always the clown, so funny in his way.*

*Oh, my papa, to me he was so wonderful.
Deep in my heart I miss him so today.*

Oh, my papa. Oh, my papa.

—EDDIE FISHER

And everybody was singing that song and loving it, whether their dad was lovable and the funny clown or not. That's the dad they wanted.

Let your home be filled with fun. Let your children bring their friends to your house. Let them raid the refrigerator. Let them mash down the couch. Let them put fingerprints on the wall. And thank God for it. Let your home be the happiest place. Let your house ring with laughter. Let your children see you laugh at yourself. Let them see you laugh in time of trouble, because it means that God is over it all. There is a God in the glory.

Conclusion

I'm finished; but in 1993, the workers in the Baseball Hall of Fame, in Cooperstown, were doing some remodeling, and as they were moving a cabinet, they found a crevice in which somebody had slipped a note. It wasn't a part of the display. Now this is the Baseball Hall of Fame. They found a hidden photograph, and it was beneath a display case; and that photograph was a picture of a man with a bat on his shoulder, and his uniform said, at the front, "Sinclair Oil." Now this is the Baseball Hall of Fame. And his demeanor was gentle and friendly. And stapled to the picture was a note. It was scribbled in pen by his adoring fan, and this is what it said—now this is in the Baseball Hall of Fame: "You were never too tired to play ball. On your days off, you helped build the little league field. You always came to watch me play. You were a Hall of Fame dad. I wish I could share this moment with you." And somebody had slipped a picture of his dad down in the crevice and said, "There are all these other guys making millions playing baseball, but you, Dad, are in the Hall of Fame."

You know, I'd like to be in that Hall of Fame, wouldn't you? I'd like to be the kind of a dad, and I know you'd like to be the kind of a mom, that, when the Bible says, "Children, obey your parents; honor your parents," I'd like to make it a lot easier for them to do just that.

Honor Thy Father and Mother

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Plan of the Home
- II. The Preeminence of the Home
- III. The Permanence of the Home
- IV. The Purpose of the Home
 - A. Husband and Wife Are to Come Together as One Flesh
 - B. Children Are to Honor Their Parents
 1. Reverence and Respect Them
 2. Obey Them
 3. Care for Them
 - C. Parents Are to Be Worthy of Honor
 1. Discipline Them
 2. Instruct Them
 3. Give Them an Example

Conclusion

Introduction

Now as we continue our study in the Ten Commandments, I would like for you to open your Bibles to Exodus the twentieth chapter, and we'll share together verse 12. Exodus 20, verse 12—God says, *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee"* (Exodus 20:12).

Let's pray one more time. Our Father, we pray in Jesus name that, as we teach people to honor their father and their mother, that, Father, we might understand the deep spiritual significance of this commandment; and, Father, that we'll not see this in a surface way, but, Father, that we'll understand all of the spiritual implications in this command that tells us to honor our father and our mother. For we pray in the sweetest name we know, and for His sake. Amen.

Someone asked me not long ago—they said, "Brother Rogers, I thought the Ten Commandments were for people living under the law." They were for people under the law; but the Ten Commandments are for those of us who are living under grace also. They are under the law. We are in the law. We don't do these things in order to be

saved; we do these things because we are saved. And our keeping of God's commandments is not the root of our salvation, but rather it's the fruit of our salvation. And in this commandment the dear Lord puts a tremendous and wonderful emphasis on the place that we call home. And, oh, how wonderful and how sweet our homes ought to be! Our homes are the only part of the Garden of Eden that man has left. The rest of it's gone, but man still has the home. And the devil knows the importance of our homes, and the devil has leveled some of his most fiery darts against our homes.

Now I want you to notice, first of all, as we get into this study the importance of the home. Would you open your Bibles to Matthew the nineteenth chapter and notice the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ on the home. Matthew 19—I'm beginning to read with verse 3: *"The Pharisees also came unto him,"*—that is, unto Jesus—*"tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery"* (Matthew 19:3–9).

I want you to notice this that the Lord Jesus Christ has said about the Christian home.

I. The Plan of the Home

First of all, I want you to notice the plan of this home. I want you to notice that it's God's plan and not man's plan. Verse 3 says that it was God that made them at the beginning male and female. Verse 6 says, *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* We hear a lot today about this idea of free love, and some people say, "Marriage contract: what's that? Just a scrap of paper. If I want to take up and live with this one for a while, and then take up and live with that one for a while, it's nobody's business but mine." My dear friend, you do it, and you'll have God to answer to. I want to tell you that. The Bible says, *"Marriage is honourable...and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4). This plan is God's plan; and from the very beginning, the first institution that God formed was not the church, and not the government, not the school, but the home. And in the beginning God made them male and female. And the Bible says, "What God has joined, let not man put

asunder.”

II. The Preeminence of the Home

The plan of the home: it's God's plan. Secondly, I want you to notice the preeminence of the home. Notice in verse 5, *“And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?”* (Matthew 19:5). Notice the preeminence of the home. The home is to come before in-laws. A man is to leave father and mother. A home should come before business. The home should come before pleasure. The home should come before friends. My dear friend, the home is the highest of all human relationships. The home is supreme in human relationships. And Jesus said that it's God's plan. And God places preeminence upon, not the church, not the school, not the government, but the home. God places His preeminence here.

III. The Permanence of the Home

And then, I want you to notice the permanence of the home—not only the plan, and the preeminence, but notice the permanence of the home, in verse 6: *“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:6). Notice verse 9: *“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery”* (Matthew 19:9). The Lord intended that the home be permanent.

Now I see these young people, and, oh, they tickle me, you know, as they go around here getting ready to get married. One young lady came into church the other day. She had just been engaged, and she walked in this way, you know, had that big ol' diamond sticking up there, wanting everyone to know it. And that's wonderful. I'm glad that she's so happy. But I have a message for these young people on the verge with an urge to merge. Listen. God has said that, when you get married, it is to be until death do you part. And I know that Hollywood is giving us some supercilious idea of marriage, that, if this one doesn't fit, then you can divorce this one and marry another. It's what someone called, “a single-file harem”: getting married to this one, and then this one, and then this one, and this one. And the Bible knows nothing of this whatsoever. The Bible teaches that one man and one woman are to be united so long as they both live. The Bible speaks of the permanence of this thing we call marriage. And our generation has greatly sinned.

Did you know that fifty-one percent of all the divorces in the world take place in the United States of America—and that's in six percent of the world's population? Fifty-one percent of all of the divorces in all of the world take place in America—in six percent of the world's population. And the Bible says, “What God hath therefore joined together, let

not man put asunder.” Someone’s going to come out with a wash-and-wear wedding gown one of these days. Oh, we’ve broken God’s laws. That marriage contract has become a scrap of paper. But I want to warn you the Bible speaks that marriage is God’s plan, and God places preeminence upon it, that a man should leave father and mother and cleave unto his wife; and God says that it is to be permanent. “What God hath therefore joined together, let not man put asunder.”

IV. The Purpose of the Home

And God says that He has a purpose in this. And what is God’s purpose? We spoke of the plan, and the preeminence, and the permanence. Now, notice the purpose. Verse 6: “*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh*” (Matthew 19:6).

A. Husband and Wife Are to Come Together as One Flesh

God’s purpose is that they come together as one flesh. They are to be one flesh physically. The Bible teaches that sex is pure and good and clean and holy, and sex is not dirty, and sex is not a subject for the back alley and for the twenty-five cent pocket novel. Sex is one of God’s most tremendous, wonderful gifts that God has given to man. But this gift is to be used and not abused. The Bible says that, “Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled; but adulterers and whoremongers God will judge.” And most sins are not doing something in itself that’s wrong, but doing something that is an abuse of something that is good.

Sex is wonderful and holy, and yet people have sinned against this. God’s purpose is that they be one flesh: that they be one flesh physically; that they be one flesh socially; that they live together; that two live as cheaply as one—that is, if one doesn’t eat. They come together and forsake all others; and they cleave one to the other, and they live together as one flesh socially.

Brother and Sister Dehoney are here. And in Brother Dehoney’s book he mentioned a man that wrote this in a newspaper ad. Of course, all of you have read the newspaper ads that say, “I will no longer be responsible for any debts that my wife has incurred, or so forth—or will incur.” This man wrote, “I am responsible for all the debts and obligations of my wife, and am more than happy to be a provider for the woman who has made the past twenty-one years of loving kindness the nicest years of my life.” Isn’t that wonderful? If I were a Britisher, I’d say, “Bully for him!” That’s good—that’s good. He said, “I’m glad to do it. I’ll do it”—wonderful—“because she’s done so much for me.” This is God’s purpose: that they become one flesh physically; that they become one flesh socially; that they live together.

You know, this is sometimes kind of hard to do. Now, really, I was talking to Dr. Jess Moody, who’s pastor at the First Baptist Church of West Palm Beach. And we were

having a cup of coffee together and talked a couple of mornings ago over at the Evangelism Conference, and I commented on something that he had written in one of his books. He said, in this particular book, someone had asked him, said, “Dr. Moody, have you ever considered divorce, you and Doris?” Doris is his wife. He said, “No, we’ve never once considered divorce. But,” he said, “on several occasions we did consider murder.”

Now it’s wonderful, though, that a man and a woman can forsake all others and come together and live as God intended them to live. They ought to be one flesh physically. They ought to be one flesh socially. They ought to be one flesh biologically. The Bible says that children are the heritage of the Lord (Psalm 127:3). And we see that newborn baby, and that mother and that father are so proud. Someone says, “Doesn’t he look just like his dad?” And someone else says, “Well, he has his mother’s eyes,” and so forth. Somebody told me about one of my children. They said, “Why, he’s got his daddy’s looks.” And I was so proud. Then they said, “He must have: his daddy doesn’t have any left.” And so that kind of took the air out of my sails a little bit. But isn’t it wonderful when two become one flesh biologically? This is God’s purpose: that man be fruitful and replenish the earth.

One flesh biologically, and then one flesh spiritually. Let me show you over here in Ephesians the fifth chapter the precious thing that the Lord has said about marriage—Ephesians 5:21: *“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”* He’s talking about husbands and wives. *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands,”*—now, notice this—*“as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”* (Ephesians 5:21–25). And then skip down to verse 31: *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery:”—oh, this one flesh, it’s a great mystery—“but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband”* (Ephesians 5:31–33).

They ought to be one flesh spiritually even as the Lord Jesus Christ and His church are one. We are His body, and members in particular (1 Corinthians 12:27). And, oh, how wonderful it is when a man and wife come to that marriage altar and they say, “I do,” and they become one flesh physically, and they become one flesh socially, and they become one flesh biologically, and they become one flesh spiritually, and there’s that union and communion of souls! Oh, how grand, and how wonderful, and how glorious is this thing that we call the Christian home! And, my dear friend, God places a

great deal of emphasis upon the Christian home.

B. Children Are to Honor Their Parents

With that in mind, what, then, are the duties of children to their parents? The Bible says in this commandment, *“Honour thy father and thy mother”* (Exodus 20:12). The first people you got to know were your mom and your dad. And when they looked at you, they loved you. No matter how red and wrinkled and ugly you were, they said, “I love you.” And they told you many, many times, before you could even understand what they were saying, that they loved you. And they did love you. Now, what shall we do? What does God’s Word command that we do?

1. Reverence and Respect Them

Number one: We’re to honor them. And how do we do this? By giving to them reverence and respect. Young man, if you’re disrespectful to your mom and your dad, I wouldn’t give you that much of a chance of being successful in the eyes of man or the eyes of God. We are to reverence and to respect our father and our mother. Why? Oh, you say, “Well, my mom and my dad, they’re so dumb; they’re so ignorant; they’re so poor; they’re so crude; they’re so this, and they’re so that.” I don’t care what they are: they conceived you. They gave you life. Your mother went down into the very valley of the shadow of death, and suffered agony, that you might come into this world. Their very blood is flowing through your veins. And, unless they are so maladjusted that they belong in a mental institution, they have loved you with an undying love from the moment you came into this world. And the closest, nearest thing to the love of God for a lost sinner is the love of a mother or a father for a child. And I believe that there are very few sins that will rank alongside the sin of just being disrespectful to your father or to your mother. Don’t you think that God thinks this is a light sin. God ranks this sin right along with the sin of murder: just being disrespectful to a father or mother.

Notice over here in the Book of Exodus—I want to show you something, kids. And if you’ve got curly hair, this ought to straighten it out this morning. You listen to this—Exodus 21, verse 15: *“And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall [surely be spanked]...”*—is that what it says? Listen— *“he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death”* (Exodus 21:15). That’s what God says. Notice verse 17: *“He that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death”* (Exodus 21:17). Now this is the Old Testament, and this commandment was given to Jews living under theocracy, and God has not meant for us to enforce this today in this dispensation of grace; but, once for all, God has shown that He doesn’t think of this as a light sin.

When you lift up your hand against your mother or your dad, when you curse and complain against your mother or your father, I want you to notice that God looks down upon this sin with fiery, holy indignation. And had you lived in the Old Testament, you

would have been slain for this sin. We must honor and we must reverence our fathers and our mothers. God has said so. And when we cease to honor our father and our mother, the home breaks down. And when the home breaks down, the church breaks down, and society breaks down, and the entire nation is headed toward hell.

Have you gotten in the habit, young man, of calling your father, “the old man”? Little girl, do you call your mother, “the old lady”? Do you know what Chester Swor said? He’s a good preacher, Chester Swor. Some of you have heard him. He leans way over the pulpit. And he said, “Young lady, if you call your mother ‘the old woman,’ I hope a wart grows right on the end of your nose.” I guess, for some, that would be the next thing to being stoned to death. We are to reverence our parents.

2. Obey Them

Not only are we to honor them by reverencing them, but we are to obey them. The Bible also says, in the Book of Ephesians, the sixth chapter, in the first verse, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right*” (Ephesians 6:1). You’re to obey your parents. It doesn’t matter whether you’re smarter than they are or not. It doesn’t matter whether sometimes they’re too hard on you. It doesn’t matter sometimes when you think they’re being unfair. It’s not up to you to decide. You live under their roof. They brought you into this world. And the Bible says that children are to obey their parents. And all of your explaining will not take it away.

God only puts one qualifying clause in this. He says, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord.*” Now, when the will of God and the will of your parents conflict, then you must take the will of God. Jesus said, “*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me*” (Matthew 10:37). Sometimes God has called a man to preach, and father and mother say *no*. He must preach anyway. Sometimes God calls someone to be a missionary; father and mother say, “I can’t bear to lose you.” He must leave anyway. Sometimes parents will teach children to steal: unthinkable is the thought; but it may be so. The child must say *no*. But everything else being equal, when the will of the parent and the will of God are not in conflict, the Bible teaches we’re to honor them by obeying them. “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.*” Today you’d think it read, “Parents, obey your children: or you’ll get in trouble.” That’s right. That’s what you’d think around Merritt Island is the way it reads. But it says, “*Children, obey your parents.*”

3. Care for Them

All right, the next thing, if we are to honor our parents, we must care for them. Not only reverence and respect them, not only obey them, but we must care for them; we must provide for them.

You know, this is a real problem in our day and age. What are we going to do with the old people? More people are getting old. More people are living for a longer time. The heathen turn them out to die. Some pagan cultures murder them.

I read of a tribe where the old people once a year over in Africa are forced to climb up some tall tree, and then the young braves down at the bottom shake the trees; and the ones that are too weak to hold on fall out and are crushed on the ground and buried, but those who manage to hold on come down and live in the society for another year.

What are we to do? The Bible says, in the Book of 1 Timothy, *“If any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). Now that’s pretty bad: *“worse than an infidel.”* But the Bible teaches that we are to provide, my dear friend, for our parents. And I know sometimes this is hard. It’s hard when another person comes, perhaps, to move in with you. But if they act silly and childish, you just remember there was a time when we were silly and childish, and they cared for us. If we have to carry them about, we must remember they carried us about. If we must feed them with a spoon, we must remember that they fed us with a spoon.

And the Bible teaches that we are to honor our fathers and our mothers, and we are to care for them; we are to provide for them. To be sure, sometimes we can provide better in a nursing home than we can at home. This doesn’t mean necessarily they must be brought into our home. Many times it would mean this. Many times it would not mean this. But this means, prayerfully, under God, with the leadership of the Holy Spirit, we must understand the best way to provide for these. And so,; children, the Bible teaches that the home is God’s divine institution; and the Bible teaches that children are to honor their parents.

C. Parents Are to Be Worthy of Honor

And, conversely, parents are to be worthy of honor. Now, you know, there are a lot of things you can choose. You can choose where you’re going to live. You can choose whether or not you’re going to receive Jesus Christ. You can choose your wife. And you can choose your business. But you didn’t have any choice about your parents, did you? I didn’t. I just took the first parents that came along. And I think this would be true with most of you. You just won’t be able to choose. You haven’t been able to choose your parents. And so, you see, sometimes it puts a kid in quite a spot when the Bible says to honor his father and mother, because sometimes father and mother don’t act very honorable, do they? You know, it’s hard sometimes to honor father and mother when father and mother act more childish than the children. And so, this commandment, if it teaches that parents should be honored, it also teaches the parents should be honorable.

And here are certain things that we must do. Parents, listen. If a child does not honor you, primarily it’s not his fault; it’s your fault. You didn’t teach them to. You didn’t train him right. You didn’t bring them up right. And most cases of juvenile delinquency are

parental delinquency. Now there are several things that the Bible teaches that we must do if our children would honor us and honor God.

1. Discipline Them

Number one: We've got to give them discipline. I know this has been preached on many times, but it needs to be said again. Listen. Proverbs 13, verse 24: *"He that spareth his rod hateth his son..."*—you say, "I don't whip him, because I love the little thing so much." No, you don't love him. If you loved him, you do what God's Word says—*"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes"* (Proverbs 13:24).

Now I know there's a lot of abuse and a lot of misuse here, and you're never to whip a child to get back, never to get angry, or never to vent your spleen because you're angry. And the Bible doesn't teach that you're to be cruel and abusive here. And, you know, a parent who does it, you can go to the other extreme, and you can provoke your children to wrath. You know what the Bible also says? The Bible says, in Ephesians 6, verse 4, *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the fear and the nurture and the admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:4). So, what are you going to do? On the one side, you can't let them get by; and, on the other side, you can provoke them to wrath. So this takes a lot of prayer.

A man was pushing a baby carriage through the park, and the baby was crying and cutting up. And this man said, "Easy now, Albert. Take it easy, boy. Careful, Albert. Take it easy, Albert. Settle down, Albert. Easy, Albert." After a while, a woman came along and said to him, "You don't know how to handle a baby. Look at that little baby cry." And she picked the baby up and said, "Now, now, Albert." He said, "No, no, I'm Albert. He's Harold."

2. Instruct Them

We sometimes have to be very prayerful and very careful as we administer this discipline. "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." We owe to them discipline. We owe to them instruction. How many of you have taught your children that the Bible teaches they're to honor you? How many of you read the Word of God with your children?

A man who'd been sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor said this: "I pardon the judges: their sentence is just. I pardon the police: they did well to arrest me. But there are two people in this court I will never forgive: they are my parents who brought me up without God, without hope." What an indictment!

3. Give Them an Example

We owe to our children discipline. We owe to them instruction, if they would honor us. And all of the discipline, all of the instruction in the world, are no good without an

example. We owe to them an example.

In Dallas there was a young cashier of a bank who grew sick. He'd worked for the bank for many years, a faithful and trusted employee. He was about thirty-five years of age. He went to the doctor. The people thought he had tuberculosis, but the doctor examined him and said, "No, you just have an extreme case of fatigue." The bank directors met and gave this young man one year's leave of absence with pay that he might regain his strength. And one of the men on the Board of Directors said to this man, "Fred, I have a camp in Maine in the north woods, and you may have it at your disposal absolutely free," and gave him the key. And this man had a little girl—she's now married—but a little girl named Doris. And he took Doris and his wife, and they went to Maine to the north woods to spend one carefree year.

And the time went on. The year matured, and the springtime came, and then the summer came, and then the fall came, and it was getting cool, and they were getting ready for the last day that they would spend in the north woods. And the father and his little girl went out for one last fishing trip. And the father took his little girl and rode way out, many miles out, on a huge lake there in the state of Maine. And there the father and the little girl fished. They didn't catch many fish, but that didn't make any difference: that's not really what they were going for. Then they had a picnic lunch. And then the father and little girl lay down and dozed for a while, slept. Then the father woke up and got a book and started to read the book.

This was the last day, and it was such a good time they were having. But then the father noticed that a few drops started to splatter on the pages of his book. And he got to thinking, "Well, the water is splashing up over the side of the boat." And then he noticed that these were drops of rain. And on the horizon he saw a black, boiling cloud. And so he thought to himself, "Well, we'd better head back in. It's not quite dusk, but we'd better head back in." And he loosed the anchor. And he took his time and folded up his book, and put the picnic supplies back in the basket, and arranged the fish on the stringer, and took his time. And then he started to row, but by then there were whitecaps on that lake, and the wind was whipping around furiously, and the raindrops started pummeling down.

And so the man started to row quite strongly, because he felt that he must get off the lake. But then the sun hid its face, and the darkness closed in around them. And even though it was early in the afternoon, it suddenly became pitch black on this huge lake. And this father looked around, and he saw that he couldn't even see the shore. He wasn't even sure in which direction he was rowing, where he was going. So he asked his little girl—he said, "Doris, can you see the shore?" She was sitting in the back of the boat looking forward, and he was rowing and looking over his shoulder. She said, "No, Daddy, I can't. Daddy, are we lost?" And he said, "No." He told her a story. He said,

"No, Doris, we're not lost. But Daddy can find his way back home." He said, "Even if he couldn't, we could stay out here all night."

He knew better. He knew that the wind and the waves would soon swamp that little rowboat. And he uttered a prayer and asked God to forgive him for telling a story, and asked God to help them, and started to pull even stronger on the oars. The little girl said, "Daddy, I see a light." She said, "Daddy, Mama said that, if we got in late, she'd put a light there in the window. I see a light." He said, "Thank God, Doris." He said, "Now you keep your eye on that light. Don't you take your eye off of it, and you guide Daddy." And so he would pull on the oars with all of his might, and rowed until his back ached; and the little girl would say, "A little to the right, Daddy"; "A little to the left, Daddy." And she kept her eye on that light.

And as this man continued to row, after a while he heard the crunch and the grinding of the keel as it came up on the rocky shore. He jumped out of that boat. He didn't put out a line to tie it up. He didn't get the rods and the reels, or the equipment, out of the boat. He just jumped up, picked that little girl up, and ran up the coast, up the steep hill to the little cottage, took his knee, pushed the door open, put the little girl in her mother's arms. And she looked at his pale, sweat-streaked, and rain-streaked face, and she said, "Why, Fred, I was beginning to worry about you. Was anything wrong?" Before he could answer, the little girl said, "No, Mama, wasn't a thing wrong. We saw your light, and we steered by your light."

And, oh, my dear friend, there is many a soul that's going to come one day through those pearly gates—through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come—and when that faithful mother comes and says, "Come, my child; come, my husband," they'll be able to say, "Thank you, Mama; thank you, Daddy: I steered by your light." My dear friend, if that boy, that girl, God has given you were to steer by your light, where would they end up? "Oh," you say, "It's nobody's business but mine how I live." Oh, you of all men most miserable and most selfish! Don't you understand that God has given to you some little children, and what you do is twice more important than what you say, and that you owe to those children a light? You owe to those children an example. And if we would teach our children to honor us, then we must give to them discipline; we must give to them instruction; and, above all, we must give to them a godly—a godly—example.

Conclusion

I close, but let me say this. Some of you say, "I am not married. I have no children. My mother and my father have long since gone to heaven. How does this commandment apply to me?" My dear friend, you have a heavenly Father, and you had better honor Him, and you ought to have a heavenly home. And so much of what I've said about our earthly parents can be said about our heavenly parent. He is worthy of honor.

Honoring Father and Mother

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 8, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. Obey Them When You Are Young
- II. Care for Them When They Are Old
- III. Honor Them at All Times
 - A. Show Them Respect
 - B. Expressing Gratitude
 - C. Heed Their Counsel
 - D. By Living Nobly
 - E. By Showing Them Love

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding Exodus chapter 20 in the Word of God—Exodus chapter 20. In a moment, we're going to be looking at a very familiar verse—verse 12. But while it is familiar, it needs to be stated again. We're talking about "Treasuring Family Values." There is an all-out assault on the home and on family values, and it's being done by cynics. *A cynic is somebody that knows the price of everything but he knows the value of nothing*. We have a generation today that does not even know family values, much less to treasure them. Notice God's Word here, in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12: "*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*" (Exodus 20:12). "Honor thy father and mother": that is a command from Almighty God.

Again, I want to say there is not only a neglecting of the family, but today there is an all-out assault on our families. It comes from the music industry. It comes from Hollywood. It comes from the television industry. When is the last time you saw on television a modern film that gives proper place and perspective to the home and the family, especially a family living in this generation, in this age? If it is a happy family, it's a family that lived back in the frontier times: *Little House on the Prairie*, or something like that. Today, the family is portrayed as something like *Roseanne*, or some dysfunctional family. And, by the way, the next six times I watch *Roseanne* will be my

first half dozen. I've never seen that. I've seen enough of her in little blips to turn me off. But what I want to say is that you will not find, as a rule, happily married couples on television. You will not find family values featured.

When television began, do you know the kind of films we watched? We watched *I Love Lucy*, *Dick Van Dyke*; we watched *Lassie*. We watched *Make Room for Daddy*. We watched *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*. We watched *The Donna Reed Show*. We watched *Father Knows Best*, *Leave it to Beaver*, and *The Real McCoys*. Those were the kind of films that we watched. And all of them had a thread through them of the family. And then those shows began to be replaced by *Roseanne*, for example, or *Dallas*, or *Dynasty*, or *L.A. Law*, or *Falcon Crest*, these other things. And, by the way, I don't watch those; I really don't.

And I had to get this list from somewhere else, because I don't watch those shows. There's just something about them that's distasteful to me. All of them are calculated to poison family relationships. And there's something that has started now in our entertainment that's very new, or, at least, it's actually come since the sixties. In the sixties, we were taught—our children were taught—“Don't trust anybody over thirty.” Now that generation—we call them today the *boomers*—they're the ones running the country. They're the ones producing the film and the music—at least publishing the music, a large part of it. And the seeds of rebellion came along in the sixties, and parents were a part of the establishment. “Don't trust your parents. Don't obey your parents. Don't honor your parents. They're not worth it. They gave us this miserable world, so we're going to have to have a new generation to take over.” And that's what has happened.

And even in the film fare that your little children are watching today, where the good films we call *The Little Mermaid*... I did see that. My children got me to watch that. *The Little Mermaid*: it's delightful; beautiful music. But when you when you look at that film, the father of this little mermaid—he doesn't understand. He has to be taught by the little mermaid. *E.T.*—I didn't see that one, but I read about it. *E.T.*—here's an extra terrestrial. And, why, the children have to teach their parents to be loving and kind to this creature from outer space. Even *Home Alone*—I did see that. *Home Alone*—they said, “Papa, you've got to watch *Home Alone*.” And it's cute. It's funny. But you think about it. Here's a little kid who's so smart that he keeps the house from being robbed and keeps his bumbling parents from making further mistakes. They're so dumb. They're so stupid. They go off and leave the kid alone. And he's the little wizard; he's the little genius who figures the whole thing out.

Do you see what's happening today? Parents are systematically—even in the good, the so-called *good*, films—they're being put down as unworthy, as stupid, not knowing, not understanding. And now we have a generation running the government who seem

to have that philosophy. Donna Shalala was speaking. She gave a speech at the University of Chicago. She described the kindergarten child of the year 2004—and here's what she said as she describes this child: "This child doesn't know any moms who don't work, but she knows a lot of moms who are single. That is, they've never had the benefit of marriage. She knows some children who only live with their dads"—notice that plural, *two dads*; don't have a mama, just have two dads—"and children who have two dads or who live with their mothers and their grandmothers. In her schoolbooks there are lots of different kinds of friends and families." The family is being redefined today. There is a systematic assault on family values as God intended, when God made one man, one woman, put them in a garden, and gave them children.

Now what I read to you in Exodus chapter 20 was a verse out of the Ten Commandments. And, actually, it's the pivotal verse. If you know anything about the Ten Commandments, you know that they have both a vertical and a horizontal relationship. First of all, the Ten Commandments start with our relationship with God: "*I am the LORD thy God...Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" (Exodus 20:2–3). Don't take God's name in vain, and so forth. Don't make graven images. Remember the Sabbath day. That's our relationship to God. That's from heaven to earth.

And then, beginning with the Fifth Commandment, in the last six he begins to talk about our horizontal relationships, our relationships to others. And he begins the second half of the Ten Commandments with the one that says, "*Honour thy father and thy mother*"—now, think about it: only ten commandments—only ten. And out of the entire ten, one is given to the subject of honoring father and mother. And, furthermore, this is the very first in the second half. Why? Because all society rests upon this commandment: "Honour thy father and thy mother"; it's the first commandment with promise. God says, "Here's a reason that you do this"—"*that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*" (Exodus 20:12). Now what He is saying is this: that society cannot long endure where parents fail to be honored, or where children fail to honor their parents.

Even before God says, "*Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness*" (Exodus 20:13–15), before He says all of this, He says we are to "*honour thy father and thy mother,*" because the child that honors father and mother will not steal, he will not kill, he will not commit adultery. You see, our parents are the first people that we meet. And if we're not right with our parents, if we don't understand our parents, if we cannot love and respect our parents, how can we expect to love and respect others? And what God is saying is, the religion that does not begin at home does not begin; that the home is the foundation, the basis, of expressing the love that we have for God, which comes first. The very next step is to love and to honor our parents.

Now I want our parents to listen today, but I especially want children to listen. No matter what age you are, I want you to listen and see what God says that you're to do to honor your parents. Basically, I want to give you three thoughts today, and I pray God that the Holy Spirit will etch these upon your consciousness and burn them into your heart, that you might learn today on this special day how to honor your father and your mother as God's Word has commanded that you do. *"Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee"* (Exodus 20:12).

I. Obey Them When You Are Young

Number one: If you would honor your father and your mother, you should obey them when you are young. Put it down: Obey them when I am young. Colossians chapter 3 and verse 20—God repeats this in the New Testament: *"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord"* (Colossians 3:20). And I don't care what else you do: if you have a rebellious spirit to your parents, you are not pleasing Almighty God. Do you know the difference in kids, the difference in children? The difference, basically, is between those who obey their parents and those who don't.

If you go out here West, out into the Colorado Rockies, these mountains that are what we call the Continental Divide, and up there in one of those passes, as those mountains reach their very peak, the water, the rain, the snow, falls from heaven, and one drop of water may go down towards the West, and another drop of water goes down toward the East. That's why they call it the Continental Divide. And those drops of water make up rivulets that make up rivers; and one river eventually will empty into the Pacific, and another eventually into the Atlantic. And the difference is simply a very slight difference. One drop goes this way, one drop goes that way; but the destination is miles apart. What is the Continental Divide in character? What makes the difference—the prime difference—in a child? It is whether or not that child obeys his parents. That is a Continental Divide.

There was a man who lived decades ago and in a part of another century. His name was Dwight L. Moody. He was the Billy Graham of his day, a mighty evangelist, and a wise man—one of the wisest men, I believe, that walked the face of America; and yet he was not well educated. But I want you to hear what Dwight L. Moody said. When he reached the age of sixty, he said, "I have lived over sixty years, and I have learned one thing if I have learned nothing else: No man or woman who dishonors father or mother ever prospers." "No man or woman who dishonors father or mother ever prospers." Children, teenagers—listen to me—God will surely judge you if you fail to obey your parents. God ranks disobedience to parents with the most vile and wicked and loathsome sins.

Take your Bibles, turn to Romans chapter 1, and look in verse 28, and I'm going to read through verse 32. And I want you to listen to the catalog of sins that are listed here in Romans chapter 1. God speaks of a generation, and this is how God describes them. God says, *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;"*—then God describes what a reprobate mind is. He describes the sins that bring any civilization crashing down. Listen to them, and as you listen, as I read this list, first of all, I want you to see how vile this list of sins is. And, secondly, I want you to notice that God ranks disobedience to parents as one of these sins. Verse 29—*"being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things,"*—now, watch it—*"disobedient to parents,"*—do you see the list that disobedience to parents comes with? And then He describes the people who do this—*"without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death,"*—God says, "If you disobey your parents, you are worthy of death—*"not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them"* (Romans 1:28–32).

Actually, that means that some people get their entertainment, their enjoyment, watching people disobey their parents; watching people commit adultery; watching people do all of the things that are listed here. This is a part of America's entertainment system. God says that a generation of children who disobey their parents is a sign of the last days; it's a sign of a civilization on its last legs.

Take your Bibles this time and turn to 2 Timothy chapter 3—2 Timothy chapter 3. Listen to this scripture. God describes the age in which we're living, and He calls this age *"perilous times."* Listen: *"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof"* (2 Timothy 3:1–4). And if you're a child today with a disobedient spirit toward your parents, you only have a form of godliness. You're not godly. You are one of those that God describes that cause perilous times to come upon any generation.

May I say, further, to disobey your parents is to invite the sure judgment of Almighty God. To obey your parents is to bring the blessings of Almighty God. Ephesians chapter 6—put this in your margin—verses 1 through 3: *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right."* Did you hear it? *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this*

is right.” And then God quotes, in the New Testament, the command that we read in the Old Testament: *“Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;”*—when God gave the other commandments, He gave a warning. But when God gave this commandment, God gave a promise. And what is the promise?—*“that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth”* (Ephesians 6:1–3). When a child learns to obey his or her parents, that child learns character. And when a child learns character, there’s something about wellbeing and help that go together.

And besides this, when a child obeys God, then God goes forth to protect and to watch over that child, and to watch over the land in which that child lives. There is the blessing, the protection, of Almighty God. Perhaps you ought to put a sign in your child’s bedroom on the wall, “Warning: disobedience to parents may be harmful for your health!” That’s what God is saying. God said, “This is a promise.” It is so plain. God says, “Honor your father and your mother that it may be well with you; it is right.” Again, God makes it very clear.

You say, “Well, what if my parents don’t understand as much as I know?” That doesn’t have a lot to do with it, friend. God says, “Obey your parents.” “Well, what if my parents command me to do something that is contrary to the Word of God? What if my parents tell me to steal, or what if my parents tell me to kill?” Well, that’s so rare it’s hardly worth mentioning. But obviously you know that the commandments of God supersede the commandments of your parents. And the Bible says, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right”* (Ephesians 6:1). Surely, sometime, you may have to choose between a command from Mom and Dad and a command from God; but that is so rare. God is saying that every child is to have the spirit of obedience to his or her mom or dad. So put it down—number one: If you would honor your father and your mother, you obey them when you are young.

Now there comes a time when you must assume responsibility for yourself and you are out from underneath those commands to obey, for when you grow up and beget a house of your own and a home of your own, then the Bible says, *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife”* (Mark 10:7). And you get a family with children that will obey you. And so you obey your parents when you are young.

II. Care for Them When They Are Old

But number two: You should care for your parents when they are old. Obey them when you are young. Care for them when they are old. There’s a very serious problem in America today. Do you know what it is? It is the elderly. And the elderly, so many times, are forgotten by their children—hard-hearted and selfish children. God commands that children are to take care of their elderly parents. They took care of us in spite of our

faults; we must care for them now in spite of their faults. If we must carry them around, they carried us around. If we must now bathe them, they bathed us. If we must feed them, they fed us. If we must sacrifice for them, they sacrificed for us. Did you know that there is no religious duty, no church work, that is more important than taking care of your mom and your dad?

I want to show you a very interesting passage of Scripture. Turn to Matthew chapter 15. We're talking about caring for your elderly parents. Matthew chapter 15—I begin to read in verse 3. Jesus is talking to the religionists of His age, and this is what He said to them, and He says it with a rebuke: *“But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying,”*—and now, here's our same verse again—*“Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.”* In the Old Testament, if you were to curse your mom or dad, you would have been stoned. *“But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:3–9).

Now what had happened was this. The religionists of that day had said, “Listen. You can take the money that you ought to be giving to your parents, the money that ought to be used to support your elderly parents, and you can take that and say you're going to give it to the building fund; or you're going to give it to missions; or you're going to give it to this thing or that thing, to some religious cause. And when you give that money to that religious cause, then you don't have to take care of your parents.” You know what Jesus said? Jesus said, that is the tradition of men. In another passage, they call this—I think it's in one of the other Gospels—it's called *corban*. And so here would be a father or a mother destitute. And here's a very religious man going off to worship with his Bible in his hand, putting his offering in the church, but he did not take care of his father and his mother.

“Are you saying, Pastor Rogers, that I ought not to give to Bellevue anymore; I just simply ought to give it to my parents?” No, I'm not saying that at all. You obey God, and give to God what belongs to God, and give to your parents what belongs to your parents. God will help you to see. And don't use one as an excuse for not doing another. Neither excuses your faithfulness in either area.

But there were those in Jesus' day who were royal hypocrites. They were not taking care of their father or their mother. If you're a deacon in this church, if you're a minister on this staff, if you sing in that choir, and you have aged parents who need care and

love, and you don't give it, Jesus said you are a hypocrite—you're a hypocrite. You are to care for your parents. The Bible is so clear about this thing. As a matter of fact, the Bible says that, if you don't take care of your parents, you are worse than an infidel. You'd have to look up to see an infidel. You're lower than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8).

Let me give you these scriptures—1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 4: *“But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home,”*—that is, the nephews, or the children, are to show to piety at home—*“and to requite their parents:”*—that means to take care of their parents—*“for that is good and acceptable before God”* (1 Timothy 5:4). That's 1 Timothy 5:4. And then, in 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 8, he says this: *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). He's not even as good as an infidel, if he does not take care of his parents. This verse, when it says, *“If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house,”* it's not talking about parents providing for children (1 Timothy 5:8). Read it in its context. It's talking about children providing for their elderly parents. How do we honor our father and our mother? We obey them when we are young. We care for them when they are old. Nothing could be clearer in the Word of God than this.

III. Honor Them at All Times

We have a generation today that has forgotten basic family values. Now, here's the third thing: Not only should we obey them when we are young, and not only should we care for them when they're old, but we should honor them whether we are young or old. I want to show you some Scripture. The Bible says, again, in Exodus chapter 20, verse 12, *“Honour thy father and thy mother”* (Exodus 20:12). Now, what does the word *honor* mean? The word *honor* actually means your parents are not to be taken lightly; they are to be given honor. I want to mention to you several ways that you can honor Mom and Dad. And I'd like for you to jot these down.

A. Show Them Respect

First of all, by showing respect—by showing respect. Now jot these scriptures down. Don't turn to them. We don't have time, but I'll share them with you. Leviticus 19, verse 3: *“Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father”* (Leviticus 19:3)—*“Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father.”* That does not mean, “to tremble in their sight.” The Bible word means, “to have reverence; to have respect.” Never speak disrespectfully to your parents. Leviticus 20, verse 9: *“For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him”* (Leviticus 20:9).

In the Old Testament, under the theocracy, if a child were to curse his father or his

mother, it was a capital crime. God puts it, in Proverbs chapter 30 and verse 7, *“The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it”* (Proverbs 30:17). Oh, how clear the Bible is! You say, “Well, my parents are not worthy of respect.” Only perfect children can demand perfect parents. Adolescence and middle age are both difficult times. Parents go through stages too, but you’re to respect and honor your parents.

I was interested once to hear that Susanna Wesley said, about the fact that she would not allow, and her husband would not allow, the children to disrespect their parents. There is one thing in our family, when our children were growing up, that I would not tolerate, and that is disrespect—and especially disrespect for their mom and dad, especially disrespect for Joyce, for mother. I would not—and I will not, to this day—because I know what that woman has done for those children. I know how she sacrificed for them. I know how she went down into the valley of the shadow of death to bring them into this world. I have watched her pray and weep over those children. Never should a child be disrespectful to father or to mother.

B. Expressing Gratitude

Secondly, you can honor them by expressing gratefulness. Thank them. Learn the attitude of gratitude. Shakespeare was so right when he said, “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.” Whoever your mother and father are, whatever they’ve done, they have done much for you. Thank them. Thank them. Thank them.

C. Heed Their Counsel

Thirdly, listen to their counsel. While you have your own home, still learn the counsel of father and mother. I still listen to the counsel of my parents. My parents are wise. Your parents are wise in ways that you’re not wise. Proverbs 1, verses 8 and 9: *“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck”* (Proverbs 1:8–9).

You’ll be amazed at how much your parents know. At sixteen, a boy thinks he’s not too sure about his parents. At eighteen, he feels he’s completely surpassed them. At twenty-two, he feels that he’s light years ahead of them. But at thirty, he begins to understand they did know a few things. And when he gets to be about forty, he thinks they were perfect. That’s right. It’s amazing how, the older you get, the smarter your mom and dad get. You see, your parents have an advantage on you. You youngsters, listen to me. Here’s the advantage your parents have—and it’s not primarily the gray matter: It is their experience. David said, “Once I was young, now I am old” (Psalm 37:25). You can’t say that. All you can say is, “Once I was young.” But, you see, they’ve

seen both sides of life, and they've had experiences that you don't have.

If we were taking a trip, and we were going to go from Memphis to the West Coast, and let's suppose your parents started out a day or two ahead of you; they're driving in their car, and you're coming along behind with your children and your car, and every so often, they call back to give you instruction. They know what hotel you're staying in, and they just simply say, "And, by the way, don't take Route 60. They're tearing the thing up. There's a blockade there. You'll spend hours there. We spent all kinds of wasted time there because of construction." And then they're saying, "And, oh, yes, listen. We ate at thus-and-such a restaurant: it's wonderful." They could tell you that. "And don't fail to see this: it's beautiful." That doesn't mean they're smarter than you are, friend. They have just been further down the road—been further down the road. That's all there is to it. David said, "Once I was young, and now I am old" (Psalm 37:25). And if you're wise, you'll hear the instruction of your father.

D. By Living Nobly

Now, let me tell you the third way that you can honor them: by living a godly and a noble life. You see, you are an extension of your father and your mother. Do you know what gives me great joy? When I sense that my parents are proud of me, when I sense that I give my mother a sense of gratefulness that I am her son, or, that my daddy can say, "He's my boy." Do you know what gives me great joy as a father? To see my children—to see them live right. When I watch my children bless their children, my heart swells with joy. I went this past week to put my son on an airplane to go to Spain as a missionary. I watched that man, and his wife, and our little Jonathan, get on that plane, and I thought, "Oh, thank you, God. Thank you for a son that loves you and that wants to spend his life getting out the gospel of Jesus Christ." I thank God that I've got two sons in the ministry, and I thank God that I've got two daughters who are godly mothers raising children for Christ. Do you know that gives me gratefulness? But that brings honor to my own life, because they are an extension of my life.

E. By Showing Them Love

Last of all—and I must close—you can honor them by showing love to them. Oh, how you ought to love your mom and dad! They gave you life. Their very blood flows through your veins. The love of your parents for you is the closest thing to the love of God known on this earth. Love your mama. Call her. Write that letter to your dad. Pay that visit. Give that gift. Do that deed of helpfulness. Put that love in shoe leather. Verbalize it. Vitalize it. Visualize it. And if you're going to do it, do it as quickly as you can. I've preached many, many funerals in my day, and I've seen people try to make up for lost love at the funeral: lost respect, lost honor, opportunities. My friend, dead noses smell no roses. You're going to do it? Do it now. Honor your father and your mother.

Conclusion

Our society is on its way down. It has lost the very rudiment of character, when we have a generation of unruly young people who shoot out the lip to mother and father. That, friend, is a family value. Honor your father and mother. That, you can take to the bank. And may God one more time bring us back to a value that we can treasure: to honor our father and our mother.

Honoring Father and Mother

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 8, 1994

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. Obey Your Parents When You Are Young
 - A. Why Should You Obey Your Parents?
 1. It Is the Root of All Blessing
 2. It Brings the Judgment of Almighty God
- II. Care for Your Parents When They Are Old
- III. Honor Your Parents at All Times
 - A. Show Them Respect
 - B. Express Gratitude
 - C. Listen to Their Counsel
 - D. Live a Godly Life
 - E. Show Them Love

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding the Book of Exodus, please, chapter 20, and that brings us to that wonderful passage that we know as the Ten Commandments—Exodus chapter 20. We're talking on this subject: "Treasuring Family Values." Somebody has said that a cynic is somebody who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing. We live in a cynical age, and there are those—many of them—who do not know family values; and, certainly, they do not treasure family values.

I think you'd have to agree with me that there has been an all-out assault on the home. And Satan has masterminded it, because the home is the basic unit of society. We've said before, God founded the home before government, before the school, and before the church. It is the basic unit of society; and as the home goes, so the society goes. And we have homes today in America that are unraveling. And the music industry and Hollywood and television are doing their part in this assault on the home.

I want to ask you a question. When was the last time you saw a happily married couple portrayed on television or in a film? Now if you can remember, again, it would be very, very rare, and probably would be set in another age, like *Little House on the*

Prairie—something back in that time, in that generation.

Do you remember—when television began—do you remember the kind of films that we used to watch? *I Love Lucy*, *Dick Van Dyke*, *Lassie*, *Make Room for Daddy*, and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, and *The Donna Reed Show*, and *Father Knows Best*, and *Leave It To Beaver*, and *The Real McCoys*. And the family could sit down and eat popcorn, and not have to worry about dirty words, not have to worry about people with morals like alley cats jumping in and out of bed together, and could just listen to Hollywood, or the television logos, saying, “This is a home, a happy home.”

Now today the kids watch *Roseanne*. You say, “Pastor, what do you think of *Roseanne*?” Well, to tell you the truth, it wouldn’t be nice for me to say what I think. As a matter of fact, I’ve never seen that show. You say, “Not once?” No, not once. The next six times I see that show will be my first half dozen. I’ve read about it. I have seen her in news clips. I’ve watched her obscenities; I’ve watched her vulgarities. And I would say, dear God, is this what it is come to? From a *Dick Van Dyke*-type of show and *I Love Lucy*, we’ve turned to *Roseanne*, and shows like *Dallas*, and *Dynasty*, and *Falcon Crest*, and these others. By the way, I don’t watch any of those either—never have. And I don’t know whether they are even still being shown on the tube or not. But all of these things are calculated to poison family relationships.

Can you imagine a show today entitled *Father Knows Best*? If they had one today, it would be *Father Knows Nothing*. Parents—and especially dads—are looked upon as imbeciles, as people who don’t understand, who are out of it, who are malicious, who are hypocritical, who are failing in every way; and it is the enlightened children today who are now telling the parents how to behave. And the parents stumble around, and they fail—and even in the nice films, the Disney-type films. *Honey I Shrunk the Kids*: the father is what? He’s kind of a bumbling dad who’s kind of stupid, but he might be intellectually smart enough to be a scientist; but it’s the kids who find their way through the jungle, or the backyard. Or even *The Little Mermaid*. My children got that and brought the thing home, and I watched *The Little Mermaid*. The music—beautiful. The scenery, the artistry—wonderful. But it’s the little mermaid who seems to understand more than her father about what true love is and true commitment. *E.T.*—it’s the children who seem to say, “Now, adults, you don’t understand how to treat this extraterrestrial being. We’re the ones who are going to have to show you.” *Home Alone*—here’s a little guy; his parents are so stupid. They leave him; and then he, all by himself, fends the house, you know, from burglars, and gets folks together and mends relationships, and all that.

Now those are the nice films, but what are all of them saying? They’re saying that parents are a failure. Do you know where this began? This began in the sixties with a rebellion, a youth culture, that said, “Don’t trust anybody over thirty.” And now that

generation is running the country, and they are running the media, we are reaping now a harvest of children who do not understand what God taught as one of the basic family values.

And I want to read it to you right here out of the Word of God Exodus chapter 20 and verse 1: *“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day in the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”* And then we come to verse 12: *“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee”* (Exodus 20:1–12).

Now you notice the first four commandments dealt with God: no other gods; no graven images; don't take God's name in vain; remember the Sabbath day. Those are what we call the vertical relationships: the relationship between man and God, and God and man. And then, after the first four, He gives six that we call the horizontal relationships: our relationships with one another. And the first of these is this: “Honor father and mother” (Exodus 20:12).

Now, think with me for a moment. God only gave ten commandments, so you know that they are exceedingly important. And of those ten, one of them says that we are to honor our father and our mother (Exodus 20:12). And that's why we're talking today on this subject: “Learning to Honor Our Parents.” Honor father and mother: that is a basic family value that needs to be treasured. This is the first of the last six. Why does God put it first? Because it is primary. The child that does not learn to honor his father and his mother will have a basic character flaw that will impede him from fulfilling the rest of the commandments. And so “Honor father and mother” comes before not killing, not stealing, not bearing false witness. This is first, and this is primary. *The religion that does not begin at home generally does not begin.* Our parents are the first persons we meet, the first persons we know. If we cannot learn to respect and love our parents, how

can we hope to get along in society?

This is absolutely, basically, fundamental. And so I want us to look at this command. And it is a command—not a suggestion, a command: Honor your father and your mother. And I want to give you three ways, children, that you can do that. And all of us are children. All of us have fathers and mothers. Some have parents who are in heaven; but we all have fathers and mothers. And here is a command, therefore, that is universal. It is to every mother's child in the world: *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee"* (Exodus 20:12). Here are three ways you can do it.

I. Obey Your Parents When You Are Young

First of all, you are to obey them when you are young. Have you got that down? Obey them. Now I'm going to give you some scriptures, and I want you to jot them down.

First of all, it's Colossians chapter 3 and verse 20: *"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord"* (Colossians 3:20). That means that not to do it would be to displease God.

A. Why Should You Obey Your Parents?

Now, why should you obey your parents?

1. It Is the Root of All Blessing

First of all, it is the root of all blessing to obey your parents. Out here, in the West, we have what we call the Continental Divide. There are the Rocky Mountains, and a drop of water falling on one side of the Rockies will end up in the Pacific; a drop of water falling on the other side of the Rockies may end up in the Atlantic. What is the Continental Divide with children? Children seem to have the same abilities, the same mind, the same opportunities, but one child chooses to obey his parent, and the other child may choose not to; and that makes the difference in character; it makes the difference in destiny. Obedience to parents is a continental divide in character.

Dwight L. Moody, who was an evangelist of yesteryear, said this: "I've lived over sixty years, and I've learned one thing, if I've learned nothing else: No man or woman who dishonors father or mother ever prospers." That's what Dwight L. Moody said.

2. It Brings the Judgment of Almighty God

God ranks disobedience with the very worst and the vilest sins. Put your finger there in Exodus chapter 20, and turn with me to Romans chapter 1. I want to show you how God feels about the sin of disobedience to parents. I'm going to begin reading in Romans 1, verse 28. God speaks of a generation on its last legs, and this is what He says about it: *"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind..."*—now you want to know what reprobate mind is; well,

listen—“*God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*”—and I want you to hear now the catalogue of sins that He’s going to list; and I want you to see, as I read this catalogue of sins, vile and vicious as they are, that God puts disobedience to parents in this list. Listen to it—“*being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents*” (Romans 1:28–30).

Now you may think that disobeying Mom or Dad is a small thing, but take that list of sins and see how God ranks the sins of disobedience with the very worst sins. As a matter of fact, God teaches that a generation that disobeys its parents is a generation on its last legs. It’s a sign of the last days and the end time. You might also find 2 Timothy chapter 3, verses 1 thru 5, and listen to how God describes the last days, how God describes perilous times, the days that I believe we’re in: “*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*” Now, here is God’s description of perilous times—listen to it: “*For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*” (2 Timothy 3:1–5).

What does God say? God says, “Teenager, if you’re disobedient to your parents, your religion is a form; it is a fake; it is a fraud. You only have a form of godliness.” I don’t care what you do in the youth activities here of Bellevue Baptist Church; if you’re disobedient to your parents, you are a hypocrite. Disobedience to parents brings the sure judgment of Almighty God, and obedience to parents brings the blessings of Almighty God.

Listen to Ephesians chapter 6, verses 1 through 3: “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;*”—when God gave the other commandments, He gave a warning. But God, with this commandment, God gives a promise. And what is the promise? That you will live long in the land. Listen—“*that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth*” (Ephesians 6:1–3).

Why is that? Because, when you honor your parents, that is the seedbed, the root, of character. And to live with character is to live with health; it is to be given a long life. And it is also to receive the blessings and the protection of Almighty God, because God does not bless, nor is God bound to protect, rebels who rebel against Him. Moms and dads, perhaps you ought to put a sign in the bedroom of your child that says something like this: “Warning: Disobedience to your parents may be harmful to your health.”

You see, friend, God judges this sin. You say, “Well, what if my mom and dad

command me to do something that's contrary to the Word of God?" Then, of course, we ought to obey God rather than men, but that is so rare that it is hardly worth mentioning. Most parents are parents who tell us what is right and what is wrong. Of course, the Bible says, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:1). You cannot go against God by obeying your parents, but you should always obey your parents when it does not contradict a known command of Almighty God. That's the first thing you can do today to honor your father and your mother: obey them when you are young.

II. Care for Your Parents When They Are Old

But you'll not be young always. The Bible says, "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife*" (Mark 10:7). There comes a time when you're out from underneath their commands and you begin to build your own home and give instruction to your own children. So the second way that you honor your mother and your father is, not only to obey them when you're young, but to care for them when they are old. Do you have it? You obey them when you're young. Number two: You care for them when they are old.

We have a serious problem in America today and in the world today, and that is we have forsaken and cast away our older people. We've become hardhearted to the elderly. And many times we're expecting the government and institutions and the churches to take care of our parents when it is our solemn and holy obligation before God. You say, "But that inhibits me. I can't do what I want to do." Friend, it makes no difference. You inhibited them when you were little. If you have to carry them around, they carried you around. If you have to bathe them, they bathed you. If you have to feed them, they fed you. If you must sacrifice for them, they sacrificed for you.

The Bible says a wonderful thing in Matthew chapter 15. It teaches us that our duty to our parents comes before our duty to the church. Now I want you to listen to this. Jesus was speaking to the religionists of His day and found out that they were being hypocritical, because they were neglecting their grown parents. And here's what Jesus said to them. He said, in Matthew 15, verse 3, "*But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me...*"—now, what does that mean? Here's a man who has a father and a mother who are in need; I'm talking about financial need, physical need. And here's a son who says, "Well, I can't help you, Mom. I can't help you, Dad. I took what I was going to spend on you, and I gave it to the church. I gave it to the Love Offering. I gave it to build the activities building. I gave it for a missionary journey. I gave it for this thing or that thing. It's a gift. I gave it to God, so I

can't help you." Jesus went on to say—*"But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father of his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free."* That is, he doesn't have any responsibility now to his mom and dad, because he's dedicated everything to the church, or to God, or to the temple. *"Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."* That is, they have taken tradition, and used tradition to nullify and negate the Ten Commandments. And then here's what our Lord said: *"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men"* (Matthew 15:3–9).

If you're here today and you're singing these songs and making your gifts, and yet you're not taking care of your mom and your dad, Jesus Christ says that your worship this morning is vain. It's vain. You have negated the basic commandment of God, which says you are to honor your father and your mother. And Jesus said one of the ways that you do that is to take care of them when they're old. If you fail to do it—if you fail to do it—the Bible teaches that you are worse than an infidel; not as good as an infidel—worse than an infidel (1 Timothy 5:8).

Put these scriptures down—1 Timothy 5, verse 4: *"But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home,"*—that is, here's a woman. She's a widow. She does not have any way to take care of herself. She has children who should take care of her. Our Lord says, "Let those children learn to show piety at home; that is godliness"—*"and to requite their parents:"*—that means, "to take care of their parents"—*"for that is good and acceptable before God"* (1 Timothy 5:4). And then listen to how Paul sums it up in 1 Timothy chapter 5 and verse 8. He says, *"But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel"* (1 Timothy 5:8). Plain English: You have no right to call yourself a child of God if you don't take care of your elderly parents. That's what God's Word says. There is nobody else who should do it for you, if you can. Now you may not be able to; you may be as destitute as they.

"Well," you say, "Pastor Rogers, then, are you telling me to take what I give to Bellevue Baptist Church and give my parents?" No, that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying you are to give to them what is due to them and give to God what is due to God. And don't use one as an excuse not to do the other. There is a wonderful balance in the Word of God. But nobody can call himself a Bible-believing Christian who does not honor and respect and take care of his parents. You are to obey them when you are young. You are to care for them when they are old. And when the Bible says, "If any provide not for his own, especially those of his own house," he's not talking about parents providing for children; he's talking about children providing for parents (1

Timothy 5:8).

III. Honor Your Parents at All Times

Now, here's the third thing that you might do on this Mother's Day to honor your mother and your father. Remember, first of all, we said, obey them when you are young. Secondly, care for them when they are old. Thirdly, honor them at all times. And I'm going to give you five ways that you can do that. Whether you're young or old, whether they're old or in their prime, here are five ways that every child can honor his or her parents. The word *honor* means, "to take them seriously; to speak of them with respect." As a matter of fact, the word *honor* comes from a Hebrew word which means, "to attach weight to something." It means, not to take your parents lightly, not to deal with them frivolously. Here are five ways that you can honor your mother, five ways that you can honor your father.

A. Show Them Respect

Number one: Show them respect. You do it by showing respect. Listen to these verses—Leviticus 19, verse 3: "*Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father*" (Leviticus 19:3). Fear them. Now that word *fear* doesn't mean to quake in their presence. It's a word that means, "to reverence," like "*the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*" (Psalm 111:10). That is, you're to have a holy respect for your father and your mother. You should never shoot off the lip at your parents. Leviticus 20, verse 9: "*For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him*" (Leviticus 20:9). This was a sin so hateful, so horrible, so heinous, that in the Old Testament, under the theocracy, were you to curse your father or your mother, they would stone you to death, young person. God puts it quaintly, in the Proverbs—in Proverbs chapter 30, verse 17, "*The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it*" (Proverbs 30:17). You say, "But my parents are not worthy of respect." Only perfect children can demand perfect parents, and no children are perfect. Our parents are imperfect. You're imperfect. But God is holy, and God says that you are to respect your parents.

There's one thing in our family that we would not tolerate, and that is disrespect. There are times when we might look the other way at some failures, and some faults, some foibles in our children, but direct disrespect I would not tolerate—and I would not to this day. My children are grown, but none of my children are going to disrespect their mother as long as I'm breathing—and they're in the same room with me—not if I can help it. I would not allow them to speak disrespectfully to someone who has done for them what Joyce has done for them. She went down into the very valley of the shadow

of death to bring them into this world. I've watched her as she's wept over them and prayed for them, and nursed them, and cared for them, and sacrificed for them, and lived for them, and labored for them, and loved them, and taught them, and cared for them. And to disrespect her is a sin, in my mind, of the gravest import. You should respect your parents. Respect them. They are your parents.

B. Express Gratitude

Number two: You honor them by expressing gratitude; to say to them, "Thank you for what you've done." Develop an attitude of gratitude. How wonderfully our parents have taken care of us! Shakespeare said, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child." You say, "But my mom and dad made me do this or that." Thank God they cared enough to discipline you. And even failing parents have done so much that deserves thanks. Thank your mom and dad, and tell them that you're thankful. Write that note. Express that thanksgiving. Learn to express thanksgiving to your parents.

C. Listen to Their Counsel

Thirdly, listen to their counsel. Heed their counsel. Listen to Proverbs chapter 1, verses 8 and 9: "*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck*" (Proverbs 1:8–9). The chains that he's talking about are not chains of slavery, but ornamentation—like a gold chain around your neck. Your mom and dad know far more than you may think they know. You say, "Well, I'm smarter than they are," or, "I've got a better education." That has nothing to do with it. Let me tell you where your mom and dad have it over you. They've lived longer than you have. David could say, "Once I was young, and now I am old" (Psalm 37:25). Children can't say that. All they can say is, "I am young." But an older person has experience that younger people do not have.

Now, suppose that your family decides that you're going to go to California on a vacation. And let's suppose that Mom and Dad start out early. And let's suppose that you and your family wait behind, and your mom and dad are driving. They take Interstate 40, and they're headed west. And then they call back to you, and they say to you, "By the way, going through thus-and-such a city, be careful: the road is under construction. You're going to waste a lot of time there. We suggest that you take a detour." And then they might say to you, "And, by the way, we found a wonderful motel to stay in. It's very reasonable and very clean, and it has a great restaurant next to it." And then they say, "Oh, don't fail to see thus-and-such." Now, is that because they're smarter than you or better than you? No, they've just been down the road further than you have.

There's something about age that the Bible says we're to honor. We're not to

discount that. And we have a young generation today that thinks that it knows better. But the Bible says, *“Hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother”* (Proverbs 1:8). When you were sixteen, you thought your dad didn’t know anything. At nineteen, you were sure of it. At twenty-two, you felt you were light years ahead of him. Then when you got to be thirty, you said, “Well, maybe he did know a few things.” You got to be forty: you think he was almost perfect. The older you get, the smarter your parents will get. The older you get, the smarter your parents will get. Your parents have this advantage. You honor them by heeding and listening to their counsel. My dad is eighty-eight years old. I had a joyful time with him on the telephone last night. I still value his advice. He is a wise man. And my mother—I listen carefully to her advice.

D. Live a Godly Life

Fourthly, here’s a way that you can honor your parents: by living nobly; by living a godly life. You are an extension of your parents. Their blood flows in your veins. When you live honorably, you honor them. When you live shamefully, you bring shame to your parents. Do you know what gives me great joy? For my parents to say, “Son, we’re proud of you,” or, “Son, we’re grateful for you.” That gives me a thrill, a rush, an exhilaration of joy—to think that I have pleased them. Do you know what gives me great joy as a father? To see my children living godly lives. I have no greater joy than to know that my children walk in the truth (3 John 1:4).

This past week, I went to Richmond, Virginia, along with Joyce, to put our son on an airplane to go to Spain to be a missionary—he and his lovely wife Kelly, and our little grandson Jonathan. And oh, what joy—what joy—surged through my heart to know that I have a son who’s living for God! I have another son in Florida who is a minister of music, who writes Christian music, and the joy of my heart is that he loves God. I have two daughters who are godly homemakers, and to watch them mother their children and to teach the love of God to our grandchildren—that gives me honor. It gives me joy. It is a crown and an honor to Joyce, because they are an extension of us. How do you honor your parents? By living honorably.

E. Show Them Love

Last of all, you honor them by showing to them love—I mean, by showing love. There’s nothing greater on earth—no greater love, no more God-like love—than love of father and mother for their own children. Most parents would fling their lives to the death on behalf of their children. They have loved us so much, and how we ought to love them! Write that letter. Have you ever written a letter to your parents? I mean a love letter telling them how much you love them. You say, “Well, it sounds so corny.” I guarantee you they’ll never throw it away. Write that letter. Tell them how much you

appreciate what they have done. Pay that visit. Give that gift. Do that deed. Show that affection, and do it while you can. If your parents are still alive, take advantage of that opportunity. I've preached a good number of funerals, and not infrequently have I come to stand there at the grave when children tried to make up in the funeral with an expensive casket, and flowers, and beautiful words—tried to make up for lost time. I'm not against an expensive casket, if that's your desire. I'm not against the flowers or the beautiful words. But you listen to me. Dead noses smell no roses. What you're going to do, do it now. Would you honor your mother and your dad?

Oh, friend, show them respect. Give them thanks. Live an honorable life, and express love. Express it. Say, "Mama, I love you." You did it when you were a little boy; you're not too big to do it today, if she's still alive.

Conclusion

The Bible says, "Honor your father and your mother"; and, very frankly, my dear friends, that's the family value that this generation needs to treasure: treasuring family values.

How to Be the Child of a Happy Mother

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. Honor Your Parents Through the Life That You Live
- II. Honor Your Parents Through the Load That You Lift
- III. Honor Your Parents Through the Lessons That You Learn
- IV. Honor Your Parents Through the Love That You Lavish

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's precious Word, please, and turn to Exodus 20:12. It's a joy to hear those pages turn today. Exodus 20:12 says, *"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee."* I want to speak today on this subject: "How to be the Child of a Happy Mother." There once was an evangelist who was the Billy Graham of his day. His name was Dwight L. Moody. And Dwight L. Moody, after a lifetime of observation, after a lifetime of service to the Lord Jesus Christ, and after a lifetime of study of the Word of God, made an astounding statement. I want every child here to listen to that statement—and, of course, every one of us is some mother's child. Here is what Dwight L. Moody said: "I have lived over sixty years, and I have learned one thing, if I have learned nothing else: No man or woman who dishonors his father or mother ever prospers." Think about it. Listen to it again. Now this is not just somebody saying this. This is one of the greatest Christian leaders who has ever lived. He says this, not thoughtlessly, but he's saying it is something he has learned. It has been the sum total—the observation of a lifetime. He said, I know this, if I know nothing else—so listen to it: "I have lived over sixty years, and I have learned one thing, if I've learned nothing else: No man or woman who dishonors his father or mother ever prospers."

Now this command that I just gave you, which says we're to honor our father and our mother, comes from the Ten Commandments. And you know, if you're a Bible student, that the Ten Commandments are divided into two categories, or two sections. The first part of those commandments deals with our relationship with God, and we call those the

vertical commands. And then the next commands deal with our relationship to man; we call those the horizontal commands. First, we have to be right with God; and then we can be right with man. If we're not right with man, then we're not right with God. But we can't be right with God until we're right with man. So all of the commands are summed up in, "Love God with all of your heart" (Deuteronomy 6:5), and, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

Now you knew that already. But now the question comes, as God starts the second section in these commands—and He begins with this statement: that we are to honor our father and our mother. Now, why does God start the second section of these commands with this particular command? Well, it is a pivotal command. You see, our parents are the first people we meet. Now if we cannot learn to love and respect our parents, then it's obvious we cannot learn to love and respect any one else. What God is saying is this: The religion that doesn't begin at home simply does not begin, because what happens at home is the basis of everything else. If the home decays, then the church decays. If the church decays, then society and the state decay. And so we begin here. God tells us that the basis of our relationship to everybody else and everything else on Planet Earth—after we get right with God—is in our home, where we learn to honor our father and our mother.

Now it's not merely sentimental what we do when we have Mother's Day. Folks, it's biblical. As a matter of fact, it is commanded that we honor our father and mother. Mother's Day is just a token of that honor. We're to be giving 365 days a year to both our father and our mother. Now the word *honor* literally means, "to add weight to." Now no mother wants weight added to her, so let's explain it a little bit. It means to think of them with seriousness; it means to take our parents seriously, to revere them, and to respect them.

Now I've thought of four ways today that each of us can be the child of a happy mother. May I say that, if you're the child of a happy mother, then you're going to be the happy child of a happy mother. So be good to yourself and honor your mother. I want to tell you four ways that you can be the happy child of a happy mother. And I just want you to apply them to your own heart and in your own life.

I. Honor Your Parents Through the Life That You Live

Number one: I can honor my mother by the life that I live. My life will either honor or dishonor my parents. Now I'm to live, therefore, a life of obedience, first of all, to my parents. This is true. When we are children, we are to obey our parents. And even when we're old, we're to learn to take their advice. But when we're children, we are to obey our parents. Now I want to give you a verse that you might read today around the table as you are observing Mother's Day and that meal. It is Colossians 3:20: "*Children, obey*

your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:20). Do you want to please God? You cannot please God by displeasing your parents. Obey your parents in all things. You see, there’s a blessing in obedience.

And not only is there a blessing in obedience, but there’s great danger in disobedience. I was astounded—I was amazed—as I studied the Bible about this matter of obeying parents. I was amazed at how God looks upon the sin of disobedience to parents. God gives a catalogue of sins—the most terrible, horrible, hurtful, heinous, hellish sins that you can think of—and right in the list of that catalogue of sins He mentions the disobedience to parents. For example, Romans 1:28–30: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,”*—you think about it. Did you hear the list of things that I just read? And then God put in that list disobedience to parents, and He’s not finished. He describes these as being—*“without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death”* (Romans 1:28–32).

God says, in the Old Testament, that if you were disobedient to your parents, you would be put to death. We’re going to see in a moment that a child who was willfully, arrogantly rebellious would be put to death. That’s how God felt about this sin—and still feels about it. Though today He does not enact the death penalty, because today we’re living under different economy.

What I’m saying is this: Obedience brings a tremendous blessing. It is well pleasing to the Lord. Disobedience to parents is a terrible, horrible sin. I want to read again some Scripture to show you that, when God wants to describe perilous times, when God wants to describe an age or a society that is unraveling and that is coming apart, God says that disobedience to parents is one of the marks of the last days of a generation. Second Timothy 3:1–5: *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away”* (2 Timothy 3:1–5). Now in that horrible catalogue of sins found during the last days, again God mentions *“disobedience to parents.”* I want to tell you, dear friend, that disobedience to your parents is going to invite the judgment of God upon your life.

Let me give you another scripture—Ephesians 6:1–3: *“Children, obey your parents*

in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1–3). Now God said, "Honor your father and mother so that you'll live a long life." Hey, folks, you want to shorten your life? Dishonor your parents. Perhaps you ought to put a sign over the door of your child's bedroom that says something like this: "Warning! Disobedience to your parents may be harmful to your health." Ha! That's what God is saying: "Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment with promise."

Now you'll say, "Well, Brother Rogers, what if my parents are not right? What if my parents tell me to do something wrong?" Well, this scripture says, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:1). Obviously, obviously, if your pastor tells you to do something contrary to the Word of God, then you ought not to do it. If the President of the United States tells you to do something that is contrary to the Word of God, then you ought not to do it. If your husband tells you to do something that is in direct violation of the Word of God, then you ought not to do it. If children are commanded by their parents to kill, or to steal, or to prostitute themselves, then, of course, they're not expected to do that. However, that's not the problem that children have today—obviously not. There's always the fact that we must obey God rather than man. And so you have to interpret Scripture by Scripture. "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord.*"

But I want to say that little children are not old enough or wise enough to make choices and to know what is right and wrong. Primarily, they have to depend upon their parents. When I was a little child, I couldn't understand why my parents did certain things. I couldn't understand, for example, why my mama would take a nap when she didn't even have to, or why my dad didn't buy all the candy he wanted: he had the money. I couldn't understand why my parents would sometimes just sit in the house and talk, when they could go out and play. We don't understand things from a parent's perspective. And so God gives little children parents, and the Bible says that we are to obey our parents.

Now that's one way, dear friend, to be the child of a happy mother. Part of the life that I live is going to honor my parents through obedience, and then by living an honorable life. You know, the Bible says that a child can bring his mother shame. Why is that? Because we are extensions of our mothers. We are extensions of our parents. Their lives are in us. We are extensions of them. And if I live an honorable life, then that honors my parents. Do you know what brings me great joy? When my parents are proud of me. I was thinking of this the other night. When my parents are grateful for their son, it brings the warmest feeling to my own heart—to know that my parents are grateful for their son.

II. Honor Your Parents Through the Load That You Lift

And so one way that I can honor my parents, and one way that you can honor your parents, is by the life that you live—a life of honor, a life of obedience to your parents. Now, secondly, another way to honor your parents is not only through the life that you live, but also through the load that you lift. You must help your parents. And, by the way, children are to be taught honesty, industry, and integrity in the home. You sin against your parents if you don't help them in the home. And you sin against your children if you do not teach them to work. For some of you kids today, your mother has to nag you to do the dishes, or beg you to clean up your room, or scold you about these things. I know some teenagers whose bedroom would win the city dump look-alike contest. It seems that the only time you'll ever clean it up is when Sears gets a riding vacuum cleaner. That dishonors your parents. Children must be taught industry in the home. And so when you are young, you're to help your parents; and when they are old, you are to care for them.

Now there's a serious problem in our age: the care of the old and elderly. The more pagan a society gets, the less that society cares for the aged and the infirm. And in some pagan societies, when people get old in age, they're just turned out of the society. Their elders are turned out of the village to wander in the jungles until they die. And something like that is happening in America, because America is becoming more and more pagan.

You know, the Bible teaches that we cannot use our religion, our churchgoing, and our church giving as an excuse for not taking care of our parents. The Bible says this in Matthew 15:3–11—Jesus is talking to the Pharisees and He says, *“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;”—*that is, “I took what I was going to give you, and I gave it to charity. It's a gift. What I was going to give to you, I just felt led to give to somebody else. I did something nice and religious with it.” Now Jesus said—*“...Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.”* God says that any man, any woman, any boy, and any girl in this church today worshipping God who doesn't take care of his parents is a hypocrite. That is what God says. “In vain do you worship me.” You are wasting your time in this service.

You say, “Well, I don’t have time for my parents, but boy, I sure am a big church worker.” That doesn’t impress God—not at all! You say, “Well, my parents are a bother. I have to carry them around. I have to change their clothes. It stinks. I have to feed them. They slobber.” Hey, folks, they changed you; they bathed you. You slobbered on them; you spit up on them.

Did you know that the Bible teaches that, if we don’t take care of our parents, we are worse than infidels? In fact, we don’t even make it up to an infidel. Let me give you a passage of Scripture here in 1 Timothy 5:4: *“But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.”* That is, first, don’t go out here in the community; don’t go out here in the church; don’t go out here in society; don’t go out here to the welfare; and don’t go anywhere else. First, go home. Listen: *“If any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents:”*—that means to take care of their parents—*“for that is good and acceptable before God.”* Now that’s in 1 Timothy 5:4. First Timothy 5:8 goes on to say, *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). He doesn’t even make it up to infidel status if he doesn’t take care of his own.

Now so many people use this passage here in 1 Timothy 5:8 to say that parents ought to take care of their children—*“If any provide not for his own, and specially those of his own house”*—but that isn’t what he’s talking about; he’s talking about children providing for their parents. You must read it in context. And the Bible says that, if a child does not take care of his parents, then he is worse than an infidel.

III. Honor Your Parents Through the Lessons That You Learn

Now, how can I honor my mom? How can I honor my dad? Number one: By the life that I live. Number two: By the load that I lift. Number three: By the lessons that I learn. Proverbs 1:8–9: *“My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck”* (Proverbs 1:8–9). Now he’s not talking about chains of bondage; he’s talking about chains of ornament—like a gold chain, like an ornament. Now, you know, the older we become, the smarter our parents become. Isn’t that true? You know, when we’re sixteen, we think they’re really out of it; and at nineteen we feel that we’ve surpassed them so far that they’ll never catch up to us. At twenty-two, they’re just out of sight somewhere back there. I mean, we still know everything. But at forty, we think they’re just about perfect. The older you get, the smarter your parents will get.

Now this is one of my favorite Mother’s Day things, and I want to share it with you. The title of this little article is called “The Meanest Mother”:

“I had the meanest mother in the whole world. While other kids ate candy for breakfast, I had to have cereal, eggs, or toast. When others had cokes and candy for lunch, I had to eat a sandwich. As you can guess, my supper was different than the other kids’, also. But, at least, I wasn’t alone in my sufferings. My sister and two brothers had the same mean mother as I did. My mother insisted upon knowing where we were at all times; you’d think we were on a chain gang. She had to know who our friends were and where we were going. She insisted, if we said we’d be gone an hour, that we be gone one hour or less—not one hour and one minute. I am nearly ashamed to admit it, but she actually struck us: not once, but each time that we had a mind of our own and did as we pleased. That poor belt was used more on our seats than it was to hold up Daddy’s pants. Can you imagine someone actually hitting a child just because he disobeyed? Now you can begin to see how mean she really was. We had to wear clean clothes and take a bath. The other kids always wore their clothes for days. We reached the height of insults, because she made our clothes herself, just to save money. Why, oh why, did we have to have a mother who made us feel different from our friends? The worst is yet to come. We had to be in bed by nine each night and up at eight the next morning. We couldn’t sleep till noon like our friends. So, while they slept, my mother actually had the nerve to break the child labor law: she made us work. We had to wash dishes, make beds, learn to cook, and all sorts of cruel things. I believe that she lay awake at night, thinking up mean things to do to us. She always insisted upon us telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, even if it killed us—and it nearly did. By the time we were teenagers, she was much wiser, and our life became even more unbearable. None of this tooting the horn of a car for us to come running. She embarrassed us to no end by making our dates and friends come to the door to get us. If I spent the night with a girlfriend—can you imagine?—she checked on me to see if I was really there. I never had the chance to elope to Mexico; that is, if I’d had a boyfriend to elope with. I forgot to mention that, while my friends were dating at the mature ages of twelve and thirteen, my old-fashioned mother refused to let me date until the ages of fifteen or sixteen—fifteen, that is, if you dated only to go to a school function. And that was maybe twice a year. Through the years, things didn’t improve a bit. We could not lie in bed ‘sick,’ like our friends did, and miss school. If our friends had a toe-ache, a hangnail, or a serious ailment, they could stay home from school. Our marks in school had to be up to par. Our friends’ report cards had beautiful colors on them: black for passing, red for failing. My mother, being as different as she was, would settle for nothing less than ugly black marks. As the years rolled by, first one and then the other of us were put to shame. We were graduated from high school. With our mother behind us, talking, hitting, and demanding respect, none of us was allowed the pleasure of being a dropout. My mother was a complete failure as a mother. Out of four

children, a couple of us attained some higher education. None of us have ever been arrested, divorced, or has beaten his mate. Each of my brothers served his time in the service of this country. And whom do we have to blame for the terrible way we turned out? You're right: our mean mother. Look at the things we missed. We never got to march in a protest parade, nor to take part in a riot, burn draft cards, nor a million and one other things that our friends did. She forced us to grow up into God-fearing, educated, honest adults. Using this as a background, I am trying to raise my three children. I stand a little taller, and I am filled with pride when my children call me 'mean,' because, you see, I thank God He gave me the meanest mother in the whole world."

We need more mean mothers, amen? We need mothers who mean business for God. Now, how can we honor your parents? Listen, folks. By the life that I live, by the loads that I lift, and by the lessons that I learn. You say, "Well, my parents are not as smart as I am." Hey, folks, that doesn't have anything to do with it.

Suppose that I'm going on a trip and driving. Let's suppose that my parents have gone ahead of me, and I'm going out to California. I'm in Fort Worth, and they're in Phoenix. They get on the phone, and we talk together; and they tell me—they say, "Now, Adrian, you want to be sure not to take Highway 72, because they're doing work on it. It took us about three hours. There's another bypass." And they say, "Adrian, listen. We stopped at the best motel: it was phenomenal, great restaurant, and so forth"—and they tell me about it. And they say, "And be sure to see so-and-so and so forth—it's magnificent."

That doesn't mean they're smarter than I am, or I'm smarter than they are. It just means they've been a little further down the road. Isn't that right? They have been a little further down the road, and they love me. They've seen things. There are detours, and beauties, and all sorts of things they want me to know about. And I can honor them; I can honor them by the lessons that I learn. The Bible says to learn from your parents is like an ornament of grace around your neck (Proverbs 1:9).

IV. Honor Your Parents Through the Love That You Lavish

Now, let me mention the last way that I can honor my parents. Indeed, one can be the child of a happy mother: by the life that I live, by the load that I lift, by the lessons that I learn, and by the love that I lavish. I've chosen the word *lavish*, because I'm talking about that kind of love. We are to love them with a great love—with a lavish love—because their lifeblood flows in us. Their very life is in us, and they would give their lives for us. I believe that the closest thing on this earth to the love of God is the love parents have for their children. I believe that it's the closest and greatest illustration of the love of God. And so we are to return that love.

Oh, folks, listen. If your parents are still living, then let me encourage you to write

that letter now; do it now; pay that visit now; send that gift now; do that chore now; or give that kiss of affection now. Whatever you are going to do, do it, and do it now. Write a thank you note to your parents. Shakespeare said, “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child!” Oh, friend, you’re to respect your parents with such respect.

“Oh,” you say, “well, my parents are not perfect.” Of course not! Do you know anybody who’s perfect? Only perfect children can demand perfect parents. And it’s been an amazing thing to me that God puts middle-aged adults and teenagers together. Kids are not the only ones going through stages, you know. Parents go through stages. But the Bible teaches that you are to respect your parents. Listen to these verses—Leviticus 19:3: “*Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God*” (Leviticus 19:3). Leviticus 20:9: “*For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him*” (Leviticus 20:9). Friend, if some of you teenagers were to shoot off your mouths at your parents back in the Old Testament times, you wouldn’t see the sun come up the next day. That’s the way God feels about it.

Listen. Proverbs 30:17: “*The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it*” (Proverbs 30:17). Every now and then, when my kids do something wrong, I’ll let them get away with it. But I’ll tell you one thing they won’t get away with in our house—and you can ask any of them: they will not get away with sassing their mama. I mean, they will not get away with it. There’s something in me that will rise up, because I know what that lady has gone through for those children. And any child who does not lavish love upon his mother and show that respect does indeed fulfill what Shakespeare said is “sharper than a serpent’s tooth.”

Conclusion

Show that love, and do it now. Dead noses smell no roses. If your parents are still alive, then show that love and honor. That’s the way on this wonderful, wonderful Mother’s Day that you’re going to be able to honor your father and mother. Those are four ways that you can be the child of a happy mother and the happy child of a happy father. So be good to yourself, and honor your father and your mother, so that it may be well with you.

How to Be the Child of a Happy Mother

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 13, 2001

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. You Should Obey Your Parents When You Are Young
- II. You Should Care for Your Parents When They Are Old
- III. You Should Honor Your Parents at All Times
 - A. Show Them Respect
 - B. Express Gratefulness
 - C. Listen to Their Counsel
 - D. Live a Life That Will Bring Honor to Them
 - E. Show Your Parents Love

Conclusion

Introduction

You've found Exodus chapter 20, and I want you to look at verse 12 in just a moment. We're talking about parents and honoring parents, especially mothers. The Bible says, "*Honour thy father and thy mother...*"—so when we have Mother's Day, we're obeying the Scripture—"*Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee*" (Exodus 20:12). Somebody said that parenthood is hereditary: if your parents didn't have children, chances are you won't either. We're grateful for parents, and we want to honor parents. I certainly want to honor my parents, my dear parents, who are both in heaven. And we plan today to honor our mother, Miss Joyce, in our home today, and our children, who are also parents.

This is the Fifth Commandment; and God gives the Ten Commandments, and He puts the Ten Commandments into two categories. The first four commandments deal with our relationship to God: we call those the vertical commandments. Then the last six deal with our relationship to one another. And it is interesting that God starts the last of these six with our relationship to our parents. But we can understand that, because *the faith that doesn't begin at home, it really doesn't begin*. If you can live for Jesus at home, you can live for Jesus anywhere, amen? And, friend, if you can't live for Jesus at home, it doesn't really matter where you try to live for the Lord Jesus. *The faith that*

doesn't begin at home, it just simply doesn't begin.

And so our Lord tells us we're to honor our father and our mother. They're the first people we meet; and so we're to learn to honor them. If we can't honor our father and mother, how can we honor strangers? And, later on, He's going to tell us such things as, "Don't steal," "Don't kill," "Don't commit adultery." But before He tells us those things, He tells us to honor father and mother. And so I am concerned that in America we see the thing of a Christian home—a God-centered home, a nuclear family as an institution—quickly receding over the horizon.

There's a man named Edward Gibbon who wrote a book called *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, and he listed five reasons that Ancient Rome fell. I'm going to read those to you; and it might just cause a chill to go up your spine. Number one: the undermining of the dignity and sanctity of the home. Number two: increasing taxes and spending of public money for bread and circuses. Number three: the mad craze for pleasure, with sports becoming more exciting and more brutal. Next: the building of gigantic armaments, when the real enemy is the decadence of the people. And, last of all: the decay of religion, with faith fading into mere form. Isn't that something? *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Maybe someday some historian will write *The Decline and the Fall of the American Empire*.

Well, God commands us to honor mothers. I want to talk to you today about how you can be the child of a very happy mother. Now I'm going to be talking about both parents; but, primarily, the emphasis here is on mother.

I. You Should Obey Your Parents When You Are Young

Number one: If you want to have a very happy mother and very happy father, you should obey them when you are young. Now the Bible teaches us to obey our parents. Colossians chapter 3, verse 20—listen to this scripture, every mother's child here: "*Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord*" (Colossians 3:20). Now we live in a day where everything around a home is run by switches, except the children. Children, obey your parents.

If you go out West, you'll find what we call the Continental Divide. That's the great mountain range that reaches the highest peak, for the most part, in the Rockies. And a drop of rain will fall on that Continental Divide, and it will begin to trickle either to the west or to the east. Theoretically, that drop of rain, with other drops of rain, will end up in the Atlantic Ocean or the Pacific Ocean. There's a continental divide.

Now, there's a continental divide in human nature; and that depends on how a child is going to turn out. That continental divide, in my estimation, is their respect and obedience to parents. I would not want one of my children to ever marry a boy or a girl who did not respect his or her parents.

Dwight Moody was the Billy Graham of his day, and Dwight Moody said this: “I’ve lived over sixty years, and I’ve learned one thing if I’ve learned nothing else: No man or woman who dishonors father or mother ever prospers.” Now if you are a child, a young child, I want you to be very much aware of the grave sin of disobedience. It’s not a weakness; it is a horrible wickedness. As a matter of fact, it’s a crime worthy of death, if we lived in a theocracy.

Romans 1, verses 28 and following—listen to this. God speaks of a society on its last legs, and God says this: “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind,*”—would you like to hear the description of a reprobate mind? Okay, listen—“*to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness,*”—now, listen to this list—“*fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things,*”—and here it comes—“*disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things*”—listen to this—“*are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them*” (Romans 1:28–32).

Now, what does that mean: “[*They*] have pleasure in them that do them?” Well, they get their jollies from watching people do these things. As a matter of fact, what I just read to you is probably the sum total of most modern American entertainment. Turn on the television any time, and you’ll see a litany of all of these things. That’s what we have pleasure in.

Now God lists disobedience to parents with fornication, and idolatry, and sexual perversion. God says that a person who’s disobedient to his parents spiritually is worthy of death. Do you know what God says the sign of the last days is? One of the signs of the last days is this: children who are disobedient to their parents. Put this scripture down—2 Timothy chapter 3, verses 1 through 5: “*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come*” (2 Timothy 3:1). Now *the* gospel *was never meant to* save civilization *from* wreckage; *the gospel was meant to save* men *from the wreckage of civilization*. So don’t get the idea that the gospel has failed, because perilous times are here.

As a matter of fact, the perilous times that we’re living in are proof-positive that the Bible is the Word of God, for the Bible prophesied it: “*In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers,*”—now, here it comes again; listen to it—“*disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection,*”—that literally means, “without family love”; that’s what that literally means—“*trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more*

than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" (2 Timothy 3:1–5). If you claim to be a Christian, and you're disobedient to your parents, all you've got is a form of godliness. You don't have the real thing; you don't have the real thing. Friend, that's black print on white paper.

As a matter of fact, to be disobedient to your parents is to invite the sure judgment of God. But, contrariwise, to obey your parents is to invite the blessing of God. Listen to this scripture—Ephesians chapter 6, verses 1 through 3: "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother...*"—now here in the Ten Commandments, we're told to honor our father and mother. Here in the Book of Ephesians, we're told how to do it—"*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;*"—God gave the Ten Commandments, but with this one He gave a promise—"*that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth*" (Ephesians 6:1–3).

Now you want to live long? You want to prosper? Then learn to honor your father and your mother. You'll learn character when you do that; you'll learn self-control when you obey your parents; you will receive God's blessing; you will receive God's protection.

"Well, pastor, what if my parents command me to do something that is wrong? Should I obey them?" Well, no. Ephesians chapter 6, verse 1, says, "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord.*" No child should ever willingly disobey a correct command of Almighty God. There is a higher principle: that we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). But a child should be extremely careful that he or she obeys parents, except when a command from a parent would come in direct conflict with Almighty God. Of course, a small child is not able to discern the difference—a very small child; then God holds the parent responsible, not the child, if a parent commands the child to do something that is wrong.

But I want to tell you something: that disobedience is a grave, grave sin in the sight of Almighty God; and if you are a child here today, living at home, I want to tell you, as solemnly as I can tell you, you would be wise to obey your parents. As a matter of fact, perhaps there ought to be a sign put in your bedroom that says, "Warning: Disobedience to your parents could be dangerous to your health."

II. You Should Care for Your Parents When They Are Old

You are to obey your parents. Now that may be old-fashioned, but the Bible says, "*Children, obey your parents*" (Ephesians 6:1). That's one way to honor them. Number one: You should obey them when you are young. Number two: You should care for your parents when they are old. Now the Bible teaches this. As a matter of fact, in heathen cultures people sometimes fail to care for their older parents. They leave them out to

die. And yet we, as a society, are becoming more and more hardened, and more and more heathen, and we're becoming hardhearted towards our older parents. Now our parents loved us in spite of our faults. I know my parents loved me in spite of my faults. And I have to love my parents if they have a fault. If I have to carry my parents, they carried me. If I have to feed them, they fed me.

Do you know what the Bible teaches? And this may shock you—and especially shock you coming from the mouth of a preacher—but your duty to your parents, your mother or your father, when they're aged, is greater than your duty to Bellevue Baptist Church. Don't ever use your duty to the church as an excuse for not loving or taking care of your father and your mother. Let me give you a very interesting passage of Scripture—Matthew chapter 15. I'm going to begin in verse 3. Jesus is preaching, and this is what He said: *“But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother:”*—now, remember, we're still talking about honoring father and mother, and this is what He says—*“and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.”* That is, in the Old Testament, if you were to ever curse your father or your mother, you'd be worthy to be stoned to death. *“But ye say,”*—now, here's where they came along with a new tradition—*“Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”* Now I know it's hard to understand. I'm going to explain it in just a moment. *“Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:3–9).

Now, let me put that in plain English. In Bible times, there were people who for a show of religion would come to church, and they would sing praises to God; they would honor God with their lips; they would bring an offering and make an offering for the temple; and yet they had fathers and mothers that were in need that were not being honored. And God said, “You are hypocrites.” What they had done was to say to their father and their mother, “Now, you know, what I was going to use to take care of you, I have taken down, and I have given it to the temple; and so I can't take care of you. But, oh, what a holy man I am; oh, what a holy woman I am; because I've taken the gift that could have been a blessing to you and I have given it to God!”

Now some of you may use what I'm saying as an excuse not to give to God what belongs to God—and God knows how evil your heart is, if you do that. But listen to what I am saying. I am saying, friend, that there is no gift that you can give to God, no service that you can do for God, no song that you can sing to God, that will take the place of

honoring your father and your mother. And if you fail to do that, God says, “You are a hypocrite.”

Now the Bible says, “If you don’t take care of your parents when they’re old, not only are you a hypocrite; you are worse than an infidel.” Listen to 1 Timothy chapter 5, verse 8: *“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”* (1 Timothy 5:8). You don’t even come up to the level of being an infidel, if you don’t take care of your own. Now many times we use this verse to say that parents ought to take care of their children. But that’s not what this verse means. It says that children are to provide for the parents: *“If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”* That’s the reason I say, *“The religion that doesn’t begin at home doesn’t begin.”* First Timothy chapter 5, verse 4: *“But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn”—that is, the children and the nephews—“first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God”* (1 Timothy 5:4).

I’m going to tell you—and it may hurt your feelings; and if it does, you can come up and apologize to me after the message—but if you’re not taking care of your parents and loving your parents—I don’t care how you sing this morning; I don’t care how much you say *amen* or what you put in this offering plate—you have departed from the faith; you’re worse than an infidel. *If your religion doesn’t start at home, friend, it just simply doesn’t start.*

III. You Should Honor Your Parents at All Times

How can you honor your father and your mother? Number one: You should obey them when you’re young. Number two: You should care for them when they are old, in their old age. Number three: You should honor them at all times. Now when the Bible says here, “Honor your father and your mother,” the word *honor* comes from a word that means, “to add weight to.” Now, sir, your mother doesn’t want you to add weight to her; she’s trying to lose weight. But what that literally means is “to take your parents seriously; to add weight, dignity, to who they are.”

A. Show Them Respect

Let me mention some ways now that you can give them honor. I want to mention three or four of them—maybe more. But listen. Number one: Show them respect. I don’t care who they are, you must always show respect to your parents. I’m going to list some verses: you jot them down. Leviticus chapter 19, verse 3: *“Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God”* (Leviticus 19:3). Now the word *fear* here is the same word that we use for the fear of God; it

means, “reverence.” You’re to reverence your parents. Leviticus 20, verse 9: *“For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him”* (Leviticus 20:9). Now some of you youngsters ought to be aware of the fact that, if you lived in Old Testament times, you still wouldn’t be living; you would be gone, because you have cursed your father or your mother.

Proverbs chapter 30, verse 17, puts it in a euphemistic way: *“The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it”* (Proverbs 30:17). Now God is using figurative speech here, but God is saying, “It is a terrible thing not to show reverence to your parents.”

“Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, what if my parents are not worthy of respect and reverence?” May I say that *only* perfect children *can demand perfect* parents. Any perfect children here? No. Now I know that your parents are not perfect. My parents were not perfect. And two of the most difficult times of life are middle age and teen age. Why God put those together, I’ll find out when I get to heaven. By the way, do you know why grandparents and grandchildren get along so well? They have the same enemy.

Now, listen. Your parents are not perfect, but you should reverence your parents. Now, in our home, we had very few rules; but some of the rules we had we did not bend. One of the rules—perhaps number one: no disrespect to parents. We just did not tolerate it. No! Now if anybody ever got away with disrespect—and very seldom they ever did it, if ever—they got away with disrespect to me, but never to their mother—never to their mother. I would be on them like *that* if I saw one of my children disrespect their mother. I tear up when I think about it. I’ve seen that woman sacrifice for them. She went down into the valley of the shadow of death to bring them into this world. I’ve seen her do without, to love, to pray, to care. How dare—how dare—a child disrespect that mother!

B. Express Gratefulness

Now we’re to honor them, and one way we do it is to show respect. Number two: Express gratefulness; give them thanks. Children, learn to develop the attitude of gratitude. I’m not a Shakespearean scholar, but one thing Shakespeare said that’s oft been quoted—and is well worth quoting—is this: “How sharper than a serpent’s tooth it is to have a thankless child.” Have you thanked your parents for all that they’ve done? As a matter of fact, you say, “Well, my parents disciplined me too much.” Thank them for that.

I spoke to a grown man, to a very prosperous businessman who became a Christian. He told me that he had witnessed to his father over and over again, but his father would not listen to the witness. This man tried to win his father to Christ. He

thought about it one day, and it dawned on him: “When I’m talking to my father, trying to win my father to Christ, I have reversed roles. It’s the father who’s supposed to be instructing the son, but here it is now I, as a grown man, am instructing my father. And when I’m telling my father that he needs to be saved, I’m telling my father that he needs to be a Christian. In a sense, it’s saying, ‘My father, here’s an area where you’ve failed. You should have taught me this. You should have told me this. Now I’m having to tell you.’” He said, “I thought, ‘What does that say to my father?’ It was saying to my father that I did not really appreciate all that he did for me.” And he said, “I had a good father who did many things for me.”

He said, “One day God gave me some wisdom. I sat down and I wrote my father a letter, and I thanked my dad for everything he had done for me: for the food, the care, the tuition, the home; everything that he’d done. I thanked him for the fishing trips. I thanked him for the bicycle. I thanked him for the care. I thanked him for the advice. I thanked him for all of the things that my father had done for me, put it in a letter, and signed it. My father read that letter.” He said, “The next time I talked to my father about Jesus, just like that, he gave his heart to Christ—just like that.” How we need to learn to give thankfulness to our parents!

C. Listen to Their Counsel

Now, thirdly—I’m talking about ways to honor them. I’m saying, friend, show them respect. Express gratefulness. Listen to their counsel—listen to their counsel. Proverbs chapter 1, verses 8 and 9: “*My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck*” (Proverbs 1:8–9). He’s talking about a chain of gold around your neck.

Someone has well said, “At sixteen, a boy’s not sure about his parents. At nineteen, he feels he’s passed them up. At twenty-two, he has completely outgrown them. At thirty, he remembers they were right about a lot of things. At forty, he decides they were just about perfect.” Isn’t that true? Listen to the counsel. The older you get, the smarter your parents will get; and you’re going to understand they were not as dumb or out of it as you think.

Now, why is that? Your parents have an advantage on you—they have an advantage. I told some high school senior girls yesterday, “You think perhaps those of us who are mature and old, that we don’t know what the situation is. Yes, we do.” You see, David said, “Once I was young; now I’m old” (Psalm 37:25). All you can say is, “Once I was young.” Think about it. We’ve been there where you are, but you haven’t been where we are.

Now if we’re going to travel, for example, from Memphis to Phoenix—and let’s suppose Joyce and I get in our car, and we start out, and we go to Phoenix; and then,

later on, we call back Steve, Gayle, Janice, David—they're going to go to Phoenix. We can say, "Kids, let us tell you something. There's a bad part of Interstate 40 that you want to stay away from, because they're doing a lot of work; there's a scenic route you might take. Also, we found a terrific restaurant at thus-and-such a place. Also, there's a speed trap along so-and-so-and-so," and we can just tell them all this. Does that mean we're smarter than they are? No, we've just been further down the road. Isn't that right? Further down the road.

How wise we would be to listen to our parents, who love us enough to die for us. And we need to heed their counsel. Listen to their counsel.

D. Live a Life That Will Bring Honor to Them

Number four: Live a life that will bring honor to them. Listen to Proverbs 23, verses 24 and 25: "*The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice: and he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him. Thy father and thy mother shall be glad, and she that bare thee shall rejoice*" (Proverbs 23:24–25). Live in such a way as to make your parents stick out their chests a little bit; not in bad pride, but to say, "Thank God for my children." You see, children are an extension of their parents. When I see my children do something good and godly and worthy, that gives me such great joy. I have no greater joy than to see my children walk in the truth (3 John 1:4). And one of the great joys of my life, before my parents went to heaven, was to do something that would cause them to rejoice, and to say, "Adrian, we're proud of you." I'm so grateful for that.

E. Show Your Parents Love

Friend, last of all, in honoring your parents, show your parents love. It's really the sum total of everything else that I've told you. Show them love. Think of what you owe to your parents. They gave you life; their blood flows through your veins. Did you know that the closest thing to God's love is the love of a mother? I'm just convinced of that. The closest thing to God's love is the love of a mother.

Conclusion

Now it's Mother's Day. Let's see if we can make it very practical. Why don't you sit down and write a letter to your mother, to your father, and tell them, like my friend told his dad, how grateful you are for them? I'll tell you one thing. They will read it over and over and over again. And when they die, and you're going through their things, you'll find that letter tucked away in their possessions. Sit down and write them a letter. Pay that visit. Make that phone call. Send that gift. Do that extra special little chore for your mother, your father. Show them genuine affection. They want hugs. They want kisses. And listen to me. Do it soon. Now when they die, you'll want to have just the finest kind of funeral for them, and you'll want special flowers; but "dead noses smell no roses." Are

you going to do it? Do it, rather than saying, “I wish that I had.” Show love and respect if your parents are living. And if your parents are not living, give them honor, and thank God for their memory.

Now let me just wrap this up by asking you another question. If the Bible says that we’re to honor our father and our mother—and, indeed, we are—how much more would that apply to our Heavenly Father? Have you honored Him? I mean, have you given your heart to Him? Can you say that God is your Father? Not unless you’ve been born into His family. And how are you born into His family? By receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. I can tell you, precious friend, there is no way to have a happy Christian home without God in the center and Christ at the hub.

Think with me, just before we pray, about a wagon wheel, an old-fashioned wagon wheel. The rim of that wheel is the parameter, and the hub is the center. Think of your home like that: the rim, the parameter, of your family. Think of the members of that home as spokes in that wheel. Think of Jesus Christ as the hub—that which the whole thing revolves around—and look at those spokes. The closer they are to the hub, the closer they are to one another. That’s the way it is—that’s the way it is. The closer the members of your family are to Jesus, I can tell you, the closer they’re going to be to one another.

How to Be the Mother of a Happy Child

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 13, 2001

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. How Can You Raise Happy Children?
 - A. Love Them
 1. Touch Them
 2. Bless Them
 3. Comfort Them
 - B. Listen to Them
 - C. Lift Them
 1. In Prayer
 2. By Way of Encouragement
 - D. Limit Them
 - E. Lead Them
 - F. Laugh With Them
 - G. Lick Them
 1. Reasons for Discipline
 - a. It Is a Sign You Love the Child
 - b. Because of Human Nature
 2. Ideas Regarding Discipline
 - a. You Need to Start Early
 - b. Use Spanking Only as a Last Resort
 - c. Be Careful Not to Make Idle Threats
 - d. Administer it Promptly
 - e. Husband and Wife, Present a United Front
 - f. Do a Good Job
 - g. After It Is Over, Don't Hold a Grudge to the Child
 - h. Discipline in Love
 - i. Always Work for Repentance of the Heart

Conclusion

Introduction

Congregation, would you find again the text that we found this morning—Exodus chapter 20 and verse 12. We are talking about the family. And why did God put us together in families? Well, to learn. You know, we are to learn the things of life primarily

in the family. God gave us the family before He gave us government or schools. And God gave the Ten Commandments, not to the government, and not to industry, but God gave the Ten Commandments to the family. It has always been strange to me that parents would complain about not having the Ten Commandments on the classroom walls in America's schools—and, believe me, I believe that we should have—but I wonder how many of those same parents have the Ten Commandments posted on the walls of their very own home.

So God gave us homes for learning. God gave us homes for living. I mean, we need a place to live. And it needs to be more than a delicatessen, a garage, and a motel room. It is a place where the deepest spiritual, emotional, and physical needs of life are met. And God gives us homes for lasting. What I mean by that is, the commandment says that, if we want to last as a nation, we are going to do it through the home. Listen to what He says here: *“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee”* (Exodus 20:12). When the home goes, the nation goes, ultimately.

Now I want to speak tonight to parents. Now I don't want to put you under some sort of a burden. I want to remind you again of what I said this morning: There are no perfect parents; no perfect children. I have seen parents sometimes whose children have been a failure, as it were. And the parents took it to heart, as if they themselves were to blame. Not necessarily so.

Now I am aware that the Bible says, in the Book of Proverbs, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). And at the risk of shocking you, I want to tell you, that is not a promise; that's a proverb. If you try to turn the proverbs into promises, you will lose your religion. What I mean by that is this: A proverb might tell you to do something that will give you a long life—and you die young; or, might tell you to do something that will make you wealthy—and you not be wealthy. A proverb is a general principle generally applied; it brings general results. It doesn't mean the proverb is not true. It is true, as a proverb. You take it as a proverb.

Sometimes, parents have done wonderfully well, and yet children have turned out not to be so good. And that doesn't mean that the parents have failed, because every child has a will of his own—have you found that out?—and a will of her own. Now I am not saying that you ought not to train up a child, but I am telling you that children do have a will of their own. And God had two children in the Garden of Eden, and they didn't turn out too well. And, certainly, nothing was wrong with that particular parent, who was God Himself.

Well, I want to talk to you tonight about how to be the parents of a happy child. Now Joyce and I have four children on this earth, a little boy in heaven; and none of our children are perfect. They don't have perfect parents. But I can say I believe sincerely

that our children love the Lord. And I believe sincerely that our children would say their parents are not phonies.

Now I am reminded of the young preacher who said, when he started out, he had four sermons on the home and no children. Then, he got four children and had to burn all the sermons.

And I am aware of that; but I have been through both stages, and now I am an industrial-strength grandfather. And I am able to look back, and just kind of sum some things up, and tell you some things that I have learned, and am still learning.

I. How Can You Raise Happy Children?

So let me tell you some things; and, for memory's sake, we will let all of these things begin with the letter *L*. And for one or two of them it will be a stretch. But, anyway, we will do it that way. How can we raise happy children? How can we be the parents of happy children?

A. Love Them

Number one: by loving them. Now we need to understand what love is itself. We need to receive the love of God and show the love of God. Now, how do you love kids?

1. Touch Them

May I say that one of the ways to love them is to touch them—to touch them. Just put your hands on them, and touch them. One of the best bumper stickers that I have seen is “Kids need hugs, not drugs.” And I remember, in the fifteenth chapter of Luke, where the prodigal son, a grown man, came home after he had been away in sin, and the Bible says his father *“fell on his neck, and kissed him”* (Luke 15:20).

Now, sir, would you think of hugging your big old boy around the neck and kissing him? It's a biblical thing to do. Now, sometimes, they will act like they don't want you to touch them—especially when they get to be teenagers: they kind of pull back. Just pull them back in again, and do it anyway. They may say, “Aw...” Mom or dad, they will shy away. But that is all right. Touch them. They need to be touched affectionately, supportively, prayerfully, playfully, tenderly.

And let them see you and your wife hugging one another from time to time. They will say, “Aw, good night,” and walk out of the room. But that is all right. Let them see it. You know, the world teaches that touching is only for sexual intimacy. Let me tell you what Charles Swindoll said. He said, “Many a young woman who opts for immoral sexual relationships does so because she can scarcely remember a time when her father so much as touched her. Unaffectionate dads, without wishing to do so, can trigger a daughter's promiscuity. All of this leads to me to write, with a great deal of passion, dads, don't hold back your affection. Demonstrate your feelings of love and affection to

both sons and daughters, and don't stop once they reach adolescence. They long for your affection and appreciation. They will love you for it. More importantly, they will emulate your example when God gives them their own families."

2. Bless Them

Now you can also love them with a blessing. You know, your children need to be blessed. Those of us who have a Heavenly Father, if you pray, I will just guarantee you, if you pray much, your prayer will have this phrase in it over and over again: "Lord, bless..."; "Lord, bless..."; "Lord, bless this"; "Lord, bless that"; "Lord, bless me"; "Lord, bless me." You are asking your Heavenly Father for a blessing, are you not? Well then, why should not your children want a blessing from their earthly father? You need to bless them. Your earthly mother. Bless them. Just give them affirmation. Another slogan: "Kids need strokes, not pokes." Bless them. Find something good about them. Give them some sort of an affirmation—a blessing.

3. Comfort Them

And I am talking about how to love them. Love them by touching them. Love them by blessing them. Love them by comforting them. You know, kids have heartaches and troubles. We look sometimes at the troubles that teenagers have—especially junior high schoolers—and we laugh, and we say, "They are going through this stage, and that stage, and they make mountains out of molehills." But the problems are real to them. They need to know that you can sit down and cry with them—even if it seems trivial to you—to sit down and say, "Darling, I know it hurts."

In our family we've had funerals for dogs. Did you ever have a funeral for a dog? I mean, go out, the whole deal, and not mock, because, when the dog dies, it hurts. And for a child to lose a dog, or a pet, that's major; that's big-time. And I doubt any of you have ever gone to a funeral with a more broken heart than some children have for dogs—or a turtle, for that matter. And I am not making light of that. I know what it is to hold a grown daughter in my arms and weep with her over her broken heart. And so, first of all, love them in the big things and the little things.

B. Listen to Them

Second *L*: Listen to them—listen to them. So many times, we want them to listen to us. They need a listening ear. Many times, parents will say to kids, "Hey, let's have a talk," and after the child starts, the first two or three sentences are out, then you get on your soapbox and begin to pontificate. Listen to them. And you are going to have to wait sometimes until they are ready to talk.

My older son—he is not here, so I can talk about him behind his back. His name is Steve: a good boy, and very brilliant; never given me any major, big-time trouble. But Steve is not the communicative type. And Joyce and I laugh about it sometimes. To get

Steve to talk more than give a grunt, or two or three words, is a major effort. But then there are times when he will talk. And just forget sleep: he will talk all night long. And I am just grateful. I say, “Well, it has happened: Vesuvius has erupted.” But you are just going to have to listen, and wait for your chance to listen to those children—and especially if they are hurting.

C. Lift Them

And then, not only love them, and listen to them, but, oh, how we need to lift them! What I mean by this is, we need to buoy them up and lift them. This world is putting them down. You need to lift them up.

1. In Prayer

One of the ways that you can lift them is to lift them to God in prayer. Joyce and I make it a habit to pray in the mornings, and to pray at night. And we pray consistently for our children by name. We pray consistently for our grandchildren by name.

2. By Way of Encouragement

But not only do you lift them to God in prayer; you lift them in their own way of encouragement. Don't try to catch them, finding something they have done—something bad. Try to find them—catch them—doing something good. And acknowledge this, and encourage them.

And you need to be very careful when you are encouraging a child. If your child brings home straight A's, don't say, “You know, that is so wonderful! You brought home straight A's! I am so proud of you!” Now my parents never had this problem very much. And it is good to recognize straight A's, because it does show achievement. But let me suggest this: Rather than saying, “John—Sally—Bill—Susan, you brought home straight A's; Dad is so proud of you!” say this: “I am so grateful to God for the effort that you put in, the consistency, in making that grade!” Do you see what you are doing? You are not recognizing some particular achievement; you are recognizing a character quality in that child—because, if a child thinks that he gets his strokes or her strokes by straight A's, then that's acceptance—approval—by achievement. And what you want to work for in these children is approval by character: not to say that, “You are great because you did something,” but, “You are great because you are something. I value you for you. You don't have to earn my love.”

And so, lift them. Lift them to God in prayer. Lift them in their own psyche, and their own conscience.

D. Limit Them

Next *L*: You need to limit them—you need to limit them. One of the things I have learned is that it takes restrictions to set children free. That is not a contradiction in

terms. They are not free until they know where the goals and guidelines are so they can play the game. And so you need to set rules. One of the greatest condemnations against a father came in the Book of 1 Samuel chapter 3, verse 13. God says, concerning Eli, *“For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not”* (1 Samuel 3:13).

Children need limitations. There are certain things that need to be denied to them. When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God gave them certain limitations. Now these limitations are going to be tested by the child. Don't have a lot of small Mickey Mouse rules; have some big ones, though, and some strong ones. And they are going to push against those. And I am going to tell you something. If, when they push against those limitations—those restrictions, those restrictions given—that child will lose his confidence in himself, and in you, and he will allow somebody else to put limitations on him. “No limitations” does not show love; it implies rejection. And so you have to limit your children.

And many of them don't want limitations outwardly. Josh McDowell has done some surveying—and here is what he said: “We included seven statements in our study of church youth about objective standards of truth and morality. Their responses indicate, for the most part, our children echo the world's view. For example...”—listen to this; it will break your heart—“For example, fifty-seven percent of our young people cannot say that an objective standard of truth exists.” That's church kids: fifty-seven percent of them—fifty-seven percent of them! All right, fifty-seven percent of our young people cannot even say an objective standard of truth exists. That's more than half of the church young people. And eighty-five percent of our kids are liable to reason—quote—“Just because it is wrong for you, it doesn't mean it is wrong for me.” And over half—fifty-five percent—agree that everything in life is negotiable. Their idea of distinction between right and wrong is fluid, something subject to change.

That, friend, is frightening, because the Bible says, in Psalm 11, verse 3, *“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”* (Psalm 11:3). If we don't have a foundation of objective truth, what are we going to do? Now we need to set a standard for our kids. We need to limit them. And you need to teach them there is a fixed standard of right and wrong: not because Dad says so, not because Mom says so, but because God Almighty says so.

E. Lead Them

The next thing: We need to lead them—we need to lead them. They are going to learn by observation. They are going to watch you, and they are absorbing all of the time things that you do. You need to train them diligently, day in and day out, by

leadership. You are going to lead the way.

When I was a grown man, somebody said, “Why do you pronounce that particular word the way you pronounce it?” I said, “What do you mean?” And they gave me a very common word, and said, “You mispronounced that word.” I said, “No, I didn’t.” They said, “It is thus and such.” I said, “That’s what I said.” They said, “No, that’s not what you are saying. Listen to yourself.” They said the word. I said the word. And I thought I was saying the same word they were saying. And finally they said, “Listen to what you are saying.” And I was mispronouncing the word, and I wasn’t aware that I was doing it.

And I am so grateful for a friend who cared enough to challenge me. And, every so often, some of you English teachers out there will challenge me. And I am glad you do—really. I am sincere. Just love me; be gentle. But that’s all right—that’s all right. But they said, “You are mispronouncing that word.” And I listened, and I said, “I am.” And I have been doing it all my life. I was a grown man. How did that get started?

Then one day I listened to my brother: he was mispronouncing the same word. I listened to my sister: she was mispronouncing the same word. I listened to my younger brother: he was mispronouncing the same word. And then I listened to my mama: and she was mispronouncing the same word. Now, bless her heart, she is in heaven. But she did it to all of us—just by that one word; a very common, ordinary word that she mispronounced. And we all picked it up from her.

Now children are learning by what you do. You need to lead them—and especially by demonstrating character. They will watch you like an eagle—in this matter of character.

Now, today, the emphasis on raising kids is on what? It’s on sports. It’s on grades. It’s on physical health. It’s on popularity. It’s on ability. Question: Who—*who*—is teaching children character? Now if you are not doing it, I can just promise you, it’s not being done.

What qualities would you like to see God develop in your children? Let me mention some qualities. I mentioned these to our Power Breakfast the other morning. Let me mention them to you, and I want you to listen to them—qualities now: contentment, courage, courtesy, discernment, fairness, friendliness, generosity, gentleness, helpfulness, honesty, humility, kindness, obedience, orderliness, patience, persistence, self-control, tactfulness, thankfulness, thriftiness, wisdom.

All right now, tell me what course in high school teaches that? What course in junior high school teaches that? Will they learn that in the movies? Are they going to get that from the newspapers? Are they going to get it from their buddies? Where are they going to get it? Mom and dad, if they don’t get it from you, they are not going to get it. Where are they to learn character qualities? You’re going to have to lead them—you are going to have to lead them by demonstration. That is the reason I told you earlier, compliment

character rather than talent or ability.

F. Laugh With Them

Now next—the next *L*: Not only do you need to lead them, but you need to laugh with them—you need to laugh with them. Learn to laugh; lighten up. I have often said, *“To have a happy home, be firm, be fair, and be fun.”* Your home ought to ring with laughter. The house that rings with laughter has a much greater chance of survival, in my estimation. The Bible says that “a merry heart does good like a medicine” (Proverbs 17:22). And, by the way, if you have a sense of humor, don’t be ashamed of your sense of humor. And don’t let anybody put you down for your sense of humor. It has well been documented that laughter, along with a well-rounded sense of humor, is one of the sure signs of intelligence. If you’re lacking in a sense of humor, you are also lacking in, perhaps, a little gray matter.

Now laughter in the home should be clean; it ought to be wholesome—not cruel, not cheap, not degrading. The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 4, *“Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks”* (Ephesians 5:4). I believe that humor is a gift of God. But you know that man is the only creature of God that can blush, that can laugh, and that can weep. Think about it. Laughter is indeed a gift of God. And Abraham Lincoln said that, “God surely must have meant for us to laugh, or else He would not have made so many mules, parrots, monkeys, and human beings.”

In the Bible, Sarah, the wife of Abraham, had a home filled with laughter. Genesis 21, verse 6: *“And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me”* (Genesis 21:6). She had a little boy. She named him Laughter. *Isaac*—that’s what it means. The Bible tells us, in the Book of Ecclesiastes, “There is a time to weep and a time to laugh” (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Home is a place for tears, but it also a place for laughter. Luke chapter 6, verse 21—Jesus said, *“Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh”* (Luke 6:21). And children need to see their parents laugh, in times of calamity.

I can remember a time when I was a little boy in West Palm Beach, Florida. We had one of those hurricanes that blew through. Hurricanes used to blow through West Palm Beach like tornadoes blow through Arkansas and Oklahoma. And I can remember where a particularly ferocious storm was coming; and, of course, as I have told you before, my older brother and I always kind of anticipated with relish the hurricanes, because there was a lot of excitement in the air. You could go over and watch the billows; the waves come up, gigantic waves. You could beachcomb on the beach after the hurricane, and find out what the ocean had washed up, and go scavenge through the neighborhood, and see what had blown around that you could pick up after the

storm.

But I can remember helping my father. The wind had already begun to blow, and my dad was out there trying to nail plywood up over the windows. And the wind was catching those big pieces of plywood, and he was trying to hold them up and nail them up. And we kids were helping. And my dad was worn out—just worn to a frazzle. And he came into the kitchen—all the electricity was off—he came in the kitchen. And he was cold, chilled, and tired. And he said to my mother—he said, “I’d give five dollars for a cup of coffee.” Well, my mother just got out a box of matches, lit the stove, put the water on, and made a cup of coffee. My dad just assumed that, because the electricity was out, the gas was off. But the gas wasn’t out. We had a gas stove. She made him a cup of coffee, and I watched my dad as he reached in his billfold, pulled out five dollars, and gave it to my mother. Well, you know, that is a memory that I have. In the midst of all of that tension, in the midst of that fear, the storm, and the tiredness, my mom and dad just sat down, as he drank his coffee, and just had a great big laugh.

Mr. Thackeray said, “A good laugh is sunshine in the house.” Don’t let your children take you too seriously. I mean, they ought to take you seriously, but don’t let them... Don’t let your home be a place of grimness. Laugh with them.

G. Lick Them

And then I am going to say the last thing here, and I know the kids are not going to particularly like this, but not only... Lick ’em. What I mean, when I say, “Lick ’em,” I mean they need some old-fashioned discipline. And that’s a part of raising a happy child. Again, if the child is not chastised, that child has very little chance of being a truly happy child. You know, at about the first ten or eleven years of his life, a child can learn more through loving discipline than he can learn later at the cost of great suffering. And so, parents, don’t keep an eye on some sort of a popularity contest with your child. Learn to discipline the child.

1. Reasons for Discipline

Let me tell you some reasons for discipline, and we will wrap this up.

a. It Is a Sign You Love the Child

First of all, if you discipline a child, it is really a sign that you love the child. Remember I started out by saying you need to love them. Well, I just took this part out and put it here at the end. Put this verse down—Proverbs chapter 13, verse 24: *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”* (Proverbs 13:24). Now you say, “Well, you know, I just love the child so much, I can’t discipline him.” Well, pardon me, but you are not telling the truth. It is not that you love him; it is that you love you. You just don’t like the displeasure of having to do it; and so you let your love for you overrule what ought to be your love for him, for the Bible says,

“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” And then, in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 6, God, speaking of Himself, says, *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth”* (Hebrews 12:6).

b. Because of Human Nature

Children need discipline. Why? Because of the nature of human nature. Proverbs 22, verse 15: *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him”* (Proverbs 22:15). Now I don’t care what some egghead psychologist has to say about it. I don’t care what some do-gooder humanist has to say about it. I don’t care what some international convocation on the family has to say about it. I still go to the Word of God. The Bible is clear on this point. Proverbs 22, verse 15: *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.”* What does it mean: *“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child?”* Well, your little child is not really a little angel, a little rosebud waiting to unfold. Psalm 51, verse 5—David said, *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”* (Psalm 51:5). It doesn’t mean that my conception took place as an act of sin, but it means that I was conceived with a sinful nature.

Children need to understand that there is a moral power in life, and fear is a good lesson to wicked human nature. The person who fears God the most loves Him the best. That is the nature of human nature. As a matter of fact, if you learn to discipline your child, it will save you from disgrace. And if you don’t, you are headed for disgrace. Juvenile delinquents are often the result of delinquent parents. Let me give you some more proverbs. Proverbs 29, verse 15: *“The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame”* (Proverbs 29:15). Proverbs 29, verse 17: *“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul”* (Proverbs 29:17).

Now, friend, there is just a way to do this. As a matter of fact, if you fail to administer proper discipline, you may be sending your child to hell. Listen to Proverbs 23, verses 13 and 14: *“Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell”* (Proverbs 23:13–14).

Now I want to say here that God is not talking here about whacking on the kid with a stick so as to cause him bruises. The construction here means this: that there is a proper instrument, and there is a proper place. God gave some padding where the child sits down, and God allows you to use a proper instrument. By the way, it is far better to use an instrument to discipline—corporal punishment—than it is to use your own hand. And, especially, don’t strike a child with your hand in the face—don’t do that. There is a place—there is a spanking place. Now you are never to harm a child physically. It will

not hurt him; it will help him spiritually. And I want to say, in case some do-gooder comes up to me after this, I am not talking about child abuse. If it were child abuse, then my dad would have been put in jail. He didn't abuse me, but he certainly knew what it was, at the proper time, to deliver corporal punishment.

2. Ideas Regarding Discipline

Having said that, I want to just tick through some ideas that I have learned about licking them; and then we will be finished with the message and all of these points that I have tried to give you.

a. You Need to Start Early

If you want to discipline a child, number one, you need to start early. Now many parents start about 160 pounds and sixteen years too late. Listen to Proverbs 13, verse 24: *“He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes”* (Proverbs 13:24). Now, what does the word *betimes* mean? It literally means, “early.” And some of you have translations that give it that way. If you love your son, then you are going to chasten him early.

Well, let me give you another verse—Proverbs 19, verse 18: *“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying”* (Proverbs 19:18). Now that doesn't mean that you spank a child every time he does something wrong. You speak first, and I will talk to you about that first. You warn; you plead; you do everything you can do. You never chasten a child for mistakes over which he has no control; but you need to discipline, and you need to start early. And if you start early, your disciplining days, as far as spanking, may be over very early.

b. Use Spanking Only as a Last Resort

Use spanking only as a last resort. Revelation chapter 3 and verse 19—see what God says. God says, concerning His Church, *“As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten”* (Revelation 3:19). First comes the rebuke. If the rebuke doesn't work, then the chastening comes: speaking before spanking. There is time for an explanation. There is time for a warning. When you chastise a child, it is not that you are trying to get even; you are trying to correct them.

c. Be Careful Not to Make Idle Threats

But if you say that you are going to do it, do it: keep your word. I told my kids, “You do thus-and-such; even if the Rapture takes place, I will get you on the way up.” Keep your word. Be careful, however, that you don't make idle threats. If you are going to do it, do it. If you are not going to do it, don't say you are going to do it.

d. Administer it Promptly

And administer it promptly. Let me give you another verse—Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11: *“Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily,*

therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). We have murderers warehoused on death row for year after year after year. We have criminals that have cases put off and off and off and off. We have people who are dealing drugs one day, out on the street the next day. What does that say? It means, to a generation, "Look, it really doesn't make much difference. There is no immediate repercussion for sin."

Obviously, we want people to have a fair trial. But listen to this verse again—Ecclesiastes chapter 8 and verse 11: "*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*" Let there be a connectivity between what the child does wrong and the punishment.

e. Husband and Wife, Present a United Front

Husband and wife, present a united front: always agree. As a matter of fact, you may cooperate in corporal punishment. One parent may hold, and the other parent may administer the board of education to the seat of knowledge. Don't let a child play one parent against another.

I think the last spanking my wife ever gave to one of our children was to a semi-grown son. I will use his name again, because he is not here: Brother Steve. He—Steve—had done something, and his mother knew that it was worthy of corporal punishment. She said, "Son, come in here and lie down over that bed," and she took a belt to him. Now he could have overpowered her. I mean, he was as big as she was. But he lay down and took his punishment.

Now, two reasons. Number one: He knew there was a reserve power of Dad, when Dad came home. Number two: I don't think that he was all that afraid of her anyway. When my mom used to whip us, we would scream, "Oh, Mama, you're killing us! Mama! Mama! Mama!" It didn't hurt—it didn't hurt. It hurt when Daddy did it. But just a united front.

f. Do a Good Job

And do a good job. I don't mean cruelty. The Bible says, "*Let not thy soul spare for his crying*" (Proverbs 19:18). You know, your spanking days may be over before he is very old. A good spanking—one good spanking—may last for years.

g. After It Is Over, Don't Hold a Grudge to the Child

And after it is over, don't hold a grudge to that child. Hug that child. Express love. Kiss away the tears, and let the child go out to play. But don't just whack at the child. You know, let the pain of the spanking be greater than the pleasure of the sin, so that he doesn't want to buy another one.

Have you ever watched a mother in the grocery store? The little kid, he is opening the cookies, and he is doing this thing and that thing. And she is trying to correct him, and she is buying groceries. And she sort of whacks at him. Have you ever seen a

mother whack at a kid? “You stop that!”—*whack, whack*. The little kid looks like—you know, he looks like he is training for a boxing match or something like that. No, that doesn’t get anything done. I mean, friend, if you are going to do it, do it.

h. Discipline in Love

And then, discipline in love. Listen to Hebrews 12 and verse 6: “For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6). Ephesians 6 and verse 4: “*And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). Wrath produces wrath. Bitterness produces bitterness. James 1:20: “*For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*” What you want for your children is correction, not revenge. Never, never discipline a child, unless you yourself are in control of yourself.

I heard of a man pushing a carriage one time. And there was a child in that carriage. And that man was saying, “Now, easy, Albert. It’s okay, Albert. That’s okay. Easy, Albert. That’s okay. It’s okay, Albert. Easy.” Someone said to him, “Well, I just appreciate your love and care for little Albert.” “Well,” he said, “that is not Albert; that is John. I’m Albert.” “Easy, Albert. Easy.”

You need to keep yourself in control, and spank only after an explanation. Let the child know what you are spanking for. Use an object that will not harm. Don’t use your hand. Never ever humiliate a child—never humiliate him. But you must punish sometimes.

i. Always Work for Repentance of the Heart

And then, last of all, always work for repentance of the heart. Now you can’t make this happen. That must be the conviction of the Holy Spirit. But you need to help children understand that, if they have disobeyed you, as I preached this morning, what they have really done is not only disobey you but they have sinned against God; for the Bible says they are to honor their father and their mother (Exodus 20:12). And they need to understand that, if they have sinned, a spanking does not take away the sin. And you must pray that God the Holy Spirit will lead that child to repent of his or her sin.

Conclusion

Well, those are lessons from a granddaddy—some things that I have learned. And if you will just take those things and put them into practice, add the things that God teaches you, I think you are going to have some happy children. And, one day, hopefully—hopefully—they will rise up and call you “blessed.”

Families That Choose Life

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 28, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:1–13

Outline

Introduction

- I. Jesus Gives Three Kinds of Life
 - A. Jesus Has Given Physical Life
 - B. Jesus Gives Spiritual Life
 - C. Jesus Gives Eternal Life
- II. Satan Is the Destroyer of Life
 - A. Satan Was a Murderer from the Beginning
 - B. Satan's Method Is Deception
- III. Parents Are to Protect All Three Types of Life
 - A. Fathers Should Protect Physical Life
 1. From Intentional Killing
 - a. Homicide
 - b. Suicide
 - c. Infanticide
 2. From Indirect Killing
 - a. Cruelty
 - b. Corruption
 - c. Failing to Take Care of Our Bodies
 - d. Hatred
 - B. Fathers Should Preserve Social Life
 - C. Fathers Should Present Spiritual Life

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you turn now to the Book of Exodus chapter 20, and we're going to begin reading in Exodus chapter 20, verse 1, so we'll be able to get the sweep of all of these commandments one more time: *"And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me."* That's commandment number one. *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God*

am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” That’s commandment number two. Number three is: *“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”* And then the next commandment: *“Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”* Then verse 12: *“Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.”* And now this Sixth Commandment: *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:1–13).

Look up here and let me tell you this: that life is God’s wonderful, wonderful gift. And, therefore, we ought to enjoy life, and we ought to choose life. Jesus is the great life giver; Satan is the great life destroyer. Now the key verse in the New Testament that helps us to understand this verse is John 10 and verse 10—that helps us to understand this commandment more than anything else. John 10 and verse 10—Jesus said, *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy:”*—now when He said, *“the thief,”* He’s not talking about a thief in the general sense; He’s talking about Satan. That’s Jesus’ name for Satan; Jesus calls him a thief. And Jesus said Satan comes to steal, to kill, and to destroy. But He said of Himself—*“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10). Satan came to destroy; Jesus has come to give life.

I. Jesus Gives Three Kinds of Life

Now I want you to think, as we talk about families that choose life—I want you to think about the Lord Jesus Christ as the great life giver. Jesus gives three kinds of life.

A. Jesus Has Given Physical Life

First of all, Jesus has given physical life. The very reason that we’re here with our hearts beating, with our eyes looking out, and our ears receiving sound: we’re sitting in this building because Jesus is the One who gave us this life. The Bible says that, *“All things were made by him”* (John 1:3). And how did He make you? Genesis chapter 2 and verse 7—by the way, parents, teach this over and over and over again to your children, because they’re not going to get it in the public schools—listen to it: *“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the*

breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7).

Listen carefully. There is no way ever that any evolutionist—I don’t care who he is, how many degrees he has after his name, where he teaches—there is no way that he can explain the origin of life. Absolutely, you would have to say that evolution falls apart at this point—if it didn’t fall apart at every other point. This monkey mythology is laughable—to say that life came about by accidental origin and some spontaneous generation, out of some fortuitous concourse of atoms, out of some green scum somewhere. By the way, they don’t even know where the green scum came from. But to say that life accidentally began.

You say, “Well, Adrian, what do you know about it? You’re just a Baptist preacher.” True, so let me tell you what someone else said. Dr. George Wald, Professor Emeritus of Biology at Harvard University—he won the Nobel Prize, Harvard Professor Emeritus; he ought to know something—I want you to see what he said. He was writing in *Scientific American*, and he’s talking about the origin of life—listen to what he says. He says, “There are only two possibilities as to how life arose: one is spontaneous generation arising to evolution; the other is a supernatural creative act of God.” He says you only have those two choices. Now, listen: “There is no third possibility. Spontaneous generation—that life arose from nonliving matter—was scientifically disproven 120 years ago by Louis Pasteur and others. That leaves us with the only possible conclusion that life arose as a supernatural creative act of God.” So far, so good; but now I want you to hear something that is sad. Listen to what else Dr. Wald said. He said, “I will not accept that philosophically.” I will not accept *what* philosophically? That life arose as the supernatural creative act of God. “I will not accept that philosophically, because I do not want to believe in God. Therefore, I choose to believe in that which I know is scientifically impossible: spontaneous generation arising to evolution.” Now, how’s that? He says, “I willingly choose to believe what I know to be impossible, because I don’t want to believe in God.”

Now, friend, evolution is not science; it is a bias against Almighty God. And we need to teach our children—we need to teach them—that Jesus is the author of physical life. He gives physical life.

B. Jesus Gives Spiritual Life

He gives spiritual life. John 14, verse 6—Jesus said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*” (John 14:6). When He said, “I am the way,” He said, “Without me, there is no going.” When He said, “I am the truth,” He said, “Without me, there is no knowing.” And when He said, “I am the life,” He is saying, “Without me, there is no growing. I give supernatural, spiritual life.” Christians *are not just nice people who are trying to do better, who have accepted some creed or some*

code. They are new creatures, having been regenerated supernaturally by Jesus Christ, who comes into them and transforms them, sends His Spirit into their hearts, and gives them life—supernatural life.

C. Jesus Gives Eternal Life

Jesus, who gives physical life, and Jesus, who gives spiritual life, is Jesus, who gives eternal life. Now, remember our verse—John chapter 10, verse 10: “I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). But, in verses 27 and 28 of that same tenth chapter of John, Jesus is speaking of those who believe in Him. He calls them His sheep, and He says, *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life;”—eternal life—“and they shall never perish”* (John 10:27–28). Jesus is the Author of physical life, spiritual life, eternal life—never-ending life. What does *“eternal life”* mean? It speaks of the quality of the life and quantity of the life. He adds years to the life, and life to the years. It is a never-ending life.

A little boy went to the pet store to buy a puppy. There were a lot of puppies, but one was sitting over in the corner wagging his tail. The little fellow said, “I want the one with the happy ending.” Now that’s what I want: I want the life that has the happy ending. I want that eternal life, that life that never ends.

II. Satan Is the Destroyer of Life

Now if Jesus is the great life giver, John 10:10 says that Satan is the thief, who comes *“to steal, to kill, and to destroy.”* John 10:10: *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.”* Satan *is the* sinister minister *of* destruction. Jesus, in John 8, verse 44, says this about Satan—listen to it. He was speaking to the unsaved Pharisees, and He said, *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do”* (John 8:44).

A. Satan Was a Murderer from the Beginning

Now, listen carefully. He, Satan, was a murderer from the beginning—he was a murderer from the beginning. Now this command that says, *“Thou shalt not kill,”* is another way of saying, “We must reject Satan; we must choose life.” Satan wants to bring death into your family. He wants to bring death to youth, death to purity, death to joy, death to happiness. He wants to bring physical death. He wants to bring spiritual death. He wants to bring eternal death. He wants to make this life that Jesus said is to be abundant—he wants to make it miserable.

Someone wrote these words:

*A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,
A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,*

*A pint of joy to a peck of trouble,
And never a laugh but the moan comes double;
And that is life!*

—PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Not if you know Jesus—not if you know the Lord Jesus. Someone has discovered, if you take the word *evil* and turn it around, it spells *live*. Take the word *live* and turn it around—it spells *evil*. If you take the word *lived* and spell it backward, it spells *devil*. If you take the word *devil* and spell it backward, it spells *lived*. Satan is antithetically against life.

Now, why does Satan hate life? Because he hates man. Well, why does he hate man? Because man is in the image of God, and Satan hates God. You are made in the image of God, and that's the reason Satan wants to destroy you. He cannot get at God, so he tries to get at man. These devilishly inspired, satanically inspired, rock groups are so controlled—so many of them—by Satan. Have you ever thought about some of the names of these rock groups? Listen to some of these names: Grateful Dead, Annihilator, Atrocity, Biohazard, Carnivore, Coroner, The Damned, Dark Angel, Demolition, Sluts from Hell, Atheist, Autopsy, Megadeth, Morbid Angel, Obituary, Death Angel, Destruction, Entombed, Legion of Death, Massacre, Monstrosity, Napalm Death, Poison, Devastation, Guillotine, Malice, Violence, The Zombies, Oblivion, Slaughter, Social Distortion, Suicidal Tendencies, Torch, Venom, Slayer, Thrasher, Ultimate Revenge. Tell me about this fascination with death: where does it come from? From the very pit of hell. And this is the kind of music that is being drummed into your children's minds. And many of them flocked into our city to hear a group called The Grateful Dead. I want to tell you, you're looking at one man who's grateful that he has life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Satan's Method Is Deception

Now Satan is the murderer, and his method is deception. He wants to deceive, and then to destroy, and then to damn. Sin thrills *and then it kills* Sin fascinates *and then it assassinates* Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly." Jesus said, "Satan, the thief, comes but to steal and to kill and to destroy" (John 10:10). God's Word says, "*Thou shalt not kill*" (Exodus 20:13).

Now when the children of Israel were facing their inheritance, the Promised Land, Moses called them together. This is worth turning to. Would you turn—just fast-forward from Exodus to Deuteronomy, if you would, for just a moment—to chapter 30. I want every dad and mom to turn to it, if you will—verse 15. Moses has given the Ten Commandments; and then this is what he says, in verse 15: "*See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil,*"—he said, "I've set it before you; there it

is! There's life, and good, and death, and evil"—*"in that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life..."*—that's where I got the title for my message, this morning: "Families That Choose Life"—*"therefore choose life,"*—it's a choice—*"that both thou and thy seed"*—that is, your children—*"may live: that thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life..."*—what a great statement—*"he is thy life..."*—not that He gives life—*"he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them"* (Deuteronomy 30:15–20).

Now when our Lord made man—we read about it over there in Genesis chapter 2—He formed man of the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7). That's physical life. He breathed into man's nostrils the spirit of life, the breath of life. That's spiritual life. And man became a living soul. The soul speaks of the mind, emotion, and the will. That's self-conscious or social life. And every man, every woman, has three kinds of life. He is body, soul, and spirit. With his body, he has physical life—made of the dust of the ground. With his soul, he has social life. The Greek word for *soul* is *psyche*. It's the word we get *psychology* and *psychic* from. And then with his spirit he has spiritual life—he knows the world above him: with his body, the world beneath him; with his soul, the world around; with his spirit, the world above him. He has physical life. He has psychological life. He has spiritual life.

III. Parents Are to Protect All Three Types of Life

Now, fathers, listen to me. We're talking about the Ten Commandments, as they relate to the home. Your wife, your children, have three kinds of life. They have physical life, social life, and spiritual life. They were made that way by Almighty God. And it is your job to protect that life.

In Deuteronomy chapter 22 and verse 8, God said, "When a man builds a house, he's to go up on the roof of that house and he's to build a border" (Deuteronomy 22:8). The King James Version of the Bible calls it a *"battlement."* We would call it today a *parapet wall*. He's to build a wall around the roof of that house, and he's to build that wall so that no one will fall off. And he will not be held guilty if he builds that wall to

protect the life of those in home. In Bible times they spent of a lot of time up on the rooftop; they enjoyed themselves. But God said it is the father's responsibility to protect his family from death. If he doesn't do it, he will be guilty of their blood.

A. Fathers Should Protect Physical Life

Now, having said all of that, let's just talk about those three kinds of life that we're to choose. And let's see what fathers are to do, and mothers are to do, to protect these homes. First of all, the family is given to protect physical life. From what?

1. From Intentional Killing

Well, number one: from intentional killing.

a. Homicide

There are people today—it's a bloody and murderous society; the violence in Oklahoma City has only served to underscore that. And, by the way, just let 'em keep working: They will try to blame that violence on Bible-believing Christians, ultimately. Of course, there's no connection whatsoever. But, ultimately, the word *fundamentalist*, the word *Christian*, will be woven into this thing. Everybody knows that true Christians are against violence; true Christians are against killing; true Christians believe in life. And they know that; but they will try somehow to shift the blood. In the streets of our cities, we have people who are being gunned down, murdered, killed in cold blood, gratuitously killed; and their blood cries from the ground. And, one day, God, who said, "*Thou shalt not kill*," will judge them.

b. Suicide

There's the crime of homicide. There's the crime of suicide. As I studied, as I've been studying about homes, I'm so alarmed at the rise of teenage suicide. What a grievous thing! What a heartbreaking thing it is for anybody to take his or her own life! Listen to your pastor. No one—no one—ever has the right to take his own life—never! Number one: It is never his—it is not his. It belongs to God. And the most incurable disease, the most constant pain, the greatest trouble and heartache, the worst persecution that you can mention, is still no reason to take one's own life, because it takes out of God's hand matters which He is wise enough, strong enough, and good enough to handle.

Could a Christian commit suicide in a moment of deep despondency, in a moment of mental derangement? Some may, but it is never ever an answer that God approves of. It never makes matters better. How painful and hurtful, and how harmful it is! When a person faces the Savior, how ashamed he will be! What shame and sorrow is left to families behind! Never do that! Jesus will give grace. First Corinthians chapter 10, verse 13: "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the*

temptation also make a way to escape” (1 Corinthians 10:13). And the word *temptation* is used in the Bible as an inducement to sin, but also means, “testing,” and, “trial,” and, “sorrow.” God will give grace, and God will make a way.

c. Infanticide

Then, not only is there homicide and suicide that families need to be protected from in these days, but, oh, the crime of infanticide—the taking of innocent little lives! In America some 4,000 a day are snuffed out—about as many as are in this building right now. Every day, every day—like that—little lives! And they’re being put to death—listen—with governmental approval! Do you know what the Supreme Court said in February of 1973? This ought to make you angry. Listen. They ruled that, “Every woman in the United States now has the same right to an abortion during the first six months of pregnancy as she has in any other”—listen to this—“minor surgery”—“any other minor surgery.” I deplore the classification of little preborn children and their death as “minor surgery.” There is something very wrong in America when we protect spotted owls and whales and snail darters and eagles, and have made, perhaps, the most dangerous place the mother’s womb.

The real issue, of course, is simply this: When does life begin? That’s the real issue. Jeremiah 1:5 answers it—if you’re a Bible-believer. God said to Jeremiah, “*Before I formed thee in the belly I know thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations*” (Jeremiah 1:5). That little baby there in that mother’s womb is life. What kind of life is it: vegetable life, or animal life, or human life? It is human life. Somebody said, “Well, that’s not a human any more than a nut and bolt put together in a Ford factory is a Ford.” There’s a difference: that nut and bolt will always be a nut and bolt, but that baby in his mother’s womb has every component of life; and you add to it nutrition and fluid, and it continues to grow. The analogy does not fit. Within eighteen to twenty-five days, the heart of this little human being is beating. Brain waves may be recorded in forty-five days. In eight weeks, the brain is completely present. By this time, the little one will respond to touch. At nine or ten weeks, he will squint, swallow, move his tongue. In two more weeks, he has fingernails, sucks his thumb, swallows, digests, recoils from noise or pain; all of the organ systems are functional; nothing new will develop. All he does is simply pass on down through the birth canal. That’s life.

Dr. R. A. Gallup, who made the Gallup Poll so famous, said this: “If a doctor will take money for killing the innocent in the womb, he will kill you with a needle when paid by your children.”

Did you read recently in the newspaper...? I read this, but I couldn’t believe it; but yet, knowing today’s insanity, I did believe it. It told of Frank Balun, a New Jersey gardener. He’s in his seventies. He went out, you know, to grow tomatoes. Everybody

has to try that one time or another: to grow tomatoes. And a rat was coming out there eating his tomatoes. So Mr. Balun—Frank Balun—set a trap for this rat; and he caught the rat, and the rat was trying to get out. And Mr. Balun took a broomstick, wrapped it in newspaper, and beat that rat to death that was eating his tomatoes. Now Mr. Lee Bernstein, the Humane Society Executive Director, issued a summons for his arrest—for Mr. Balun’s arrest. And he said that he needed to be fined 1,250 dollars for killing that rat, and could face up to six months in jail. His crime: he beat a rat to death with a broomstick.

Now when Mr. Bernstein found out that people were laughing at him all over America, this is what he said—listen to this: “The fact that the animal was killed is not why the summons came, but the summons came because it was a trapped animal that could not escape, and it was mutilated and died a horrible death.” Not that I killed a rat—that’s okay; but it was trapped; he couldn’t escape.

When I read that, I thought about little babies in their mother’s womb—little babies in their mother’s womb, who are trapped and cannot escape, and are mutilated in their mother’s womb. Yet here’s a man who wants to arrest another man for killing a rat who’s been eating his tomatoes.

You say, “Well, what do you know about it? You are not a medical doctor, pastor.” Well, let me tell you what a medical doctor said. Dr. Landrum Shettles served for more than a quarter of a century as the attending obstetrician and gynecologist in Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York. He pioneered in the field of sperm biology, fertility, and sterility. And a part of his international reputation lies in the discovery of male- and female-producing sperm. This man’s no “six” or “seven”; he is a medical doctor of no mean repute. Listen to what he says. He said, “I oppose abortion. I do so, first, because I accept what is biologically manifest: that human life commences at the time of conception; and second, because I believe it is wrong to take innocent human life under any circumstances. My position is scientific, pragmatic, and humanitarian.” That’s a man—I don’t know whether he’s saved or not—but he thinks straight.

2. From Indirect Killing

Now, but not only is there this matter of direct transgression of this commandment; there’s the indirect transgression that we need to warn our children about.

a. Cruelty

Cruelty—cruelty—is a way of killing people. I’m just talking about being heartless. Some sons have put their mothers in an early grave. Some husbands have put their wives in an early grave. Some of you have pinched wrinkles into your daddy’s brow and put gray hairs in your mother’s head because of the way that you live.

The Chinese used to have an ancient torture and form of execution. They called it the Chinese water torture. They would strap a man into a chair and put over his head a

huge reservoir of water and let the water just drip on the man's head until finally the whole nervous system would explode in divesting rebellion. And it would end in horrible death: drip, drip, drip, drip. Some of you are killing people that way—the same way.

b. Corruption

Other forms I believe people that are guilty of this are people who are in corrupt businesses. I would never be in the whiskey business: not because of financial matters, but because of this verse that says, *“Thou shalt not kill”* (Exodus 20:13). The liquor industry—and we need to teach our kids this—they don't understand it. Hollywood is saying, “Drink it.” Madison Avenue is saying, “Drink it.” Their friends are saying, “Drink it.” But listen. The liquor industry has the curse of God upon it. Whiskey *is* brewed *with* tears *and* thickened *with* blood *and* flavored *with* death

Listen to these scriptures. Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 12: *“Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity”* (Habakkuk 2:12). Habakkuk 2, verse 15: *“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink”* (Habakkuk 2:15). What's he saying? People say, “Well, liquor is good for business.” God says, *“Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity.”* *“Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink.”* Robert McNamara has now come out with a book and said, “Vietnam was a mistake, and we in the White House knew it.” Fine time to say so, isn't it? Did you know that six times as many Americans lost their lives due to alcohol during the same period of time as in the Vietnam War? Six times as many! When is somebody going to say, “Well, we made a mistake about alcohol”? They won't do it. Every twenty-two minutes somebody's killed in an alcohol-related crash. Every sixty seconds someone is maimed. We have four million teenage alcoholics in America today.

Here's a letter that was written to *The Dallas Morning News*—it's signed by a medical doctor in Dallas; he works in the Parkland Hospital there: “Recently, we saw another preview of hell in the Parkland Hospital emergency room: a woman struck down by a drunken driver, a college student lying semiconscious following a head-on collision with a drunken driver, who himself was critically injured. The drunk's companion was dead. Four other drunks with lacerations and stab wounds were waiting to be treated. Night after night, year after year, the same bloody trail of horror: major automobile accident injuries, stabbings, rapes, wife beatings, and nightly emergencies treated and released, admitted to the hospital, or pronounced dead on arrival. And almost always, the bloody trail is led by the honored man of distinction who again drinketh. Almost always, the moderate drinker—not the alcoholic. I wonder, is there so much joy to be gained from the total consumption of all the beers and whiskeys ever made to ever equal a small fraction of the innocent suffering, the damaged bodies, the broken marriages, the discarded children, the total brutality, and the crimes which will forever accompany its use? What a quiet place our emergency rooms would be if beverage

alcohol was ever abolished from our city!” That’s a medical doctor.

Now I know that alcohol has many defenders, but it has no defense. I mean, it has turned our highways into slaughter pens, and our homes into prisons of despair. Fathers, you need to build a wall. Take that boy, take that girl, down some Saturday night, some Friday night, to the emergency room, and let them see. They don’t understand. These kids think they’re invincible.

c. Failing to Take Care of Our Bodies

I’ll tell you another way that we transgress this. It’s just by failing to take care of our bodies—in temple maintenance. We commit suicide by degrees. Many of us who look down our long noses at the drunkard, we’re killing ourselves with a knife and fork. Hello! Someone has well said that, “Americans are digging their grave with their teeth, killing themselves with immorality, and embalming themselves with alcohol.”

d. Hatred

Now you say, “Well, pastor, I’m free from all of those things.” Well, one more thing, and I can see that I’m certainly not going to come to the bottom line of this message, but here’s where we all need to listen. Our Lord said, in this spirit of this command, that if we allow hatred in our hearts, we have transgressed this command. First John 3, verse 15: “*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*” (1 John 3:15)—mental murder.

Is there somebody you hate? You say, “I’m not in the liquor business. I’m not an abortionist. I’m not a strong-armed thug. I’m not a terrorist. I’m not a drug pusher. I don’t have one of those rock bands that’s encouraging suicide.” Do you hate anybody? Do you? Is your heart headquarters for hate? Now I believe in salvation by grace; but, according to John, you’re going to hell—you’re going to hell if you are a person who hates others. I don’t care what kind of hate: it could be racial hate, religious hate, revengeful hate—somebody has done something bad to you.

B. Fathers Should Preserve Social Life

Fathers should protect physical life. Fathers should preserve social life. That was my second point—never got to it. But you should make the home a happy place.

C. Fathers Should Present Spiritual Life

And then, fathers should present spiritual life. Dads ought to lead their children to Jesus.

I have four children on this earth and a little boy in heaven. My four children are a long way from perfect. You know how the preacher’s kids get into trouble? They get that way playing with the deacons’ kids. They’re not perfect, but I tell you, they all love God. My son Steve—I just spent a little time with him down in Florida—when Steve was a teenager, I’d go to watching him. I didn’t see the beauty of Jesus in his life, though he’d

walked down the aisle and made a profession of faith. I said, “Steve, get in the car with me, would you, please. Let’s just go for a ride.” “I’ve gotten a ride.” I said, “Let’s just go out and walk in the woods. Let’s spend a day just walking in the woods.” And I said to him, “Son, Daddy has got to know that you know Jesus.” We talked. I didn’t try to put a stranglehold on him, but I just wanted to know that I knew that he knew Jesus. And out there in the woods we kneeled and prayed. He assured me, “Daddy, I love Jesus.” And he’s showing it now through his life.

One day I was praying and I said, “Lord, if any of my children are not saved—I don’t have any reason now to believe that any of them are not saved—but if any of them are not saved, oh, Lord, I don’t want to go to heaven without all my children.” I didn’t say anything to my wife Joyce or the children about it. But the next Sunday when I gave the invitation, my oldest daughter Gayle came down the aisle, and she said, “Daddy, I don’t believe I’ve ever really, truly, been saved. I want to be saved.” She’d already been baptized. She gave her heart to Jesus. And I believe it was directly related to that prayer, “Oh, God, if any of my children are not saved, I want them saved.”

Conclusion

Families need to choose life—choose life. And, dads, you’ve got to build a wall around the roof of your house, lest your children fall off. You need to protect them—their physical life. You need to provide their social life, and make home the happiest place on earth. And you need to pray for and plead for their spiritual life, and say, “I will not go to heaven without my children to come with me.” Families need to choose life. Satan has come to steal and to kill and to destroy. But Jesus has come that we might have life.

The Key to a Magnificent Marriage

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 4, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:14

Outline

Introduction

- A. We Need to Have Compassion on Those Whose Cars Are Wrecked
- B. We Need to Build Some Safety Rails
- C. We Need to be Removing Obstacles that are Causing These Wrecks
- D. We Need to be Teaching These Drivers How to Drive
- I. We've Got to Teach Our Young People God's Plan for a Magnificent Marriage
 - A. The Priority of Marriage
 - B. The Permanence of Marriage
 - C. The Purpose of Marriage
- II. We Need to Warn Our Young People
 - A. Adultery Is a Sin
 - 1. It Is a Sin Against One's Own Self
 - 2. It Is a Sin Against the Home
 - 3. It Is a Sin Against the Church
 - 4. It Is a Sin Against One's Nation
 - 5. It Is a Sin Against Almighty God
- III. We Need to Show Our Young People
 - A. Decision
 - B. Dependence
 - C. Devotion
 - D. Development
 - E. Discipline
 - F. Determination

Conclusion

Introduction

Exodus chapter 20 and verse 14 says something clearly, with no stutter, no stammer, no apology, no compromise, no equivocation. Clearly and plainly, God says, in His Word, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). I want to speak to you today on this subject: "The Key to a Magnificent Marriage."

I heard about an old couple; they'd been married for many, many years—fifty years. They were sitting by the fireside. He looked over to her and had a romantic thought. And

he said to her, “After fifty years, I have found you tried and true.” Her hearing wasn’t very good. She said, “Eh?” He said, “After fifty years, I’ve found you tried and true.” She said, “After fifty years, I’m tired of you, too.”

Now I want to show you how to have fifty years and more, by the grace of God, that will be magnificent and wonderful. God wants our marriage to be magnificent, and the key to a magnificent marriage is found right here.

Now generations come and generations go, but the Ten Commandments stand. They don’t need to be amended or revised. And in the true sense of the word, we are broken on them if we try to break them. Now the commandments, and this one, are not given to be painful or onerous, or to bind us in, but, really, to liberate us—set us free. The Bible says, “*His commandments are not grievous*” (1 John 5:3). These are laws—God’s laws for liberty, when God says, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (Exodus 20:14). But here’s what we need to do. We need to take the law and put it in our heart, because if the law of God is only on the outside, it will be a rule, a regulation, a restraint; but if it’s on the inside, if the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, then what liberty—what release—is there!

An ancient emperor built what we call today the Great Wall of China, and he built that wall to keep the enemy from the north from invading. And it was so high, and so great, and so wide, that chariots could ride across the top of that wall. They say it’s one of the few manmade things that could be seen from the moon, as you look back to the earth. But, you know, that wall did not keep the enemy out. Do you know why? All the enemy did was to bribe a gatekeeper. And so, in spite of the wall, there was an enemy on the inside that let the enemy on the outside in. And so the gatekeeper must be in your heart, in your life. The walls of restraint and the laws of God’s Word do no good unless the gatekeeper is on the inside.

Now this Seventh Commandment deals with all immorality, and what it says, in a nutshell, is this: that sexual involvement outside marriage is a grievous sin. This means premarital sex, extramarital sex. It is a sin against Almighty God. Now we’re told today that the Ten Commandments, and especially this one, are out of date, old-fashioned; there’s a new morality. And, in the meanwhile, homes are coming apart, and young people are being sucked down into swirling sewers of sin. And venereal disease is rampant. We’d better go back to God’s Word—Acts 15, verse 29: “*Abstain from...fornication*” (Acts 15:29). First Corinthians 10, verse 8: “*Neither let us commit fornication*” (1 Corinthians 10:8). Colossians 3, verse 5: “*Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry*” (Colossians 3:5). First Thessalonians 4, verse 3: “*For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain form fornication*” (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

Now the word *fornication* means, “any sexual immorality before or after marriage.” And if you are sexually active before marriage, you’re breaking the command that says, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (Exodus 20:14). You say, “Well, I’m not married.” If you are sexually active before marriage, you are sinning against the person you will marry, and you’re building obstacles and barriers that you will have to overcome after you get married.

So many of us who have children and grandchildren are wondering, “Who will our children marry? Will there be a person sexually clean and pure? Will there be a person that our children can marry? How are our children going to find the right person?” Well, we must teach them to be the right person, because, if they are the right person, they will have such a greater potentiality for finding the right person.

Aldous Huxley wrote a book that you’re probably familiar with: *Brave New World*. And here’s what he said that our day would be like. He said, “In a few years, no doubt, marriage licenses will be sold like dog licenses—good for a period of twelve months, with no law against changing dogs or keeping more than one animal at a time.” We’re almost there. We’re almost there.

I want you to imagine a mountain, and at the bottom of that mountain is a beautiful valley. There’s a winding road that comes down the mountainside, and on that road there are steep cliffs and sharp precipices. And there are obstacles on the road, and few, if any, guardrails. At the top, there’s a line of automobiles, and they’re starting down that road. Two people are in that automobile, and they’re heading toward the happy valley. And, along the way, they pick up passengers. But all along that road, there are wrecks. And these automobiles are careening over the precipices, or running into obstacles, and the people who are in these automobiles are being broken and maimed; and passengers that they’ve picked up along the way are being broken and crushed. When they start to the happy valley, they think it’s going to be wonderful. But along the way, something happens.

It’s an illustration, a picture, of marriage in America today. And what should we do? What should do?

A. We Need to Have Compassion on Those Whose Cars Are Wrecked

Well, number one: We need to have compassion on those whose automobile has been wrecked. We need to have a heart full of love and compassion, and say, “Our hearts are open, and our churches are open. Our arms are open. The Word of God is open; the love of God is there.” And God is a God who forgives and restores, and He does not hold grudges. We need to teach that, because there are a lot of broken people, and they don’t need somebody pointing a finger in their face. They need somebody who will get down alongside of them, and bind them up, and help the bruised

and the broken, because, friend, there are plenty of them in America today. And if anybody thinks that this message is a message to point out blame at somebody, or put somebody further down, you are dead wrong.

B. We Need to Build Some Safety Rails

There is something else we need to do: We need to be building some barricades, some safety rails.

C. We Need to be Removing Obstacles that are Causing These Wrecks

We need to be removing some of the obstacles that are causing some of these disastrous wrecks, don't we? I mean, it's dangerous for kids today to live in America, because everything is against marriage, it seems. As I have said before, the devil has leveled all of the artillery of hell against our homes. We need to be removing obstacles and building guardrails.

D. We Need to be Teaching These Drivers How to Drive

But, you know, I think the main thing we could do is to teach the drivers how to drive, teach the drivers how to drive—to give them some instruction, to give them some help. And, very frankly, that's what we're trying to do in this series on "A Perfect Ten for Homes That Win." We're trying to help young people.

Did you know that young people who are getting married today, they don't get a lot of help? Did you know, speaking of driving, that it's easier to get a marriage license? Think about it. It is absolutely easier to get a marriage license than a driver's license. It's easier to get married. All you have to do is have some public notary, or somebody, say a few words over you, and they say you're married. Put down your money; get the license: *ipso facto*, you're married.

I heard about an Indian ceremony. The Indian chief stands before the two and says, "Want 'em?" "Ugh." "Want 'em?" "Ugh." "Got 'em."

It's just about that simple; and yet, in order to get a driver's license, you have to know something.

Now what we have today in America is a vicious cycle. Broken homes produce broken people that have more broken homes, that produce more broken people, that produce more broken homes. Now that's not an irreversible cycle. What we need to do is to break that cycle. What we need to do is to teach young people today how to have a godly marriage, how to get from the mountaintop to the valley below. Now you may be happily married, but the message still applies to you. You may be unmarried, but the message today still applies to you. Why? Because we have a responsibility before God, whether or not we're married, or happily married, to help other people. It is a ministry. We must be a part of a team to help young people today prepare for marriage and to

help those who are married to arrive safely.

Now, here are three things I want to point out to you.

I. **We've Got to Teach Our Young People God's Plan for a Magnificent Marriage**

Number one: We've got to teach our young people God's plan for a magnificent marriage. Now, look, if you will, in Genesis chapter 2. You're in Exodus; just turn left to Genesis chapter 2, if you will, please, for a moment. And, in Genesis chapter 2, we're going to read a few verses of Scripture to you. And in these few verses of Scripture, every problem that marriage will ever face is alluded to here, and the answer to every problem. Genesis 2, verses 21 to 24—it tells about the first marriage in the Garden of Eden. It tells about God's magnificent plan for the home and for a magnificent marriage. And it says this: *"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* Now, notice the *therefore* in verse 24. And we've alluded to this many times in our preaching, so hopefully you have it underlined. If you don't, underline it right now. Genesis 2, verse 24: *"Therefore..."*—listen to it. Here is all of marriage in one verse. Here it is distilled down into a pure essence. Everything is included in this one verse. Look at it—*"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh"* (Genesis 2:21–24). Any advice that you can give will simply be an enlargement, an extrapolation, of that one verse.

A. **The Priority of Marriage**

That one verse speaks of the priority of marriage. Now, notice what it says: *"[For this cause] shall a man leave his father and his mother"* (Genesis 2:24). Now, what is that saying? It is saying that marriage has the highest priority. The highest priority of human relationships is not parent to child, or child to parent, but mate to mate. The highest priority in marriage is not parent to child, or child to parent; it is mate to mate. And, therefore, we as parents must be preparing our children to leave us.

We must be coming to a place where, as the eagle stirs her nest to get rid of those little eagles in the nest, we've got to be preparing to stir the nest to get rid of those children so they can go out and have a home of their own. Now the little eagle doesn't want to leave the nest. It's so comfortable in the nest. And the mother eagle comes with little bits of fish, or big fat juicy worms, to feed that little eaglet there in the nest. But there comes a time when that eagle must fly and get out of the nest. Now many moms and dads don't want to have the empty nest, so they keep the nest feathered, and they

make it easy for the little baby eagle, and never really teach that baby eagle how to fly. What a mistake!

You know what we say when we overly pamper our children and take care of them beyond the time when they are to be out of the nest? We say, “Well, I want them to have the things that I never had. I want to be able to give to my children things my parents never gave to me.” Well, I wonder, are you giving your children the things your parents did give to you?

You know, I was raised in a home where we didn’t have a lot of extra things. And I was born in the Depression, and grew up in the latter years of that Depression. We didn’t have money to spend on things that kids spend on today. I never knew what it was to eat out or those kinds of things. We never even thought about that. That was ridiculous. We were having enough trouble eating in. But you know what we used to do sometimes when my dad and I didn’t have work to do? We’d go to Singer Island, and we kids would scan for minnows for my dad to fish with. We’d build a bonfire there on the beach, and Mama would bring two or three cans of Van Camp’s Pork and Beans, and we’d get some lard—I know, it wasn’t very healthy, but we’d get some Crisco to fry the fish in—and catch those fish. Hey, folks, those are my best memories: things that we did because we didn’t have money to do anything else. Those were the times when we, because we didn’t have things, we were forced together as a family. The question is not, “Are you giving them the things that your parents didn’t give you?” Are you giving them the things that your parents did give you: that togetherness?

And there is a priority of marriage. And this what the Bible teaches. Parents are not our supreme commitment. Children are not our supreme commitment.

B. The Permanence of Marriage

Now not only is there the priority of marriage taught in this verse; there’s the permanence of marriage. The Bible says he “*shall cleave unto his wife*” (Genesis 2:24). The Hebrew has the idea of welding or gluing. It’s not people who put themselves together; it’s God that puts them together. Mark 10, verse 9, says, “*What therefore God hath joined together*”—what God hath joined together—“*let not man put asunder*” (Mark 10:9). Marriage is permanent. Marriage is “till death do us part.”

Show me two who consider divorce as an option, and I’ll show you two young people who have a greatly increased potentiality for a break-up of their marriage. You say, “Well, we got divorced because we had problems.” I have news for you. People who stay married and people who get divorced have basically the same kind of problems. People who get divorced and people who stay married have basically the same kind of problems. The difference is not in the problems. The difference is in commitment. I mean, everybody has problems in their marriage.

You have to watch a man who says he understands women. He'll lie about other things. And it's a minefield. You've got to be careful.

One woman, her husband walked in. She was in tears, and she said, "I believe this is the worst meal I have ever cooked." He said, "Oh no, it isn't." It's dangerous being married.

But just get rid of the idea of divorce. Just take your scissors and cut that word out of your dictionary. I mean, divorce is the only game in which both players lose. Everybody is a loser, and a no-fault divorce is a contradiction in terms; there is no such thing. Everybody has problems in their marriage. But you have a wonderful marriage, and ninety percent of the marriage is wonderful, and ten percent of the marriage is in trouble; so you throw out the ninety percent because of the ten percent that's in trouble. That's because of a lack of commitment.

C. The Purpose of Marriage

This verse speaks of the priority of marriage. It speaks of the permanence of marriage. It speaks of the purpose of marriage. The two will "be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Now this deals with more than simply a sexual union, though that is included. It means that they will be one flesh physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Two become one. Marriage is a romance, and in the first chapter both the hero and the heroine die; and then they become one new person.

I enjoyed listening to Lisa Love play the violin in that magnificent song that we had today. Marriage is very much like a violin. The violin without the bow: there's no music. The bow without the violin: there's no music. But when the two come together, then there is that music that we listened to today. And that's the way marriage is. God takes two, and God makes them one. "Oh," you say, "that's old-fashioned." Yeah, it's old-fashioned, but it's still mighty good.

Did you know that the latest poll results are in? And all of these people have been telling us we need to be liberated. Here's what the latest polls say. The best physical and sexual relationships, as well as emotional stability, come to those who wait upon God and keep themselves pure for marriage. A new survey, commissioned by the Family Research Council, a pro-family lobbying group based in Washington, D.C., found that people who are most likely to report that they are very satisfied with their current sex life are married people who strongly believe that sex outside of marriage is wrong. The poll found out that seventy-two percent of these married traditionalists reported sexual satisfaction. This is thirty-one percent higher than unmarried non-traditionalists and thirteen percent higher than married non-traditionalists. And then this poll went on to show that sexually happy people also tend to go to church. The poll found that two-thirds of responders who attend church weekly are very satisfied with their sex lives,

compared to barely half of those who never attend a church. It's an amazing thing.

When all fails, just go back and read the directions. Marriage is for more than the propagation of the race; it's for mutual love, and comfort, and joy. You see, look. God loves you. I've said this over and over in this series. *When God says, "Thou shalt not," He's just saying, "Don't hurt yourself." When God says, "Thou shalt," He's saying, "Help yourself to happiness."* You are not smarter than God. God loves you, and when God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14), He's not trying to keep you from sex; He is trying to keep sex for you. It is a wonderful gift of God. *"Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge"* (Hebrews 13:4).

So what do we have to do? First of all, if we are to get these down from the mountain to the happy valley, we have to show them God's plan for the home, for a magnificent marriage. And God's plan is very, very simply the priority of marriage, the permanence of marriage, the purpose of marriage: that they become one flesh, and achieve that happiness, that satisfaction, that joy, that fulfillment that God has intended, in spite of all of the difficulties along the way.

II. We Need to Warn Our Young People

Now the second thing we need to do is, not only teach them, but we need to warn them. We need to warn them. And this message today—and I have prayed over it—is going to be very solemn and very stern, because there's no equivocation here when God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exodus 20:14). To *adulterate* means, "to make impure." And when you adulterate marriage, you have made impure something that God values so highly and so wonderfully.

A. Adultery Is a Sin

Let me tell you why adultery is a sin.

1. It Is a Sin Against One's Own Self

First of all, it's a sin against one's own self. Do you know what the Bible says? It's an interesting verse—1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 18—the Bible says, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body;"—that means, "outside of his body"—"but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18). *There's no sin that will do you more personal damage—spiritually, mentally, and physically—than immorality.* And we could talk about that from a psychological point of view. We could talk about it from a spiritual point of view. We could talk about it from a physical point of view.

Lord Byron was handsome, witty, charming. He was a playboy poet in England. He died with venereal disease at an early age. This is what he said:

*My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and the fruits of love are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief,
Are mine alone!*

—LORD GEORGE GORDON BYRON

He had it all, but he lost it all through immorality.

We hear young people today talking about safe sex. Sex is not supposed to be dangerous. You're not supposed to have to even be talking about safe sex. It is sacred sex. Immorality is a sin against the self. A man sins against his own body.

2. It Is a Sin Against the Home

It's a sin against the home. And here is one of the most heinous things about adultery. It sins against the home, and against the children in that home. The lives of children—innocent children—are being torn apart every year in America. I want to quote what Kent Hughes said—and listen to this: “The man who commits adultery tells his child, ‘Your mother is not worth much, and your father is a liar and a cheat.’ Furthermore, honor is not nearly as important as pleasure. In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you are.” That's pretty stiff, isn't it? But listen to it: “The man who commits adultery tells his child, ‘Your mother is not worth much, and your father is a liar and a cheat. Furthermore, honor is not nearly as important as pleasure. In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you are.’”

3. It Is a Sin Against the Church

It's a sin against the home, but adultery is also a sin against the church. Now none of us live to ourselves, and none of us die unto ourselves. And the Bible teaches that we are the temple of God; and then the Bible says, *“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy...which temple ye are”* (1 Corinthians 3:17).

You say, “Pastor Rogers, my personal sex life is none of your business.” Well, if you're a member of this church, it's some of my business. And mine is some of your business, because we're in it together. We're members one of another. We're members of the same body. And when a member of a church lives in sexual immorality, he sins against the holy Body of Christ. He takes the members of Christ and makes them members of a harlot. The Bible says, “How should this happen? God forbid” (1 Corinthians 6:15).

4. It Is a Sin Against One's Nation

It's a sin against oneself. It's a sin against one's home. It's a sin against one's church. It's a sin against one's nation. I wonder how long the wrath of a holy God will be stayed against America. Gibbon, who wrote *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, said this sin, the sin of immorality, was the number one thing that brought that empire

crashing down. Historians tell us it was the sin that destroyed Greece. It was the sin that destroyed Rome. It was the sin that destroyed Egypt. It was the sin that destroyed Babylon. And I believe it may well be the sin that will destroy America.

And, even now, the raging waters of God's wrath are furiously pounding against the dam of His mercy. One day, that dam of mercy will give way to the waters of God's wrath. The Bible says, in Proverbs 14 and verse 34, *"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people"* (Proverbs 14:34). Deuteronomy 22, verse 22, speaks to the Jews living under a theocracy, and it says this: *"If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel"* (Deuteronomy 22:22). Now we don't live under a theocracy anymore; but, under a theocracy, when God was the king, God said, "Put away this evil from our land, so that our land can survive." The enemy of the home is the enemy of society, and people who treat sex lightly will treat other people lightly; and the society comes down.

5. It Is a Sin Against Almighty God

But here's the bottom line. Adultery, yes, it's a sin against the body—yes; yes, it's a sin against the home—yes; yes, it's a sin against the church—indeed; yes, it is a sin against the nation. But listen to me, ladies and gentlemen. Adultery is a sin against Almighty God. It is God—it is God, Almighty God—who has said, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). And when King David committed adultery, he was wise enough to pray, in Psalm 51, verse 4, *"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight"* (Psalm 51:4). It is God who said, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). Proverbs 6, verse 32, says, *"But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul"* (Proverbs 6:32). Why? Why does he destroy his own soul? Because he sinned against Almighty God. These are holy laws. The Ten Commandments are not advice; they are law. And law without penalty is only advice.

Now, don't get the idea that a pure life is just an option that you might choose as a Christian. If you're not living a life of sexual purity, you have no right to call yourself a Christian. First Corinthians 6, verse 9: *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind"* (1 Corinthians 6:9). Ephesians 5, verse 5: *"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God"* (Ephesians 5:5). Revelation 21, verse 8: *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death"* (Revelation 21:8).

No matter how you glamorize it, God says, “It is sin. It is a sin against me. I am a holy God. My children do not live that way.” You say, “Well, I’m a member of the church, and I’m living that way, and nothing has happened to me.” Well, *“If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons”* (Hebrews 12:8). God said, “If you were my son, I would have chastised you.” But Romans 2:5 says, *“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath.”* You’re just treasuring it up.

III. We Need to Show Our Young People

We need to teach our children, and we need to warn our children. Let them know this is clear; it is plain. And it is for their welfare. The third thing we need to do: show our children. Oh, we need to model this before our children. Now it’s difficult. Let me give you some words very quickly in the few moments that I have that begin with the letter *d* that will help you to get your marriage back on track if it’s off track; to keep it on track if it’s on track.

A. Decision

Number one: the first one is decision. Decide for Christ. Give your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you have failed, if you have sinned, bring it to Him. *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). He will forgive, and He will not hold grudges. Every stain, every blot, every blur, every blemish, He will bury in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. Come to Jesus, and I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He will cleanse.

B. Dependence

The second *d* is the word *dependence*—not only decide for Christ, but depend on Christ. Let His life in you energize you and give you power. He doesn’t merely forgive you and then say, “Now, do better.” He comes to live in you, to energize you, to give you power, day by day.

C. Devotion

Number three: devotion. Begin to pour out your love to Christ and to your family. Love God and love your mate with a supernatural love. When a man comes to me and says, “I’m going to divorce my wife, because I don’t love her anymore,” he gets no sympathy from me, because love is a decision. God has commanded us to love. Anybody can love who chooses to love. The Bible says, *“Husbands, love your wives”* (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:19). That’s not a suggestion. That also is a command. Don’t come around here with this idea: “Well, you know, I’ve just fallen out of love; and, therefore, I can’t do it anymore.” No, friend. Decide to love, and then have this

devotion—a love for God, and a love for your family.

D. Development

Now here's the next *d*: development. Let your love continue to grow. Learn this about love—what love is: Love is not like a diamond—some precious, beautiful gem that we stumble upon, we find, we acquire, we keep it to treasure forever. No, no, that's a static thing. Love is not like a diamond. Love is like a flower. It must be cultivated. It must be cared for. It must be nurtured, so it can grow and grow and grow. If you don't love your wife more than you did when you got married, I believe that you love her less. It will never be static. Begin to develop that love, and feed that love.

I ask young couples when I marry them, "Will you continue to feed that love from day to day, and from week to week, and from year to year, from the very best resources of your living?" Men, let me just tell you something just very, very, very simple. Don't flirt with other women. Don't—I mean, good-naturedly, in the office—don't flirt. Never flirt with another woman. Never stop flirting with your wife. Just flirt with her all the time. Wink at her. Hug her. Do those little nice things. Keep the honey in the honeymoon—development.

E. Discipline

Here's the next *d*: discipline. Guard your company. The Bible says, "*A companion of fools shall be destroyed*" (Proverbs 13:20). Friends that are urging you to sin are not friends. Watch what you set in front of your eyes. You sit there going through the channels and there are things that are going to come up on that screen. Don't watch those things. Don't abide with those things. You wouldn't put garbage in your mouth. Why put garbage in your brain? Garbage in, garbage out. Don't say it won't affect you. "*Can a man take fire in his bosom, and...not be burned?*" (Proverbs 6:27). Watch what you watch. I've told you before, when I was in college, just like any other college boy with raging hormones, I had on my desk this motto: "He who would not fall down ought not to walk in slippery places." Watch what you do. The Bible says, "*Flee fornication*" (1 Corinthians 6:18). And there must be a discipline.

F. Determination

And then, last of all, with that discipline, there must be a determination. I mean, make up your mind—make up your mind. I don't have to make up my mind every time I go out of town whether I'm going to be true to Joyce. I don't have to make up my mind every time I turn on the television whether I'm going to watch filth or not. I don't have to make up my mind every time I pass a newsstand whether I'm going to buy something raunchy or not. Why? I have already made up my mind. I'm not saying that I'm arrogant about it. I'm just simply saying, "My heart is fixed, O Lord, trusting in thee" (Psalm

112:7). I have decided to follow Jesus.

Ladies and gentlemen, make one big decision. It will help you with a whole lot of other smaller decisions. You won't have to keep on saying this or that. Just have that deep determination in your heart: *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15).

Conclusion

Now our time is gone, but here's what I want you to remember. Number one: God's plan is purity for marriage. Number two: If you've failed, God is a God of forgiveness; He's the God of a second chance, and a third chance, and a fourth chance, and we ought to be people, just like our God, to forgive one another. Remember the woman taken in adultery? *"Where are thine accusers? hath no man accused thee?... Neither do I...go, and sin no more"* (John 8:10–11). If you have a broken heart, or if you have a broken home, bring it to Jesus. He can put it back together—if you'll give Him all the pieces. The first miracle that our Lord performed was at a wedding—when He turned water into wine. I want to tell you this: that God is still performing miracles. And when you get right down to it, every magnificent marriage is a miracle marriage, because it is a union of man, a woman, and God. It won't always be easy, but it's always worth it.

Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:14

Outline

Introduction

- I. False Philosophies about Immorality
 - A. Immorality Is Freedom
 - B. Immorality Is Fun
 - C. Immorality Is Love
 - D. Immorality Is Nothing
 - E. Immorality Is Status
- II. What Does the Bible Say about Immorality?
 - A. It Is a Sin Against One's Self
 - B. It Is a Sin Against One's Family and Society
 - C. It Is a Sin Against the Nation
 - D. It Is a Sin Against God
- III. How Is This Commandment Broken?
 - A. By Fornication and Adultery
 - B. By Divorce
 - C. By Lust in Your Heart

Conclusion

Introduction

Exodus, the twentieth chapter and the fourteenth verse, continuing in our series of sermons on the Ten Commandments. Tonight, we come to the seventh commandment, the one that deals with the scarlet sin. God says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (Exodus 20:14).

Let us pray. Father, bless us now as we look into thy Word. Give us wisdom, and give us power to preach. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

I want to say at the outset of this sermon that one of the most wonderful and glorious things that God has given to man is this thing of marriage and physical love—what the world calls sex. There's nothing dirty about it. There's nothing impure about it. There's nothing unholy about it. It's a wonderful gift from a loving heavenly Father. My, how many tender moments people who are in love and who are married have had!

I'm thinking of a young couple who just got married. They went to their little vine-

covered cottage, and they were so rapturously in love one with the other. There was a fire flickering in the fireplace. The crickets were singing on the harp. The light from the fire made her complexion even lovelier. And he sat there and looked at his lovely bride in rapture. And she had such a pure, sweet, almost mystical look on her face as she was staring off into the shadows. And he could tell that she was thinking something—something wonderful, something so grand. So he said to her, “Sweetheart, we’ll probably never have another moment just like this as long as we live. And I can tell from the look on your face that certainly there’s a beautiful thought in your soul. Would you share it with me?” She said, “Well, yes I will.” She said, “I was thinking that if you would wear a rubber band around your head, your ears wouldn’t stick out so.”

Marriage really is a wonderful thing. It really is lovely. The Bible says, in Hebrews 13, verse 4, “*Marriage is honourable in all*” (Hebrews 13:4). It was the Lord God Almighty Himself who performed that first wedding in the Garden of Eden. And it was the Lord Jesus Christ who sanctified marriage when Jesus came to Cana of Galilee. And marriage and love and sex, and all that goes with it, is pure and good and clean, and so very, very beautiful, and so very, very wonderful. But what God has made to be beautiful and clean, man has taken and abused, and misused, and made to become very dirty and very filthy in his own mind. Sex is good; but sex is to be used, and not abused. And we have some present-day attitudes that need to be dealt with because our young people are following the steps of the older people, and they’re going to hell in this matter so fast that it ought to break our hearts.

I read this afternoon in doing some studying for this message that forty-seven percent of the illegitimate children who are born in the United States are born to teenagers. Now, every now and then, someone says, “Well, these kids don’t need this message.” Forty-seven percent are born to teenagers. Let me say, really, there are no illegitimate children; there are illegitimate parents, not illegitimate children. Forty-seven percent! I read something: one new case of social disease, venereal disease; one new case every minute—sixty minutes to the hour; twenty-four hours to the day—is occurring in so-called Christian America among teenagers. And Brevard County is leading the state of Florida in this social problem. And most of this is among teenagers.

And I believe that the church has been silent far too long on this subject. And I know as I speak on this subject that I risk hurting some people’s feelings and offending a few people. But if I can offend a few ol’ fuddy-duddies, and help these kids, I’ll be glad to do it. I want to preach what the Bible has to say, because I believe that if there were ever a time that it needed to be said and needed to be preached, this is the time; this is the hour.

I. False Philosophies about Immorality

We’ve got some crazy ideas about this thing called sex in our land today. Let me tell

you some of the philosophies that I've noticed as I've studied and as I've talked to young people.

A. Immorality Is Freedom

One of them is this: that sex is freedom; that if you want to be free, just throw off all restraint, all inhibitions, and express yourself. And young people are being told today, "You don't have to listen to those old fuddy-duddy rules." You don't have to listen to that preacher, Adrian Rogers. You don't have to listen to that Bible, and you don't have to listen to the narrow Baptist denomination, or anything else. After all, you live in America, and immorality is freedom. And just throw off all of these restraints.

The Bible says, "While they declare themselves to be free, they become the slaves and the servants of sin" (John 8:33–34). You know, there's no one, young people, and there's no one, adults, who is really free. Don't you let anybody tell you that you're free, and you can do what you want, so far as immorality is concerned. Nobody is really free. I don't care who they are, or where they live: nobody is really free to do all that he wants to do.

One man thought that he was free to do what he wanted to do, so he decided in a particular town that he was going to build him a toolshed. So he decided he'd build it out of wood. But they came along. The Fire Department said, "You can't build it out of wood, because it will be a fire hazard." And so then he found out he had to build it out of blocks. And he went down and bought some blocks and bricks. And then the man came along and said, "You can't build it unless you have a building permit." This made him so mad that he spit on the sidewalk. And then they arrested him for that, and carried him downtown and fined him. He was really mad then. And when he left the police station, he was driving so fast that he went through a red light. They arrested him again—fined him again. He decided then that he was through with that lousy town, and he was going to leave and get out. But when he got to the outskirts of town, the health officer stopped him and told him the entire city was under quarantine. And he had to stay.

It's just a story, but it illustrates this. It could actually happen that no one is actually free. You see, your freedom ends where my nose begins. No one is free, for example, to holler "fire" in a crowded theater. But yet these young people are being told in college campuses today, "Just throw off all restraints. Immorality actually means freedom."

B. Immorality Is Fun

And, then again, they're being told that immorality is fun; that, if you want to have a good time, just transgress the holy commandment of God that says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" Now, young people, the devil is a liar. You remember these two things about the devil: he's a liar and a murderer. Jesus said this, in John 8:44: "Ye are of your father the devil. He was a liar from the beginning and abode not in the truth. And he's a

murderer.” Jesus said his motive is murder and his method is to lie. And one of the devil’s biggest lies is that you can break the commandments of God and have fun. And yet young people all over the world believe this: that immorality is fun. And adults believe this. But you remember this: that all of the devil’s apples have worms in them. And you can drink the cup of sin if you want to, but the dregs will be very bitter. As Dr. Lee says, “You can eat the devil’s corn if you want to, but he’ll choke you on the cob.”

And this thing seems to be fun, and at first it appears to be fun; but you notice what God says here in the Book of Proverbs, the fifth chapter, verse 3: *“For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb...”*—when he’s talking about the *“strange woman,”* he’s talking about the loose woman, immoral, the perverse woman—*“For the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil:”—*we’d call her “honey lips” today—“ol’ sweet lips.” And she’s really got a line. She’s got the big ol’ “Come on, fellas.” Her mouth is smoother than oil. And the devil holds this woman up to you, and the devil will say, “This is the way of pleasure, and this is the way of fun.” But God’s Word goes on to say—*“but her end”*—that is, the end result of going this way—*“is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell”* (Proverbs 5:3–5).

Now, kids and adults, if you’re looking for joy, you’re not going to find joy and pleasure in immorality. The only thing it can bring to you is shame, remorse, heartache, disappointment. Oh, there will be a certain amount of fleshly pleasure, but the Bible says that *“the pleasures of sin”* are only *“for a season”* (Hebrews 11:25).

C. Immorality Is Love

But these ideas are out—number one: immorality is freedom—throw off restraints; number two: immorality is fun; number three: immorality is love. This is the idea that’s out today too: that you don’t need a marriage certificate; you don’t need to stand in front of some ol’ fuddy-duddy preacher and have him perform some wedding ceremony. And this is the way people think: “After all, the real important thing is what we have in our hearts. That’s what counts. We love one another, and since we love one another it doesn’t make any difference. This is the thing that really counts. And so we’ll go out and break God’s commandment; we’ll live in fornication, and we’ll live in adultery, because we are in love.” They call it love. But it’s not love; it’s lust.

A boy takes a girl out on a date. He parks the automobile, and then he whispers in her ear, “Oh, I love you, I love you, I love you.” And then he attempts to do something out of line. You know what he ought to say? He ought to say, “I love me, I love me, I love me.” He doesn’t love her. He loves himself. And he’s only seeking the satisfaction of his own physical desire. If he loved her, he would want her treated with respect and purity. He’d want her treated according to the tenets of God’s holy Word.

But today *Time* magazine says, the question no longer is, “Is it wrong?” No one should ask this question anymore. But *Time* magazine says, the question now is, “Is it meaningful?” That’s what they’re telling young people in school. You just ask this question if you want to have some illicit relationship: “Is it meaningful?” In other words, if you really feel that you’re in love, then it’s perfectly all right, whether you’re married or whether you’re not.

But, my friend, God’s Word does not say that. God’s Word says that, “*Marriage is honourable...and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge*” (Hebrews 13:4). And the Bible teaches that the physical union between the sexes is to be reserved only for those who are in the bonds of holy matrimony. I don’t care what any smart-aleck professor has to say. I clipped this, and I want to share it with you. Some of you have heard about John Robinson, who is an Episcopalian who’s written a book called *Honest to God*. Others of you have read some about some of these other so-called clerics. It’s amazing today what preachers are saying. It’s amazing. Some of them are saying that God is dead, you see. Others of them are saying the Bible is not the Word of God. Some of them are calling themselves “Christian Atheists.” And this is hard to believe, but this Professor Fletcher—and I quote—told a group of young people—and I’m quoting now from *Christianity Today*, which is one of the substantial, conservative, scholarly, Christian magazines that’s put out today—Professor Fletcher told a group of young people, most of high school age—this is at a youth conference at Elmhurst College—that, “Neither rape, nor incest, nor any other sexual act, nor indeed the denial of one’s Lord, or the violation of the first commandment by having another God, is necessarily and always wrong.” He says that when the situation is right, any of these is morally right.

Now, can you imagine a situation where rape, or incest, or denial of Almighty God would be right? This is just sheer absurdity! I mean, absolute, ridiculous absurdity! And yet this is the thing that’s abroad in the land, and this is what kids are being told. They’re being told that if the situation is right—as if they had what it takes to really, philosophically, think out this situation when they’re all worked up in the back of an automobile—if the situation is right, this is all right.

D. Immorality Is Nothing

My dear friend, I want to warn you that the idea that immorality is freedom, the idea that immorality is fun, the idea that immorality is all right if it’s based on love, is just as wrong as it can be. Then, there’s another idea out today: Immorality is nothing. Don’t get excited about it. So, young people do wrong—young people have to sow their wild oats.

I was reading, in Indianapolis, a fraternity held a party in a hotel. It turned out to be a

wild sex orgy, and a teenage girl was involved; and when the police came and arrested these drunken teenagers, they called this girl's father. And when he first saw the police, he was frightened. And they told him what happened, and he said, "Oh, thank God, I thought she might have been in an accident." She was involved in this wild, horrible perversity, but the father seemed to shrug his shoulders and say, "Well, you mean, that's all you're telling me about?" And this is the idea that's in the world today. They say, "Well, after all, you know, these are just biological urges, and we're just human beings."

It was the same idea that Paul faced in the church at Corinth. Notice in your Bibles, in 1 Corinthians the sixth chapter: *"Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body. And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power. Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:13–20).

Now the people in Paul's time were saying, "Well, meats for the belly, and the belly for meats." They were saying, "If God gave us a stomach, and God gave us meat, God intended for us to put that meat in our stomach; God intended for us to eat." And then they've taken this same argument, and they've applied it to sex. And they said, "If God arranged things this way, if God gave us these capabilities, then God intended for us to use them; and there's nothing any more wrong with satisfying one's sexual urge than in satisfying one's hunger." That's what they were facing in Paul's day. And that was their little slogan: "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats." But Paul said, "If you commit fornication, you sin against your own body."

E. Immorality Is Status

But these are the ideas that are out today: that sex, immorality, is freedom; that immorality is fun; that immorality is love; that immorality is nothing; and, again, immorality is status. Today in some high schools the pressures are being put on these kids to go out and have an affair so they can be accepted in the group. They're being looked down upon. And the same is true in many suburban communities: that you haven't arrived, you're a square, you're out of kilter somehow, if you haven't had some

sort of an affair. And these pressures are actually being put on these people today—and not just the teenagers, but the college kids, and many adults—that in order to have status they've got to have an affair.

II. What Does the Bible Say about Immorality?

Well, these are some ideas that are out there in the world today. But what does the Bible have to say about this sin? I want you to notice what the Bible says about the wickedness of the sin of adultery.

A. It Is a Sin Against One's Self

God says, number one, that it's a sin against one's own self. The scripture that I just read, 1 Corinthians 6:18: "*Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*" It's a sin against yourself, if you commit this sin.

Young people, listen to me. Don't you sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate. Don't you sin against your body. You keep your body clean, and you keep your body pure. It will hurt you spiritually. It will hurt you physically. I want to quote an editorial from the American Medical Association: "At the end of the decade"—he's talking about the fifties—"the social disease began to reappear." And I don't want to be vulgar, or crude, but I think most of you adults know that there are certain social diseases that are in the land today that are the direct result of breaking God's commandment that said, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" And men thought that they had this disease controlled. But the American Medical Association says that, "At the end of the decade the social disease began to reappear, and a move back from its banishment to the horizons of society, to coincide with a subtle social change taking place in the late post-war period. The tiger was not dead. He had not become a docile kitten. And he was hungry. And the rising incidence among young people is without parallel. The shocking extent of this rising incidence is shown by more than 1,300 new cases occurring every twenty-four hours in adolescents from fifteen to twenty years old."

In an article in *Today's Health*, this article says, "Many of these adolescents..."—listen to me now—"Many of these adolescents come from very fine homes in suburbs where they are given everything they need, including the cars in which many become infected." Don't you think that I'm talking about the kids on the other side of the tracks. I'm talking about your kids, our kids. Now we might as well face this thing. We can be like an ostrich if we want, and go out and stick our head in the sand; but God says, when you commit this sin, you sin against yourself. It hurts you mentally.

*Trust me, no tortures which the poets feign,
Can match the fierce, the unutterable pain*

*He feels, who night and day, devoid of rest,
Carries his own accuser in his breast.*

—JUVENAL

There are some who are listening to this message that would give all that they possess if they could undo one night when they let down the bars of purity and sacrificed that purity on the altar of lust. And they've been tortured mentally. You sin against yourself. You sin against your body. You sin against your soul. You sin against your mind. It's a sin against one's self.

B. It Is a Sin Against One's Family and Society

Not only is it a sin against one's self, but it's a sin against one's family, and it's a sin against society. The tragic part of it is physical suffering and anguish have oftentimes come to a pure wife and innocent children because she's married a man with a bloodstream tainted with disease, because he broke God's commandment that says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" And this causes, many times, the breakup of the home, this immorality.

C. It Is a Sin Against the Nation

And so this sin is not only against self but it's against family; it's against society. And if it causes divorce, and if the home is the basic unit of society, and it causes the breakup of the home, then not only do you sin against yourself and your family, but you sin against the entire nation. When you commit this terrible, horrible sin, you sin against the family that you have, or the family you hope to have.

D. It Is a Sin Against God

And it's a sin against God. Ultimately all sin is against God. It's God that says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*" It's God that says, in Revelation 21:8, that, "*Whoremongers...shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*" It's God that says, in Ephesians 5, verse 5, "*For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person...who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God*" (Ephesians 5:5).

III. How Is This Commandment Broken?

Now, how is this commandment broken?

A. By Fornication and Adultery

In the first place, any sexual union before marriage, or any unfaithfulness during marriage, breaks the seventh commandment that emphatically says, "*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*"

B. By Divorce

Number two: You can break this commandment by getting a divorce. Divorce breaks this commandment. Jesus says, in Matthew 19, verse 6, *“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”* (Matthew 19:6). I’ve studied my Bible, and so far as I can ascertain, God gives one exception and one allowance for divorce—Matthew 19, verse 9: *“And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery”* (Matthew 19:9).

Now, don’t get mad at me. If you’ve got any arguments, you just take your Bible and read Matthew 19:9, and argue with Jesus. This is the Word of God, and God says, my dear friend, that there’s only one reason that He would allow for a marriage to be broken up—and that would be for a third party to come in. And if this third party comes in, God does not expect anybody to live in a triangle; and God says, then you have permission, only in the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to divorce and marry another without committing adultery. If he tears the sheet with his toenails, that’s not enough reason for divorce. And if she doesn’t fill up the water bottle, or leaves cracker crumbs in bed, that’s not enough reason. The Bible teaches that there’s only one thing serious enough. And that shows you how God hates this sin. God doesn’t allow divorce for drunkenness, or mental cruelty, or anything else. That shows you how much God hates this sin.

In God’s mind, when a man commits this sin, or a woman commits this sin, they’ve committed a crime worthy of death. In the Old Testament, they were stoned, put to death. Then the person didn’t have to worry about whether they were going to get a divorce: divorce wasn’t necessary. They were dead, and they were free to remarry. Well, in the New Testament, they didn’t stone them; but in God’s mind they were still just as good as dead. And God says, *“This is the only thing I’ll allow a divorce for.”* “Well,” you say, “Brother Rogers, suppose I did get a divorce, and I didn’t have biblical grounds, and I’m married to someone else now without biblical grounds: does that mean I can’t work in the church?” No, my dear friend, you can work in the church. I’ll tell you—bless God—Jesus will forgive any sin, any sin—it doesn’t matter what it is. It doesn’t matter whether it’s murder, or adultery, or stealing, or lying, or cheating: the Lord will forgive any sin. And the Bible says, *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). Bless God. God forgives.

Well, someone says then, “Well, if you married the wrong person, you’re living in adultery, then you ought to leave them and go back to the old mate.” No sir, that isn’t what the Bible teaches. The Bible doesn’t teach that you ought to divorce the person you’re now living with, even if you broke God’s commandment when you got married.

The Bible teaches that you ought to remain with that person. The Bible says, in the Book of 1 Corinthians the seventh chapter, “Let everyone abide in the calling wherewith he’s called” (1 Corinthians 7:20). If you’ve been saved, and you are married to someone, and you’ve broken God’s commandment by getting married, God says you abide in that calling. “Art thou married to a wife? Seek not to be loosed from her” (1 Corinthians 7:27).

I’ve heard some foolish preachers get up and preach, “Well now, you need to break up this marriage, and you need to go back to that first marriage, and you need to remarry that other person.” That isn’t what God’s Word teaches. You look in the Book of Deuteronomy the twenty-fourth chapter—God’s Word teaches just the opposite: “*When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man’s wife. And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD*” (Deuteronomy 24:1–4). God does not teach that you ought to divorce the present one and then go back to the first one. God doesn’t teach that at all. Here in this book, God calls that one the “*former husband,*” not “her husband”—the “*former husband,*” no longer “her husband”—and God said it would be an abomination if she went back.

I’m just simply saying that you cannot unscramble eggs. There are a lot of people who find themselves in a situation—they say, “Well, I’ve been divorced two or three times, and remarried. What should I do now? Should I leave this home? Should I leave these children? Should I break this up?” No! God says, “Let every man abide in the calling where with he’s called”; “Art thou married to a wife? Seek not to be loosed from her.” But what we hope to do is to say, “Oh, God, I sinned. I did wrong. Forgive me. I’ll never do it again.” “If we confess our sin, He’s faithful and just to forgive our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Someone says, “But then you’re living in adultery continually.” No, the sin is when you got married: it’s not the sin of continuing to live together as husband and wife. God recognizes the marriage. And there’s a difference in actually being married to a divorced person and living with someone without being married to them. Now if you live with someone without being married to them, God says that’s adultery. But if you live with someone who’s been divorced, and yet you’re living together as husband and wife, you do not continually commit adultery.

Do you remember the woman at the well who Jesus met? Jesus said, “Woman,

where is your husband?” She says, “I have no husband.” He said, “You said well, for you had five husbands, and the one that you’re living with now is not your husband.” You see, Jesus recognized all five as husbands: “You’ve had five husbands, but the one you’re living with now—you haven’t even been married” (John 4:16–18). And Jesus did not sanctify that relationship. But even though this woman had sinned each time she divorced and remarried, the Lord recognized them as her husband.

Now I’m just saying, away with this foolish idea where people say, now that you’ve been divorced and remarried, you’ve got to get divorced again. We’ve often heard it said, “Two wrongs don’t make a right.” We’ve got to take the situation as it is. Commit it to the Lord Jesus Christ, admit our sin, confess our sin to God, and then do the very best we can under God to make that home a Christian home.

I’m not trying to make people who have been divorced feel bad. Some of the godliest church members I’ve ever had have been people who had tragic marriages. I’m not trying to make you feel bad. But when I preach on this subject, I’m trying to help these kids. I’m trying to help these kids, and I’m trying to get them to understand that the Bible says that one man and one woman are to be united together until death do them part. And if they shuck this partner and marry another, in God’s sight they’ve sinned grievously. They’ve committed adultery. And God has said, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery.*”

C. By Lust in Your Heart

But you can break this commandment, not only by sexual union before marriage, or unfaithfulness during marriage; and you can break it not only by divorce; but you can break it by lusting in your heart. Jesus said, in Matthew 5, verse 27, “*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart*” (Matthew 5:27–28). You read these filthy magazines, and you lust with your eyes: Jesus says you’ve broken the spirit of this commandment.

You say, “Brother Rogers, I can’t help what I see.” No, you can’t. That’s true. Young man, when a pretty girl walks by, and your pulse quickens, that’s not a sin. That’s natural. God gave you that. But when you lust, when you bring this thing into your mind, and turn it over and over again, and God sees that your imaginations are wicked, then you’ve sinned in your heart, whether you’ve sinned outwardly or not. Someone has described it this way: they said, “We can’t keep the birds from flying over our head, but we can certainly keep them from making a nest in her hair.” And that’s certainly true that you cannot help what might happen, and what you might see from time to time; but you can help what you bring into your heart, and you feed on, and you lust after.

And the Bible says, “And lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin: and sin,

when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15). And if you lust, and read these girly magazines and so forth—did you know that there are fifteen million copies a month of these dirty, lascivious, slimy, magazines that are sold; fifteen million copies a month, or three billion a year? Do you know how much that is? That’s enough to fill up five buildings the size of an Empire State building. A year. And they say the great majority of these ultimately end up in the hands of children. You read that stuff, and you’ve broken God’s commandment that said, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”*

Conclusion

I wanted to say some more, but I’m going to quit because time is gone. I would have probably made a few of you mad anyway, because I was going to preach about some accessories to the crime. I was going to preach about the dance. I was going to preach about immodest dress. I was going to preach about petting in parked automobiles. Now I believe if the devil ever had a tool, it’s the modern dance. It’s awful quiet in here. The dance, as our young people know it today, has reached the very limits of obscenity and depravity, and the dance steps themselves imitate animals going through the act of mating. One man came downstairs, and his daughter was dancing with her boyfriend in their living room. He beat the young man up and threw him out of the house. His problem was he was deaf and didn’t hear the music. And I can understand why. I’m talking to you about something, though, that’s serious. It ought to break our heart. This is a sin that’s ruined other civilizations, and it’s a sin that’s going to sweep America right down into hell. Do you know what the doctrine of the communists is? They don’t believe they’re going to have to take us over with bullets and guns. They believe that we’re going to rot, just as other civilizations have done, and they will come right in.

Beloved, we’d better have a revival, and we’d better get back to the preaching of this book. Thus saith the Lord God: *“Thou shalt not commit adultery.”* I don’t care what any smart-aleck professor says. I don’t care what you learn about the new morality—which is nothing but the old immorality. And I don’t care about all the philosophies around the high schools and the colleges. I want to tell you, it pays to be pure. I thank my God that I committed many a sin, but I never committed this sin. I never committed the sin of immorality. I’m glad that I could go to the marriage altar pure. I’m glad of that. And I wanted a pure wife.

You young people, you save yourself for the one that you’re going to marry. And if you’ve committed this sin, then commit that to God, and ask God to forgive you, and to cleanse you—and He will. And start from here on out—keep yourself clean. Husbands and wives, keep yourselves pure. Don’t be hypocrites, telling your children one thing, and you’re doing another.

Integrity: Don't Leave Home Without It

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 12, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:15

Outline

Introduction

- I. We Need to Teach Our Children Integrity
 - A. Ways to Live Without Integrity
 1. Direct Stealing
 2. Fraud
 3. Halfhearted Work
 4. The Gambling Industry
 5. Withholding Love and Devotion
 - a. From Your Spouses
 - b. From Your Neighbor
 - c. From Your Parents
 - d. From Your Children
 - e. From God
 - f. From Ourselves
- II. We Need to Teach Our Children Industry
- III. We Need to Teach Our Children Generosity

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding the Book of Exodus chapter 20. Our verse for today is verse 15. And you don't have to have a doctorate to understand it; it can't be much plainer: "*Thou shalt not steal*" (Exodus 20:15). If there were ever a verse that is needed, this one is. We're talking about "A Perfect Ten for Homes that Win"; and this is one of God's great laws for living, rules for righteousness, and encouragements to have the kind of homes that will win.

You know, America has just forgotten the basic rules of honesty. I read about the market in California. There was a little boy standing there in front of the fruit stand. There were grapes there. He was putting those grapes, cramming those grapes, into his mouth as fast as he could. There wasn't an adult anywhere. A clerk was standing by, absolutely hopeless and helpless, not knowing what to do. And this little fellow was just cramming the grapes in his mouth. After a while, his mother appeared, and she saw

what was happening. She said, “Johnny, not so fast.” This is the kind of a situation that we live in, where we seem to have forgotten the basic rules of honesty.

Well, I want to be very pertinent in this message and tell you this message tells us that anytime we take anything that belongs to someone else, or that we keep from someone the thing that we owe to them, we have transgressed this commandment. Now it might be time, it might be money, it might be affection, it might be possessions, it may be courtesy, or appreciation, or love, or anything else: if we defraud somebody else, we have taken that which does not belong to us, and we’re guilty of stealing. There are many synonyms: to extort, to burglarize, to defraud, to filch, to cheat, to misappropriate, to rob, to swindle, to swipe, to jip, to embezzle. Now, how do we teach our children what this commandment means? You remember that God gave this commandment to the children of Israel, and then He said that fathers ought to teach these things to their sons and to their grandsons (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Well, there’s a verse in the New Testament that I’d like for you to put in your margin right by Exodus chapter 20 and verse 15, and it is Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 28. And, in my estimation, this one verse is the perfect explanation and amplification of the Old Testament verse that says, “*Thou shalt not steal.*” Again, Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 28—listen to it: “*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands that thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*” (Ephesians 4:28). Now, did you listen to it? Let me read it again. This is a dynamite verse: “*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth*” (Ephesians 4:28). In that verse, there are three things that every parent ought to try to emblazon in the heart of his or her child, to etch there into his or her consciousness—three grand principles.

The first one is integrity: “*Let him that stole steal no more.*” The second principle is industry: “*But rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good.*” And the third is generosity: “*That he may have to give to him that needeth.*” Now all of these, according to the New Testament, are wrapped up in this commandment that says, “*Thou shalt not steal*”: integrity, industry, and generosity. Those are three characteristics that all of us ought to say, “Dear God, help me to teach these things to our children. And help me—help us—that we might practice these things before our children.”

I. We Need to Teach Our Children Integrity

Now, let’s talk a little bit about the demands of integrity—the first of those three items.

A. Ways to Live Without Integrity

You know, there are many ways that you can live without integrity.

1. Direct Stealing

Of course, there's direct stealing. You know what the kids call shoplifting? A *five-finger discount*. Where they just go in and filch that. It is amazing how much is stolen by sheer shoplifting. Curtis Bicknell told me the other day—he said, “You know what, pastor? We had somebody steal a Bible from our bookstore.” Can you imagine—to steal a Bible from the bookstore? They took the Bible out and set the empty box back on the shelf. Well, it may be not just shoplifting: armed robbery, burglary. Our city is plagued with this. Stealing at the workplace is epidemic. Did you know, according to the research that I did, that the American economy loses forty billion from stealing at the workplace? That's simply embezzlement, or pilfering, from the work place. And so that's one kind of stealing: just direct stealing, whether it be shoplifting, or whether it be burglary, or bank robbery, or pilfering on the job, or embezzlement. All of these things will receive the sure judgment of Almighty God.

2. Fraud

But there's another form of stealing—and that's fraud: what we call *white-collar crime*.

You know, for years, the Beechnut people sold baby food, and mothers said, “Well, when you think of Beechnut, you know, we give our little children”—I know, we raised ours—“these little jars of baby food.” And we thought, “Well, that's purity, and that's health, and all of that.” Then one day the authorities discovered that they had been selling apple juice, and they sold it for ten years, and on the label it said “100 percent fruit juice, no sugar added.” And when they analyzed it, they found out it was little more than chemicals, and dye, and water—sort of a chemical cocktail. And so they were told, “You can't sell this on the market. You can't advertise this and let mothers think they're giving their babies apple juice when you're giving them this chemical concoction.” So what did they do with it? I'll tell you what they did with it. They loaded up nine tractor trailers with the stuff, and within days it was being sold in Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, and the Virgin Islands. The Bible says, “*Thou shalt not steal.*”

In Mobile, Alabama, I read about a motel. You walk into that motel, it says the rooms are eighty dollars; cash rebate, twenty dollars. Now, think about that. It doesn't say the rooms are sixty dollars. It says the rooms are eighty dollars; cash rebate, twenty dollars. So if you're a salesman, you go in there, and they give you a receipt for an eighty-dollar room. You turn that into your employer and say, “I rented a room for eighty dollars.” You put twenty dollars in your pocket. Now this is going on all over the land. It is a form of stealing.

3. Halfhearted Work

Halfhearted work is stealing. You work for an employer and don't give him an honest day's labor: you've stolen from him. Colossians 3, verse 22: “*Servants, obey in all things*

your masters according to the flesh; not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God" (Colossians 3:22). Now if you don't fear God enough to give an honest day's work, you have broken the commandment that says, *"Thou shalt not steal."*

I heard about a man who applied for a job, and he asked the prospective employers, "What will you pay me?" He said, "Well, I'll pay you what you're worth." He said, "Oh no, no, no, nothing doing." He said, "I just quit a job making more than that." And there are a lot of people who are being paid more than they're worth.

And if you're an employer, and you don't pay a man what he's worth, you have stolen from that man. Listen to these scriptures, those of you who have businesses—Colossians 4, verse 1: *"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven"* (Colossians 4:1). That applies—that also speaks—to the domestic work in your house. Do you pay them what is just and equal? I mean, if you were in their place, would you expect to be paid more than you pay those people? James chapter 5 and verse 4 says, *"Behold the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth"* (James 5:4). That means that God sees when you don't pay what you ought to pay. And God sees when you don't earn what you get paid for.

Some who are sitting in this building today have no idea that you have broken the commandment that says, *"Thou shalt not steal"* (Exodus 20:15). You just think of yourself as a shrewd businessman. Now tax avoidance is one thing; tax evasion is something else. Having insurance is one thing: assurance; insurance manipulation is something else: high finance and sharp dealing. Jesus warned about Pharisees that devoured widows' houses (Matthew 23:14). They sought the opportunity to take advantage of unsuspecting widows whose husbands had died and the woman did not know how to protect herself.

4. The Gambling Industry

Do you know one of the greatest forms of thievery that's going on right here in this area? It's the entire gambling industry. Did you know that? That's all thievery. And I know I'm going to get a lot of hot letters about this, but that's okay. Let me tell you something, friend. Gambling is morally wrong.

Now, why is it morally wrong? What's wrong with gambling? Well, nobody can win at gambling without somebody else losing. Again, you don't have to have a Ph.D. to understand that. True legitimate business is win-win. I make a widget. I sell it for a dollar. I get the dollar. You get the widget. I win, and you win. In gambling, for every winner, there must be a loser. Gambling is profit and pleasure at somebody else's pain and loss. Gambling is an attempt to get what belongs to someone else into your

possession without giving him anything for it.

Now if two people meet in a back alley, and one puts a gun on the other person and takes what belongs to him, they call it thievery. But if two people meet in a casino, and one takes what belongs to the other, they call it gambling. Oh, they don't call it gambling; they call it gaming. "Well," you say, "but, pastor, there's a difference. In the back alley, one person is very willing; the other person may be willing, but one is not willing." The fact that both are willing doesn't make it any better. A duel is murder by mutual consent. When people decide they are going to shoot each other, that doesn't make it legal, just because one is willing to take the other's life, and the other is willing to take the other's life. That doesn't make it right. You see, when somebody gambles and wins, he has the spirit of thievery. When he gambles and loses, he's been very foolish.

And so the Bible says, in Habakkuk 2, verse 6, "*Woe to him that increaseth that which is not his*" (Habakkuk 2:6).

5. Withholding Love and Devotion

Withholding love and devotion breaks this commandment.

a. From Your Spouses

Do you know the Bible commands husbands and wives not to defraud the other in the matter of sexual love? That, if you withhold from your husband or from your wife physical, sexual love and endearment, you defraud them?

b. From Your Neighbor

Why, if you withhold from your neighbor love, you defraud your neighbor. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 13, verse 8, "*Owe no man any thing, but to love one another*" (Romans 13:8). We owe that love.

c. From Your Parents

Some have defrauded their parents of honor.

d. From Your Children

Some parents have defrauded their children of guidance, and love, and instruction.

e. From God

God's Word says, "*Thou shalt not steal.*" Do you know the worst thievery is to steal from God? And so many are stealing from God. You say, "How am I stealing from God?" Well, I want to ask you a question. Have you given Him your life? You belong to Him, you know. I mean, you are not your own. You are bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Corinthians 7:23). Isn't that what the Bible says? You are His by creation; He made you. You are His by redemption; He died for you. You are not your own. You're "*bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:20). And when you live your life for self and self

alone, as if Jesus Christ never lived and Jesus Christ never died, you, my friend, are a thief—a thief. You have taken from God that which belongs to God. You walk God’s green earth. You breathe God’s air. You live with the life that God has given you. And you don’t pour your life back out to God. First Corinthians 6, verses 19 and 20: *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price”* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Do you know why we tithe? The tithe is an emblem and a symbol that everything belongs to Him. Don’t get the idea that ten percent of what you have belongs to God. All that you have belongs to God, because the One who owns the sheep owns the wool. And you happen to belong to Him, and all that you have belongs to Him; and the tithe is only an emblem and a symbol. Malachi 3, verse 8: *“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me? But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings”* (Malachi 3:8).

f. From Ourselves

Now when we steal from others—whether it be armed robbery, or a dishonest day’s work, or where we hold back the wages from those who work for us, or whether we try to swindle somebody with a shrewd deal, or whether we try gambling to get what belongs to somebody else into our possession, or whether we fail to give love, or whether we fail to honor God as we ought—do you know who we really steal from the most? Ourselves. You see, when you fail in these other ways, do you know the person who is robbed? It is you. The Bible says, in Jeremiah chapter 5, verse 25, *“Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you”* (Jeremiah 5:25)—*“your sins have withholden good things from you.”*

*It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,
It pays every step of the way.*

—FRANK C. HUSTON

You have defrauded yourself. In seeking to get, you’re the one who loses.

II. We Need to Teach Our Children Industry

Now we need to teach this to our children. We need to teach our children integrity—line upon line, precept upon precept. But here’s the second thing we need to teach them. Not only do we need to teach them integrity; we need to teach them industry. Now, remember what our verse said: *“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good”* (Ephesians 4:28). Work is not bad; work is good. Work is not a curse; work is a blessing. Do you know what is wrong with this generation? Our young people do not know, by and large, the duties of honest labor.

Now the Bible is very clear about the necessity of work. The Bible says, in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 and verse 10, *“If any would not work, neither should he eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10). The ancient Jews, they understood the meaning of this commandment, *“Thou shalt not steal.”* And they also understood the commandment that says, *“Six days shalt thou labour,”* was just as true as the one that says on the seventh day we’re to rest (Exodus 20:9–10). God commands labor. He says, *“Six days shalt thou labour.”* They saw labor and work as a divine imperative. And the old rabbis used to say this: “He who does not teach his son a trade teaches him to steal.” We have boys and girls who are going to college today and graduating from college, and still don’t know how to make a living. The rabbis, again, saw work as a gift from God; and the prophets did also. Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verses 18 and 19—listen to it: *“Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion.”* What? That God gives him work, and then the fruit of his work. *“Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God”* (Ecclesiastes 5:18–19). Labor is the gift of God; work is not a curse. *“Six days shalt thou labour”* (Exodus 20:9).

Now, today, everybody wants to get in a position where they’re going to win the sweepstakes so they won’t have to work anymore. They think, you know, that Ed McMahon is the guy who’s going to knock on your door. And then so many people have the idea, you know, “If I just had several millions of dollars, I wouldn’t work anymore.” That would be pathetic: I don’t care how much money you have. But we have a generation today that doesn’t want to work. And we have a great number of people in America, very frankly, who are not working.

I want to say a word. It may sound political, but it’s not political; it’s moral and biblical. You cannot legislate the poor into freedom by legislating the industrious out of it. You don’t multiply wealth by dividing it. And government cannot give to anybody anything that it doesn’t first take from somebody else. And when somebody receives something without working for it, somebody else has to work for it without receiving. We have to understand that. And the worst thing that could happen is for half the people to get the idea they don’t have to work, because somebody else will work for them, and the other half to get the idea it does no good to work, because they don’t get to keep what they work for. The Bible teaches that if a man *“would not work, neither should he eat”* (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Now what happened here—and our young people have to be re-trained, just an honest day’s work—it happened in the sixties. And in the sixties we were talking about the hippies and the flower children; they were going around smoking dope and saying,

“Peace, brother,” and talking about free love; and dope was hope, and sex was salvation. And they were saying, “Make love and not war,” and all of that. And we said, “Aren’t they kind of silly?” But underneath all of that was a philosophy that simply said, “Turn on, tune in, and drop out,” and the only dirty four-letter word was *work*.

Now that was a generation in the sixties. The sad thing about that is they have taken off their frayed jeans and their beads, and trimmed up their hair, and put on suits, and gone to Washington. That was the biggest cultural revolution. Well, we had a generation that did not understand the work ethic that was taught by our fathers. And it’s still not true in America today that, by and large, there is a work ethic. And those who are working are not working for the pleasure and the joy of cooperating with Almighty God and running this world that He’s made for us. They’re only working to get enough money so they can stop working. The Bible says, “*Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands that which is good*” (Ephesians 4:28). It’s good to work. Work is not bad. Work is good.

The socialists have the idea now that, you know, we’re just supposed to pool the wealth, and have a lot of drones, and no producers. Brother Bob, you and I have been to Moscow. You walk down the gray streets of Moscow, you see the crumbling infrastructure. I had a guide there, and the guide said, “You know what’s wrong with communism?” She said, “Under communism, we pretended to work, and they pretended to pay us; and everything just went under, and it went down.”

Do you know what’s wrong in America today? We have created a society where some people think it is better not to work. You take a young girl. She lives in a home that you can’t even really call a home. There’s poverty, roaches, filth. She’s afraid of the men in the house, that they may assault her. She’s fighting with her mother all the time. She wants to get out of that house, and her government has told her this: that when she turns sixteen she can have her own apartment. And not only can she have her own apartment; she can get legal aid. And not only that, but she can get a welfare check. And not only that: she not only can get a welfare check, but she can get food stamps. But there are two requirements: number one, she must have a baby out of wedlock; number two, she must not work. Now if she will have a baby out of wedlock, and if she will not work, then the government says, “We will take care of you.” You think I am being hard on people? Friend, I am telling you, that’s the worst thing we could do to our society.

We need to teach our boys and girls how to work. And God knows we need to have mercy on those who are locked into this kind of a situation. But it is time for us to wake up and find another plan, because the old one of no work does not work. We need to put our nation back.

And the same thing is true in our prisons. They’re all upset down here now in—

where is it? Alabama—because they're making people work, who are in prison. *La-ti-dah*. Did you know, in 1828, approximately eighty-five percent of the inmates were gainfully employed? That is, when they were in prison, they were put to work. In 1990, less than ten percent of those in the prisons worked.

Charles Colson says this—and I want to quote—he says, “With one of the most destructive and wasteful national policies imaginable, we are deliberately keeping almost a million men and women out of the labor force and denying them the skills they will need when they are released from prison to reenter the labor force.” What do we do? He said, “I visited more than 400 prisons.” He said, “I see these men locked in a narrow cell, lying on their bunks, staring at the ceiling—nothing to do. They live in a six-by-nine cage with a tiny black-and-white television set, a few books, and absolutely nothing to do. We've seen the sullen expressions, the downcast eyes, the simmering bitterness.” We have a generation today—many of these young people who are in these prisons, and older people—they never learned how to work. They didn't have a daddy who taught them a trade. They didn't have a mama who made them carry out the trash. They did not learn the basic things of industry.

How long will this nation go on? Those of you who want to retire, you're getting the idea that pretty soon you're going to retire, so you can do nothing. God have mercy upon your pitiful soul! You'll never retire from serving God. And if you are well enough off so that you don't have to report in at eight o'clock at the office, that just gives you more time to serve God with all of your heart and all of your soul. If you'll look, you see, the opposite of work is idleness: idleness, just simply not doing anything.

We need to teach our children, not only do we need to teach them integrity, but we need to teach them industry—industry. Let them labor, working with their hands. Start early with these boys and girls. Let me give you a good verse to put in your margin—Lamentations 3, verse 27: “*It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth*” (Lamentations 3:27). Do you know what that means? Don't ever get the idea, “Well, they're only children; now they ought not to work when they're children. Wait till they grow up; and when they grow, then they'll work. And let the children play when they're children.”

Now, folks, I've known what it is to work since I was a child. You may think that being a preacher is no work. You may think, “You don't work. You're just a preacher. You talk a little bit on Sunday morning.” I've known what it is to work. When I was in grammar school and junior high school, I was buying my own clothes. I ran a milk route and did a day's work in junior high school, and did a day's work before the other kids were getting out of bed. I used to deliver milk to the girl I'm married to right now. She'd go look out the window to see me set the milk down there on her back porch. I did a day's work. I'm not bragging about it. It didn't hurt me. My dad believed that his boys

ought to work.

My brother and I had to cut the grass. You know what kind of grass we had in our front yard down in Florida? We didn't have the kind of grass we have up here. We had a grass called *bitter blue*, and it's thick. And when he'd say, "Cut the grass," I was both bitter and blue, because, I want to tell you, we didn't have one of these kinds of mowers; we had one of these kinds of mowers that you push. And we didn't have one of those kinds of hedgers with a string on it; we had a little half-moon thing that you put your foot on and it went around. All day long we worked on that yard, my brother and I. My dad would come home and inspect it, look at it. I'll tell you, it was hard work in the Florida sun. When he'd say, "Boys, that's a good job; that really looks good," I felt so good, felt so good, felt I'd done something. And we earned our way.

I worked my way through college. I'd bus tables. I've been a carpenter's helper. I've been an elevator mechanic. I've been a used car salesman. I've been a fruit picker. I've done all of these things. But I'll tell you one thing I did. I got married. I went for four years of college and four years of seminary, raised a family, allowed my wife to stay home. I worked in the daytime. I worked at night. I got out without owing anybody anything.

I give God the praise. I give God the glory. And it didn't hurt me. And I learned how to work, because I learned how to work as a child. And my daddy taught me how to work, and I'm glad he did. I'm glad he did. And you say, "Well, you think you're hot stuff." No, I don't. I'm just giving you a testimony. I'm telling you, friend, that work is good.

And the Bible says, "*It is good for a man [to] bear the yoke in his youth*" (Lamentations 3:27). There's nothing wrong with work. And we need to teach our children integrity. "*Let him that stole steal no more*" (Ephesians 4:28). And we need to teach them industry. And, sometimes, folks, it's easier to do it yourself than to get them to do it, amen? I mean, like teaching a four-year-old—teaching a four-year-old—who is old enough, to gather up all the trash, and carry out, and empty the trash. But you have to go help him to do it, and pick it up, and go with him, and guide him, and do it. A six- or seven-year-old, they can help with the dishes. Ten, twelve: they can work in the yard. And remember that, when you're teaching them industry, when they go to school, that's a part of their work. Their activities, their paper routes, their babysitting, their music lesson, the practice time—that's work to them, just like your work is work to you.

"Now," you say, "Pastor Rogers, don't you want to let them play?" Of course you let them play! But this summer a lot of kids will be saying, "There's nothing to do." They'll be bored. Around my house I was afraid to act bored, because my dad would find something for me to do. Let them work when they work, and when they play, the play will be a whole lot sweeter.

III. We Need to Teach Our Children Generosity

Now, look at this verse—Ephesians 4, verse 28. Number one, it says, *“Let him that stole steal no more.”*—that is integrity—*“but rather let him labour,”*—that is industry. Now, here’s the third thing—*“that he may have to give to him that needeth”* (Ephesians 4:28). The opposite of stealing is not, not stealing; it is giving. It is giving. And for every negative, there’s a positive. And we need to teach our children generosity. We need to teach them charity. We need to teach our children work: not only to meet their needs, but to meet others’ needs.

Let me give you a verse for your margin—Acts chapter 20, verses 33 and following. Here’s what the Apostle Paul had to say. He said, *“I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.”* We’re going to talk about that next week: coveting. *“Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.”* He said, “I have my needs met, because I work.” And then he said, “I was able to meet the necessities of them that were with me.” And now, listen to this: *“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive”* (Acts 20:33–35)—laboring, that we might have to meet our needs; and laboring, that we might give to others.

It’s a sin and a shame before God that we’re expecting the government to take care of our loved ones, to care for our parents and our children, when we ourselves ought to do it. And if we would do it with industry, we would have to give to ourselves and to give to others. This kind of living frees us from selfishness. Little children who learn to be selfish are going to be miserable children. Misery comes from mirrors; joy comes from windows—when we’re beginning to pour out and give to others.

I want everybody in this building to do a little experiment with me, if you will. I’m not ashamed to make you feel a little childish. Take your fist and squeeze it as tightly as you can for just a moment. Everybody, if you would, just take it and squeeze it just as tight, and hold it there. Squeeze it! Keep it there! Hold it! Don’t let go! Just squeeze it! Keep squeezing! Hold it. Don’t let go! Don’t let up! Just squeeze it! Hold it! Don’t relax! Hold it there! Squeeze it! Go ahead! Now, relax it. Doesn’t that feel a lot better? This is the way so many are living. “Hmm...that’s mine”—they go through life that way; that’s the way they go through life.

“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give” (Ephesians 4:28). Life is made up of takers and givers. Teach the children to give. And there’s so much they can give. Give them understanding, and they’ll give you understanding. People today want somebody to understand and to care. People will call up a 900 number and pay somebody just to listen to them. It’s an amazing thing. Give acceptance. Give forgiveness to your

children. Don't let that bitterness poison you and them. Give love. Love means, "I'll do you good, no matter what you do to me." Teach the children to give.

John Wesley, founder of Methodism, a great man of God, said this in one sentence: "Make all you can; save all you can; and give all you can." Teach children integrity. Teach children industry. Teach children charity, generosity. Teach your children to clean up their neighbor's yard. Go over and help a widow carry the groceries home. Teach them to bring their own money to church. Give them their allowance, but let them take out of their allowance a gift. And it may be a nickel, or dime, or quarter—whatever it is—but let the children have the joy of bringing their money to church. When we take the love offering here at the church, and you as a family pray over it, pray over it with the children. Let the children participate in mission projects. Teach the children how to give to their brothers and sisters. Teach them how to give. Train them in giving. You do it by precept. You do it by example. You do it consistently.

Conclusion

I wish I had more time to talk to you about this, but I don't. Time is gone. But now, listen to me. Listen carefully. The Bible says, "*Thou shalt not steal.*" And I want to remind you again—listen. Listen. Don't even get your books. Just look at me. Jesus, on that cross, poured out His life's blood for you. He suffered, bled, and died for you. He bought you. You belong to Him. Are you saved? If you steal from God, I will promise you, as sure as my name is Adrian Rogers, that you'll steal from yourself, for, "*your sins have withholden good things from you*" (Jeremiah 5:25).

If I had a thousand lives to live, I'd give every one of them to Jesus. I am so glad that I know Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. I know all of the toys of this world that we cling to, we're soon going to leave. We used to say, when I was a kid, "Losers, weepers..." How did it go? "Finders, keepers; losers, weepers." "Finders, keepers..." Jesus says, "Keepers, weepers; losers, finders. Lose your life for my sake and the gospel's, and you'll find it." Jesus said, of the devil, "*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they might have life, and...have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10). Satan is the biggest thief of all, and he wants to steal from you the abundant life that Jesus has for you.

Do you know what you ought to do if you've never done it? Right now, you ought to just open your heart and say, "Lord Jesus, I receive the gift of salvation, and I give myself back to you. Lord, I don't want to steal from you. My very life belongs to you, and I give it to you right now." And, friend, you'll understand that, when you give to Him, He gives back to you. And what He gives to you is nothing in comparison to what you give to Him, or gave up for Him.

Truth or Consequences

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 18, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:16

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Liability of a False Witness
 - A. How Satan Uses Slander
 1. Satan Uses Slander to Corrupt a Good Man
 2. Satan Used Slander to Criticize a Godly Man
 3. Satan Used Slander to Come Against the Lord Jesus Christ
 - B. Who Are These Children of Satan?
 1. The Perjurer
 2. The Rumormonger
 3. The Flatterer
 4. The Insinuator
 5. The Slanderer
 6. The Silent
- II. The Reliability of a Faithful Witness
- III. The Responsibility of a Family Witness
 - A. How Do We Transfer These Things to Our Children?
 1. By Precept
 2. By Example
 3. By Discipline
 - a. Deliberate Disobedience
 - b. Defiance
 - c. Dishonesty

Conclusion

Introduction

Take, if you will, please, your Bible, and be finding the Book of Exodus, chapter 20. And, today, we look at verse 16. Exodus chapter 20 and verse 16 simply says this: *“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour”* (Exodus 20:16)—*“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.”* Something tragic has happened in America. We have gotten away from the very basic standard of morality that was rooted in the Ten Commandments. There was a time when almost all Americans took for granted that the Ten Commandments are the standard and the basis of morality. But we have seen one absolute after another go—not, primarily, with the older generation, but, heartbreakingly, it has happened with the younger generation.

In 1962, the Supreme Court ruled that voluntary prayer in the classrooms, the public classrooms of the United States, is unconstitutional. Quickly they followed that in 1963, when they said we could no longer read God's Word publicly in the classroom. It didn't take them long to go to the next step that said the posting of the Ten Commandments on classroom walls is illegal; it is unconstitutional. And then, in 1982, the Supreme Court ruled that we cannot teach that we were created by Almighty God. The teaching of creationism was ruled to be unconstitutional against the principles of this country. That's twenty short years. In twenty years, 180 years of American history is reversed. And from that time on, something terrible has begun to happen in America today. Yes, we can't post the Ten Commandments, but I'll tell you what a child can do. A child can go into a school-based clinic today and receive birth control devices without his or her parents' knowledge of that. Now they can't get an aspirin without parental advice and consent, but they can be given counseling concerning an abortion without parental advice, consent, or knowledge. In America, our boys and girls can be given birth control devices and counsel about an abortion, with the parents completely oblivious to it. And yet, in America, we cannot post the Ten Commandments on the classroom walls.

Our boys and girls are being taught what is called now a *values-free education*. That is, we're not going to take a stand on values. Now, since that time, the suicide rate among teenagers has soared astronomically. Since that time, illegitimate births have become pandemic. Promiscuity is rising. I listened the other day to television, and they were talking about statistics, and they said, "Well, one good thing in America—or two good things—is that among the teenagers, number one, drug abuse seems to be down a little and the use of contraceptives seems to be up." That was a good sign to them—that the use of contraceptives is up among teenagers—and they were boasting about that. The problem is this. We in America have lost the concept of absolute God-given truth.

I was reading in a news magazine, *U.S. News and World Report*, and this is what it says: "Our nation has become a nation built on falsehood. Governmental officials dissemble." That's a fancy word for telling a lie. "Scientists falsify research. Workers alter career credentials to get jobs." And then this magazine asked this question: "What's going here? The answer, a growing number of social critics fear, is an alarming decline in basic honesty."

And then I was reading another research study. It was completed in 1991. The title of this study: "The Day America Told the Truth: What People Really Think About Everything That Really Matters." Now the authors of this book are James Patterson, who's the chairman of J. Walter Thompson Company, and Peter Kim, who's the firm's director of research services and customer behavior. Now this is what they say they have done. They have documented the problems Americans have in ethics. And I

quote, “In the most massive in-depth survey of what Americans really believe that has ever been conducted...” Now, remember, the title is “The Day America Told the Truth: What People Really Think About Everything That Really Matters.” If these statistics are anywhere near the truth, they’re heartbreaking. They said that thirteen percent—thirteen percent—of the population believes in all of the biblical Ten Commandments. Thirteen percent believe in all the biblical Ten Commandments. This research went on to say that nine out of ten Americans lie regularly—nine out of ten; that’s ninety percent. One-fifth of America’s children—one-fifth—have lost their virginity by age thirteen. They went on to find out that, for ten million dollars, of these, seven percent said they would kill a stranger if you would pay them ten million dollars. This is so-called “God-blessed” America.

Now we know more and believe less than ever. We’re drowning in a sea of facts. In the last thirty years, we’ve produced more information than in the previous 5,000 years. Nearly 50,000 books and 10,000 magazines are published in America every year. A person who reads a newspaper like the *Los Angeles Times* gets more information in that one newspaper than people who lived in the sixteenth century would get in a year. And they tell us this information is doubling every five years. Those are facts, but facts are no substitute for the truth. And we’re becoming road-kill on the information superhighway. While the information is coming, truth has been jettisoned.

Now, here’s what Isaiah said about the truth in Isaiah chapter 59 and verse 14: “*And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter*” (Isaiah 59:14). Listen to that verse again—Isaiah 59:14: “*And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter.*”

What is the picture here? It’s the picture of a traffic jam. Here’s equity, justice, and judgment; and they’re all backed up. Why? Because truth has fallen. And because truth has fallen, judgment, justice, and equity cannot get by. How did truth fall? Well, she’s been kicked down by professors of philosophy. She has been tripped up by dishonest politicians. She has been chloroformed by liberal preachers. And there it is: truth—truth—has fallen. And what is wrong in America? Judgment, justice, and equity cannot get through, because truth has fallen in the street. What is our job? Our job is to set truth back on her feet.

The Bible says, “*Thou shalt not bear false witness.*” I want you to listen today as we think today about “Truth or Consequences.”

I. The Liability of a False Witness

The first thing I want you to notice is what I’m going to call the liability of a false witness—the liability of a false witness. “*Thou shalt not bear false witness.*”

Have you ever thought about who the father of all false witness is? He's Satan himself. John chapter 8 and verse 44—Jesus, speaking to the unsaved Pharisees, said, *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts”*—that is, the desire—*“of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.”* There is no truth in Satan. Listen: *“When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he”*—Satan—*“is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44). Every time you tell a lie, you're acting like the devil. Do you know what *the devil* means? The very word *devil* means, “slanderer”; that's the meaning of the word. When you bear false witness—when you slander—you're like the devil. When you tell the truth, you're like the Lord Jesus, whose name is Truth.

A. How Satan Uses Slander

I want you to see how Satan, who is a slanderer—I want you to see what he's done.

1. Satan Uses Slander to Corrupt a Good Man

For example, he uses slander to corrupt a good man. Who is the good man he corrupted? Adam. Adam was there in the Garden of Eden, and Satan came and slandered the character of God before Adam. He slandered God's honesty, because God said, “The day that you eat, you'll surely die” (Genesis 2:17). And he said, “Oh, you'll not surely die” (Genesis 3:4). He slandered the character of God. He made God a liar. And any man who puts a question mark after the Word of God is doing the work of the devil. Never forget it! He slandered the honesty of God. He slandered the goodness of God. He said, “God doth know that, in the day ye eat thereof, you'll be like God, knowing the difference between good and evil” (Genesis 3:5). That is, “God really doesn't care about you. God just has a monopoly on being God. He wants to keep us all to Himself.” And he's really slandering the goodness, the righteousness, and the honesty of God. And the slanderer did his work, and Adam sinned. He corrupted a good man.

2. Satan Used Slander to Criticize a Godly Man

Then I want you to see, not only did he use slander to corrupt a good man, but he used slander and false witness to criticize a godly man. If you were to turn to the Book of Job chapter 1, you would find there that Satan appears before the throne of God and begins to slander Job. Job was a perfect man, an upright man, who loved God with all of his heart. And Satan said something like this, in Job chapter 1, to God the Father—God the Father says to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? He's a good man” (Job 1:8); and Satan says to God the Father, “Well, he doesn't really love you, God. The only reason that he serves you is because you have bribed him. You've bought him off. You've given him all these good things. He's never known any heartache. He's never known any trouble. He doesn't really love you. He's playing you

for a sucker, God. The only reason he serves you is for what he can get out of you” (Job 1:9–11).

3. Satan Used Slander to Come Against the Lord Jesus Christ

You see, he corrupted a good man through slander. He criticized a godly man through slander. You find him coming against the Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man. When Jesus was in the wilderness, and Satan came to Jesus, he began to slander the Lord Jesus by his accusations and by his temptation. The truth of the matter is that Satan bears false witness against the Lord Jesus today, and he has been doing that for a long time. When Jesus was taken by the Pharisees, and they wanted to crucify Him—listen to Matthew chapter 26 and verse 59: “*Now all the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus*”—sought false witness against Jesus—“*to put him to death*” (Matthew 26:59).

B. Who Are These Children of Satan?

Now, what am I saying? I’m saying, from the Garden of Eden to the time when they hung up Jesus on that cross, to this day, Satan is in the business of slander. Any time you slander someone, you are acting like Satan. Now he’s the father of it; and being the father of it, he has a family (John 8:44). And who are these children of Satan? You know, children are like their father.

1. The Perjurer

If you’re guilty of perjury, if you ever appear in a court—whether it’s the trial of Mr. O. J. Simpson or anyone else—and you perjure yourself, you break this commandment that says, “*Thou shalt not bear false witness.*” Exodus chapter 23, verse 1, says, “*Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*” (Exodus 23:1–2). Now it doesn’t matter what people think: you speak the truth and tell the truth. And if you perjure yourself ever in a courtroom, one day you will stand in God’s courtroom. And the one who sets the murderer free will be condemned of murder. The one who accuses the innocent will suffer the penalty that innocent person suffered. The perjurer is the child of his father, the devil.

2. The Rumormonger

The rumormonger is the child of his father, the devil. It was rumored that Jesus was going to destroy the temple. Jesus did not say He was going to destroy the temple that was built there in Jerusalem. He was talking about the temple of His body. But rumors got started about that. The Bible says, in Exodus 23, verse 1, “*Thou shalt not raise a false report*” (Exodus 23:1). If you’re one that is given to rumors, that is, to spreading rumors—“Oh,” you say, “It’s not really... I’m not the one who starts all these things; it’s the one I tell them to that does that”—the Bible clearly forbids the carrying on of a

rumor.

I heard of a new pastor who came to a church. You know, pastors are vulnerable to rumors just like anybody else. He came to a church, and people didn't know him very well, but some of the ladies got a little rumor going that they were having a ladies' meeting, and the pastor had come to that meeting, and the pastor had rudely told his wife she must leave the meeting, and he almost snatched her out of the meeting. And the girls, the ladies, began to talk about how rude the pastor was to his wife, and this was rumored all through the church. He was new; people didn't know him very well. After a while he got news of the rumor, and he had to talk about it from the pulpit. He said, "I want to discuss several things about a rumor that's going around." He said, "First of all, I never tell my wife what meetings she can attend or which ones she cannot attend. Number two: My wife did not attend the meeting in question. Number three: I never appeared in the meeting in question. Number four: I don't have a wife." It's so easy for unfounded rumors to get started.

3. The Flatterer

Now the perjurer breaks this commandment. The rumormonger breaks this commandment. The flatterer breaks this commandment. Did you know that flattery is forbidden in the Word of God? Did you know that? Proverbs 26, verse 28: "*A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin*" (Proverbs 26:28)—"*a flattering mouth worketh ruin.*"

I'm not talking here about giving encouragement. You ought to give encouragement. I'm not talking about giving thanks. You ought to give thanks. You ought to honor. Encouragement, thanksgiving, and honor: that's the oil that lubricates life. If somebody has done a good job, tell them so. Encourage them, if they need your help. Flattery, however, is a way of using people.

Psalm 55, verse 21: "*The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart*" (Psalm 55:21). Have you ever met anyone like that? Oh, they flatter you to your face, but when you don't have your face toward them, it's an amazing thing what they will say about you. Do you know why a flatterer and a hypocrite are so much alike? The flatterer will say to your face what he will not say behind your back. The hypocrite says behind your back what he will not say to your face. And both are really heads and tails of the same coin. And God's Word forbids it.

4. The Insinuator

You can break this commandment by mere insinuation. The Bible speaks, in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 20, about whisperings (2 Corinthians 12:20). When Jesus Christ was teaching, the Pharisees insinuated that Jesus was an illegitimate child. And they said, in John chapter 8 and verse 41, "*We be not born of fornication*" (John 8:41). What's the implication? "You are." You know that you can bear false

witness just by insinuation, just by the tone of your voice, just be the arching of the eyebrows.

I've told you before about something that God convicted me of when I was a young preacher. I was driving down to my little country church. I was aware that one of the seal beams of my car had burned, and I was driving with one headlight, hoping I could make it to get it fixed, back to school. The highway patrolman stopped me. I got out, tried to be courteous and respectful. He said to me, "Son, do you know you only have one headlight?" Do you know what I said to him? "I only have one headlight?" I told him the absolute truth. I only had one headlight, but you see how I said it. I insinuated that I didn't know that. You see, when I got back in the car, he said, "Get that thing fixed, young man." I said, "Yes sir, I will." When I got back in the car, the Holy Spirit tore me up, and said, "Adrian, you lied to that man." I said, "I didn't lie. I told him the truth. I only have one headlight." "Then you told a lie." And I did tell a lie—by mere insinuation.

5. The Slanderer

We can lie, I say, with the tone of our voice. And then, of course, sheer slander is a part of one of the family members of your father the devil, the slanderer. The Bible says, in James chapter 4, verse 11, "*Speak not evil one of another, brethren*" (James 4:11)—"*Speak not evil one of another, brethren.*" It doesn't say whether it's true or whether it's not true. We are not to slander. We are not to speak with an evil spirit.

The Bible calls this, in Jeremiah 18, verse 18, "smiting with the tongue" (Jeremiah 18:18). Many people are smitten with the tongue. Do you know what A. B. Simpson said, the great Christian and Missionary Alliance pastor? Do you know what he said? Listen to this quote: "I would rather play with forked lightning or take in my hand living wires with their fiery currents than to speak a reckless word against any servant of Christ or idly repeat the slanderous darts which thousands of Christians are hurling on others." When you listen to slander, you're as guilty the person who gives it. It's a small compliment to you that people want to use your ears for garbage cans.

6. The Silent

You can even break the spirit of this command that says, "*Thou shalt not bear false witness,*" by simply being silent, because the negative always implies the positive. And when the Bible says, "*Thou shalt not bear false witness,*" it implies you will bear true witness. And if you're quiet and don't speak when you ought to speak, you've sinned. Leviticus chapter 5, verse 1: "*And if a soul sin...[and] he hath seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity*" (Leviticus 5:1). That is, if you simply say, "It's none of my business," and you keep silent when a criminal deed is done, or when you fail to speak up when a good man is criticized, you break the spirit of this command.

There are few things you could do more foolish and more hurtful than to bear false witness. It is so hurtful to people, and it is so hellish before God. Listen to what God

says in Proverbs 6, verse 16 and following: *“These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift to running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren”* (Proverbs 6:16–19). Of the six things that God hates, yea, seven, two of them deal with breaking this commandment, which says, *“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”*

Now you may think it’s a small thing to lie, but if you have a practice of lying, I want to tell you plainly and clearly that you are of your father, the devil, and you will spend all eternity with him in hell, for the Bible says hell was *“prepared for the devil and his angels”* (Matthew 25:41). And the very word *angel* means, his “messenger,” his “witnesses.” You have become a witness for Satan, and you will spend eternity with your father, the devil, in hell. Hell was not prepared for you, for me. It was prepared for the devil and his angels. And when you become a false witness, you become one of Satan’s angels, one of Satan’s messengers. And the Bible says, in Revelation chapter 21, and verse 8, *“All liars”—all liars—“shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone”* (Revelation 21:8). That’s the Word of God. I can’t change it; I cannot expunge it. From the lightning and thunders of Sinai, God says, *“Thou shalt not bear false witness.”*

Again, I want to tell you, you are never more like Satan than when you bear false witness. When you perjure, when you slander, when you falsely criticize, when you remain silent when you ought to speak, when you insinuate things that are not true, all of these things break God’s holy commandment and will receive the judgment of Almighty God.

II. The Reliability of a Faithful Witness

Now there’s a second thing I want you to see. I’ve talked to you about the liability of a false witness. I want you to see with me also now the reliability of a faithful witness; because, you see, when God says, *“Thou shalt not bear false witness,”* by implication, God is saying, “You shall bear faithful witness.”

Jesus Christ is called the faithful and the true witness of God (Jeremiah 42:5). And we are to be witnesses to Him (Acts 1:8). The Bible says, *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me”* (Acts 1:8). My home and your home ought to be a witness to the saving power of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the Bible, when the Bible says that they took the gospel from house to house (Acts 20:20), that does not mean that someone went down the street knocking on doors and telling people about Jesus—this house, and then this house, and then this house. Now that’s well and good. That’s a good way to do evangelism, but that’s not what the Bible means when it says the faith went from house

to house. It means it goes from the Jones' house to the Smiths' house, and from the Smiths' house to the Browns' house, and so forth. And one family becomes a witness to another family. And our families—our families—ought to bear witness of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now we are not to bear false witness against our neighbor. We are to bear faithful witness to our neighbor. Our neighbors ought to know the Jesus that we know. Are you bearing a faithful witness to your neighbor? Do your neighbors know that you're Christians? You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, I haven't been to seminary. I'm not trained." Well, let me ask you a question. Has Jesus Christ saved you? Has He changed your home? Is He real to you? Now, remember, you are called to be a witness, a faithful witness. Well, what does a witness do? A witness tells what he has seen and heard. As they used to say on *Dragnet*, "Just the facts, ma'am." That's all. A witness tells what he has seen and heard.

Now Jesus did not call you to be His lawyer. A lawyer argues a case. A witness simply shares what he's seen and heard. And so you just tell what Jesus Christ has done for you, and how you know He has done it. Don't witness about things you don't know, but witness about things you do know. If you fail, that's a part of your witness. Tell how you failed, and how God forgave you and gave you another chance. Your neighbor is waiting to hear. Our neighbors are waiting to hear about the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. The Responsibility of a Family Witness

There's the liability of a false witness. There is the reliability of faithful witness. Now, let me come very quickly to the close of this message and talk to you about the responsibility of a family witness—the responsibility of a family witness. We are calling this series of messages "A Perfect Ten for Homes That Win." There is a crying need in America today for families that know the truth, believe the truth, love the truth, teach the truth, speak the truth, and share the truth. A home that is not built on truth will crumble.

A. How Do We Transfer These Things to Our Children?

Now, how do we take these things that I've talked about today, and how do we transfer them to our children? And that our children might go out to the school, and to the workplace, and to the government, and permeate society with truth, there are three basic ways.

1. By Precept

Number one: by precept. You need to get this tape, or you need to get a study like this, and you need to get all of the scriptures that I've given you today, and you need to teach them to your children—literally, teach them. Take the Word of God and show

them that, when they tell a lie, they're acting like the devil. Show them that, when they tell the truth, they're acting like the Lord Jesus Christ. And don't just simply say, "You ought not to tell a lie; that's bad; that's naughty." Give them a theological reason. Tell them why they ought to tell the truth. Talk of these scriptures when you rise up, when you lie down. Make certain that your children understand the holy commandments. So number one, you transfer by precept, by teaching.

2. By Example

Number two: by example. And I cannot—oh, God help me—I cannot say it well enough, strongly enough, how important it is, mister, that you, as a father, tell the truth. One of the grandest things that has happened in America today is a movement called Promise Keepers, where men have made up their minds under God that they will keep their word. Listen. You need to be able to say to your children, "God says, '*Thou shalt not bear false witness.*' And, my child, I want to tell you this. I will never lie to you. I will always keep my word to you." Come up close, and I'm going to tell you something. You can fail in many, many, many ways, and still come out fairly good with your children. But if you fail here, if you fail to keep your word, to keep your promises, if you fail to tell the truth to children, I promise you that your home is on the road to disaster. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to have fathers that will tell the truth. If you've ever made a promise to your child and failed to keep that promise, ask that child for forgiveness.

One day I got all of my children together. I said, "I want to ask you a question. Have I ever promised you anything that I didn't do?" I was sure they'd say, "Oh no, Dad. You've always kept your word." But one of them said, "Yeah, there was a time *da-da...*" I just made little remarks that were taken as promises, and one of these "we'll do that" or "one of these days we'll do that." I said, "Forgive me. I'm sorry."

And ask for forgiveness when you've done wrong, and confess that you've done wrong. Let your children know that you are a truth speaker. Now, dads, I'm going to plow real close to the corn right now. Do you have one of these little gizmos up on your dashboard called a *fuzz buster*? Well, I want to ask you a question. Why do you have it there? Why does your child think you have it there? Now if you have one, I'm not saying throw it in the garbage can. But I'm saying that you ought to say to your child, "I have this here in case absent-mindedly somehow I am breaking the law. But my intent is not to get around the law. My intent is to keep the law." *Amen* or *oh me*? I'm telling you, folks, we'd better be careful what we're teaching our children. This thing of integrity is so very, very important.

What do you do when Throckmorton just turned twelve, and you go to the show—whatever it is—and it says "for children under twelve: *thus-and-such* an entry fee"? Now Throckmorton is twelve and three days old. You say, "Well, hey, just tell them you're

twelve, son.” You will rue the day you do that.

I remember we took our family down to Pirate’s World down in Fort Lauderdale. I mean, all the little kids like this. And, folks, to take them to one of those places, you just have to go in somewhere and hock your right eyeball to get enough money to do it. I don’t even know whether Pirate’s World is still there, but they named it well. And we’re going into this thing. I looked in my billfold, Brother Jim, and I had just so much money, and we were just like seventy-five cents short of having enough money. And we got up there, and I counted the money with the taxes and everything: I didn’t have enough. And the little children, they had their heart broken. I said, “Well, will you take a check?” “No, we can’t take a check.” And then I looked, and it said, “Under twelve less.” My oldest was twelve by several days. They said, “Well, Daddy, I just I just turned twelve. What if we just say I’m under twelve? We can get in.” And we had a moral crisis on our hands. We were going to ruin the whole day. I said, “I’m sorry, son. We just can’t do that. We just can’t do that.” I won’t tell you the rest of the story. We did ultimately get in, because the kids won’t let it go. We got in with the rules, and never broke the rules.

Do your children know that you tell the truth? Do you ever teach children to lie for you? Do you ever teach children to pick up the phone and say, “Mama’s not here; Mama says she’s not here”? If we teach them to lie for us, we should never punish them when they lie to us.

I actually heard about a mother one time who told her son, “Johnny, if you don’t stop lying, there’s a man—a green man—that lives on the moon. He’s going to catch you and make you pick up sticks the rest of your life if you don’t stop lying.”

3. By Discipline

What do you do with children? Number one: by precept—teach them the Word of God. Number two: by example—live the Word of God. Moms and dads, tell the truth, and keep your word. Number three: by discipline. There are three deadly *d*’s that our kids knew about when they were coming up. Now our kids are not perfect kids, but they love God, and they’re saved. There are three deadly *d*’s that I would not put up with—I’m talking about when they were little. Now, wait, I’m not talking about such things as stealing, or using dope, or anything like that. I’m talking about when they are little kids now.

a. Deliberate Disobedience

The first was deliberate disobedience. Now a child could disobey; and if it’s not arrogant, not deliberate, then you have to deal gently with them. But when it is deliberate disobedience, friend, you must you must deal with that immediately.

b. Defiance

The second thing is defiance—defiance. That’s the same as disobedience, but it is just simply a disrespectful attitude, a defiant disrespect. Deal with that immediately.

c. Dishonesty

And the third is dishonesty—dishonesty—when a child tells a lie. Our children knew that they could get away with some things, but if they were ever disrespectful to their mother, ever disrespectful to their dad, ever defiantly disobedient, or ever were dishonest, at that moment—at that moment—the judgment was sure and swift. Kind? Yes. But stern? Yes.

Conclusion

Well, time has gone. Let me tell you this, folks. If you want your home to win, you'd better go back to what God has said. You'd better take these commandments one at a time, beginning with the commandment that says, "*I am the LORD thy God... Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" (Exodus 20:2–3), and take them one at a time, measure your life by them, and teach them to your children.

The Secret of Satisfaction

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 25, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:17

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Perplexing Problem of Covetousness
 - A. A Deceptive Problem
 - B. A Debasing Problem
 - C. A Destructive Problem
- II. A Proper Perspective
 - A. Do You Have Salvation?
 - B. Do You Have a Family?
 - C. Do You Have Friends?
 - D. Do You Have Wisdom from the Word of God?
 - E. Do You Have the Peace of God?
- III. A Positive Practice
 - A. Trust in the Lord
 - B. Develop a Spirit of Thankfulness
 - C. Learn to Love Other People
 - D. Learn to Give

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and open, would you, please, to Exodus chapter 20. And we look now at verse 17—Exodus chapter 20 and verse 17. And while you're finding it, may I say that Madison Avenue has done a job on the American people. It has given a bad case of the *I wants*, and we can't be satisfied unless it's newer, bigger, better, shinier, or different. We've been told that we can be happy if we can have that different car, that better vacation, that more wonderful house, the more stylish clothes. If we can have this experience and the right credit card to go with it, we have got it made. But the truth of the matter is these things are not bringing happiness. To the contrary, a noted research firm has found out that homes that are having the most arguments are not having arguments over sex, children, or in-laws, but primarily over money, over possessions. And many of these are people who have outwardly many things. You know, it's strange, isn't it, that couples who get married today want to have in three years what it took their parents thirty years to accumulate? And they can get it, temporarily, with the false god of credit. And they remain happily married until debt does them part. And this is

happening all over America. How many truly happy and contented homes and people do you know? Most people are being sucked in a swirling sewer and whirlpool of discontent.

Well, let's see what God's Word has to say about it. Look, if you will, in verse 17: *"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's"* (Exodus 20:17)—*"Thou shalt not covet."* I'm talking today on "The Secret of Satisfaction."

Now, what is this command? I mean, what is it when God says, *"Thou shalt not covet"*? Well, what God is talking about is unlawful. He's not talking about lawful desire, but He's talking about wanting those things to which we have no legitimate right. Now it may involve money or things, but it may deal with other things: influence, power, or fame, appearance, popularity—whatever it is that someone else may have, but you do not have. And you have no legitimate lawful reason to have what they have, and because you don't have it, your happiness is hindered. You see, the spirit of covetousness says, "I must have that thing in order to be happy." You're not satisfied with what you have. You disobey the commandment to be thankful in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:18); and, rather than being humbly grateful, you're grumbly hateful. A great philosopher said this: "To the man to whom little is not enough, nothing is enough." Don't forget that: "To whom little is not enough, nothing is not enough." Covetousness has an appetite that is never satisfied; and so we could just say, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's large salary, his education, his advantages, his good looks, his automobile, his dishwasher," or whatever else it is that makes you envious.

Now this command is not a command against legitimate and lawful desire. When God saves you, He doesn't make you passionless, where you have no passion, where you have no desire. It's not wrong to want a home. It's not wrong to want clothes. It's not wrong to want a family. God has given you a desire for love, for satisfaction, for happiness, for success, for victory. It's not wrong to want these things. It's not wrong to want to acquire things. It's *"the LORD thy God...that giveth thee power to get wealth"* (Deuteronomy 8:18). But we're going to see that covetousness goes beyond that which is legitimate to that which is illegitimate and harmful and hurtful. Now this command is different than all of the other nine that we've looked at, because this command deals not with what we do, but it deals with what we are. It deals with attitude and not action. It deals with desires and not deeds. This is the commandment that rightly sums up all of the others, because it shows that the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart.

I. The Perplexing Problem of Covetousness

Now I want you to think with me first of all about what I'm going to call the perplexing

problem of covetousness.

A. A Deceptive Problem

In the first place, I want to say it's a very deceptive problem—a very deceptive problem. Few, if any, people ever say, "You know, I've got a problem. Pray with me about it. I'm a covetous person." You just don't hear that. The Bible speaks of the "*cloak of covetousness*," in 1 Thessalonians 2, verse 5 (1 Thessalonians 2:5). We have a cloak—that is, we kind of hide in that cloak; and some people with the very best reputations are inwardly covetous.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great, great preacher of London, England—some say the greatest preacher who ever lived, outside the Apostle Paul—said this. He said, "I have seen thousands converted, but I've never seen a covetous man converted." Now he was saying that tongue-in-cheek. What he meant was, "I've never seen anybody who said, 'Oh, thank God, God saved me from covetousness.'" He said, "You know, they say they've been saved from alcohol. They've been saved from adultery. They've been saved from pride and many things, but few people recognize the sin of covetousness."

A great Roman Catholic leader, Francis Xavier—you know, the Catholics take confession, and people confess their sins to the priest—he said, "In my lifetime I've heard thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of confessions. But," he said, "I have yet to hear a person confess the sin of covetousness." It's such a deceptive sin. And many of you may be sitting there saying, "This preacher talking right now may be wondering if any of those old covetous people are going to get the message today."

The Apostle Paul was a splendid man—I mean, outwardly. Paul himself looked like "a perfect ten." He kept the law. He was meticulous. He was a Pharisee. He was a leader. He was educated. He had morals. He had character. He had it all, and Paul gave his testimony in Romans 7. He said, "I was checking myself up." He said, "I had the Ten Commandments out there, and I was going down the list: '*Thou shalt have no other gods before me*'" (Exodus 20:3). He said, "Well, I don't have any other gods." "Thou shalt not make any graven images" (Exodus 20:4). He said, "I don't make graven images." "*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD of thy God in vain*" (Exodus 20:7). He said, "I don't do that." "*Remember the sabbath*" (Exodus 20:8). "Yes, I've done that." "Honor your father" (Exodus 20:12). Boy, he's just checking it off. He said, "I was doing well. I was doing good till," he said, "I got to the commandment that said, '*Thou shalt not covet*'" (Exodus 20:17). And he said, "That one slew me. That one killed me. That was the one that knocked the props out from under me."

I'll give it to you—Romans 7, verse 7: "*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law*"

had said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:7). And then God showed him the things that were in his heart, and he had to say, “Maybe I’ve not committed adultery, but can I say I never wanted to? Can I? I might say I’ve never taken anything that didn’t belong to me, but could I say I never really wanted what belonged to another person?” This was the thing that brought Paul into that deep conviction of sin. It is this commandment that says, “*Thou shalt not covet.*”

You see, we can wear the cloak of self-righteousness. I hear, Brother Bob, about a preacher who was out playing golf one day, and he was with some men who were rather worldly, and they were using some language that golfers sometimes use. But the preacher was very circumspect in his language, though he sometimes made some very bad shots. And one of the men said to the preacher—he said, “You know, I just really admire you. You’re under such control.” He said, “You don’t use language like other men.” He said, “Well, that is true, but,” he said, “I want to confess to you, if you’ll look and see where I spit, the grass never grows again.” Sometimes it’s such a deceptive thing. It comes out of the heart, the sin that’s in the heart. That man may not curse, but he may want to.

B. A Debasing Problem

It’s a deceptive problem, and it’s such a debasing problem. You see, this problem comes out of the heart. I want you to take your Bibles, and look, if you will, in the Gospel of Mark with me for a moment—chapter 7 and verse 21. Here’s something that may amaze you. Listen to it: “*For from within, out of the heart of men...*”—now, notice this—“*out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts,*”—and now, watch this—“*covetousness,*”—do you see the company that covetousness keeps?—“*wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man*” (Mark 7:21–23). Covetousness comes from within; it comes out of the heart. It is a debasing sin. It shows the vileness that’s in our hearts.

Now as we’ve said before, *the heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart*. We’re born with it. We have a *me-first* attitude. We are egocentric by nature. Little children, their first words are often *me, mine*. Their first movements are to their mouth, satisfying the ego.

Remember when you were two? You were in the corner of the room. You were surrounded by about twenty toys. Your mother had a guest. She had a little baby, took one of those toys, sat that little baby in the corner with that other toy. You left your twenty toys, went over there and bopped him on the head, and took that one toy. You didn’t want him to have it. You had all this over here. That’s just human nature. We think it’s cute when it’s in little children; but, I tell you, it is born in the heart of people, and it

drags us down.

Charles Kingsley said this: “If you wish to be miserable, think about yourself: about what you want, about what you like, what respect people ought to pay you; and then, to you, nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch. You will make misery for yourself out of everything good. You will be as wretched as you choose.” Now the attitude that Charles Kingsley just described is covetousness.

I was reading in *The Charlotte Observer*, a newspaper, an article—an interesting article. The title was interesting; the title was “The Time of the Living Dead.” And this article went on to talk about MBA students at Duke University, at the Fuqua School of Business. These MBA students at this very prestigious school were asked to go write their life’s goals: what they wanted to do, what they wanted to achieve. Now these are MBAs, or students working in the business school, and this is what they aspire to. Listen to this. They said, with a few exceptions, they wanted three things: money, power, and things; and very big things, including vacation homes, expensive foreign automobiles, yachts, and even airplanes. They were primarily concerned with their careers and with the growth of their financial portfolios. Their personal gains contained little room for family, intellectual development, spiritual growth, social responsibility, or even effective management. Their mandate to the faculty was, “Teach me how to be a money-making machine. Give me only the facts, tools, and techniques to incur my instantaneous, financial success.”

And then this article—this is a secular article called “The Time of the Living Dead”—and then the article went on to quote the psychologist Eric Franz, and he said one of the most penetrating things that I’ve read in a long time. He said this—and I quote: “If I am what I have, and what I have is lost, then who am I?” “If what I am is what I have, and what I have is lost, then who am I?” That’s why so many people jumped off of buildings in the Great Depression, because what they had was who they were. But it wasn’t really what they had; it had them, and they lost it.

C. A Destructive Problem

You see, it’s so deceptive. It’s so debasing. And it is so destructive. Put this verse in your margin by Exodus 20 verse 17: 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 6 through 10—1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 6 through 10. Listen to it: “*But godliness with contentment is great gain...*”—by the way, I want to say that’s the secret to the sermon title, “The Secret of Satisfaction”—“*godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment*”—that is, food and clothes—“*let us be therewith content.*” Now verse 9—listen to it: “*But they that will be rich...*”—now, it doesn’t say “those who are rich.” Some of the godliest people on this earth are rich. Some of the meanest people you’ll ever meet are

poor. Some poor people are godly, and some rich people are ungodly. But the Bible does not condemn riches. But the Bible condemns making riches your goal. If you do—if you do—you are headed for industrial strength problems—*“they that will be rich...”*—that is, *my desire*. When you make it your goal to be rich, do you know what you’ve done? You’ve just gotten another god. Your goal, your desire, must be what Jesus said, in Matthew 6:33: *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.”* And don’t ever tell young people, “Make all the money you can, just so long as you make it honestly,” because, if you tell him that, he’ll be making money when he ought to be soul-winning. He’ll be making money when he ought to be praying. He’ll be making money when he ought to be sleeping, fishing, or spending time with his ten-year-old son—*“they that will be rich”*—listen to it—*“fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after...”*—underscore that. We’re talking about covetousness—*“For...which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Timothy 6:6–10).

“Pastor, I don’t understand that, when you say the love of money is the root of all evil. There are other kinds of evil.” Yes, but peel it back, and covetousness causes us to break all the other commandments. For example, what are the first two? “Have no other gods” (Exodus 20:3). “Don’t make any graven images” (Exodus 20:4). Well, you read in the Bible, in Colossians 3, verse 5, *“covetousness...is idolatry”* (Colossians 3:5). When gold becomes your god, and greed your creed, you have broken the first two commandments. Then, what does the next one say? It says, “Don’t take God’s name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). How many people have used God and tried to use religion to get ahead, to get the things that they want? And their religion is only a form of self-service and hypocrisy. *“Remember the sabbath...to keep it holy”* (Exodus 20:8). Why is it today that business places are open on the Lord’s Day? Covetousness. “Honor your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12). Why is it that we fail to take care of our aged parents and sometimes just warehouse them or let other people take care of them? Why is that parents don’t become honorable parents and take care of their children as they want? Why are people not even having children today? Covetousness. Many of them—not all of them—many precious people want children and cannot have them.

“Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). I read in the newspaper this week, if the story’s correct, right here in our city some young men saw an automobile with big hub caps on it, wanted those hub caps, killed the owner to get the hub caps. *“Thou shalt not kill.”* What was behind that? Covetousness. *“Thou shalt not steal”* (Exodus 20:15). Well, we take what belongs to other people. We want what they have. Covetousness. *“Thou shalt not bear false witness”* (Exodus 20:16). Why? We’re stealing someone else’s

reputation, or trying, by dishonesty, to get ahead. And we falsify contracts and tell lies that things may come to us. Every one of the commandments is transgressed by this last one, which says, *“Thou shalt not covet”* (Exodus 20:17). Covetousness is an octopus that wraps itself around the soul and cannot be shaken off. Homes are being destroyed by covetousness.

And the worst thing about covetousness is this: It will drag you down to hell. You say, “Pastor, that’s a little strong.” Well then, I want to refer you to the Word of God. Put this one down—Ephesians 5, verse 5: *“For this ye know,”*—you know this—*“that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetousness man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God”* (Ephesians 5:5). “Pastor, read that again.” *“For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”* Folks, folks, listen. Covetousness is not a minor thing. God says it’s a form of idolatry. Well, that’s the problem.

II. A Proper Perspective

Now, how do we get hold of this thing? Well, not only do we see this perplexing problem, but it’s so important that we get a proper perspective. Covetousness is a lack of perspective.

You see, what is the secret of satisfaction and contentment? It is promised and provided in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here’s a great verse—oh, write this one down! Your kids need it. Listen to it. Hebrews 13, verses 3 through 6: *“Let your conversation...”*—the word *conversation* here means your lifestyle—*“Let your [lifestyle] be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me”* (Hebrews 13:5–6). *The only truly contented and satisfied people in this world are people who have let go of this world with both hands and have taken hold of Jesus Christ with both hands.*

Ernest Hemingway, a great, great writer—I have enjoyed reading Hemingway and, at least, familiarizing myself to some little bit with the talents of this man—but he died of suicide. And here’s what he said—this is what the great, vaunted, successful, rich Hemingway said: “Life is just a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness to nothingness. There’s no remedy for anything in life. Man’s destiny in the universe is like a colony of ants on a burning log.” Too bad he didn’t know Jesus. Too bad he did not know the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the answer to everything. You see, you’ve got to get a proper perspective. Hemingway didn’t have it.

And, without Jesus, I can understand why people would be pessimists. I would be a royal, first-class pessimist if I saw the world crumbling down around me, I saw rampant

crime, I saw meaninglessness, and all I could look forward to was a hole in the ground, to die and rot. Why not get it over with? I'm not saying that's the answer, but I can understand why some people may feel that way. Thank God for the Lord Jesus. We have contentment. Listen. He says, *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."* I'm satisfied with Jesus. You just think of how rich you are. If you've been sitting around envying some fat cat, some Hollywood mogul, some wheeler-dealer, let me tell you how rich you are.

A. Do You Have Salvation?

You've got to get a perspective. First of all, are you saved? I'm talking to God's people. Are you saved? Listen to Psalm 73, verses 25 and 26: *"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee. My flesh and heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever"* (Psalm 73:25–26). Friend, if you can say that, you are a multibillionaire: to have God, to be saved, to have a hope that is steadfast and sure.

B. Do You Have a Family?

Do you have a family? Oh, oh, how rich you are! *"Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD"* (Proverbs 18:22). Little *"children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward"* (Psalm 127:3). You've heard me say many times, "Thank God for your children! They're your wealth! They're the heritage that God has given you!" Oh, in this day, when we put little babies to death in the womb, what a tragedy! "Well, they will hold me back from my career." Oh? Children *don't make a rich man poor; they make a poor man rich*. The rich man can't take his children to heaven, or his riches to heaven. I'm taking all my children to heaven.

C. Do You Have Friends?

Think what we have in our Lord: not only salvation and family, but the friends that we have. Think about our brothers and sisters in Christ. These men, when we huddled up here and we were shaking hands just a few moments ago, several of them put their arms around me. One of them hugged me good and said, "I love you"—"I love you." These men: our brothers and sisters in Christ, our friends that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. *"A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity"* (Proverbs 17:17). How rich we are!

D. Do You Have Wisdom from the Word of God?

Do you have a knowledge of the Word of God? Do you have the wisdom that comes from this one book? Proverbs 3, verses 13 and 14: *"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better*

than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold” (Proverbs 3:13–14). You don’t have to have diamonds dripping from your fingers and gold around your neck. If you’ve got God’s Word in your heart, and you have wisdom, you know more than Ernest Hemingway knew. You know more than all the wiseacres in the Pentagon put together—if they don’t know the Lord Jesus Christ. How rich you are to have the wisdom of God!

E. Do You Have the Peace of God?

Do you have the peace of God that passes understanding in your heart, that gives you satisfaction, and you can be satisfied with your needs and not your greed? Can you say with the Apostle Paul, in Philippians 4, verse 11, *“Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”* (Philippians 4:11)?

John Muir—if you ever go to California, out in San Francisco, go to Muir Woods—it’s named after him; where the redwoods are. John Muir was talking to a railroad magnate, an industrialist, a man who was a wheeler-dealer, a man who had millions. John Muir, who lived a simple life, said to that man, “I am richer than you are.” He said, “Oh, yeah? How is that so?” He said, “Because I have everything I want, and you don’t. I have all I want, and you don’t. I am contented, and I have enough.” If you have the peace that passes understanding—listen, folks—you’re rich. You’re rich.

I was witnessing to a man—he was standing in front of his house. I went up to talk to him. He was not a Christian. It was in another city. I asked him to give his heart to Christ. He said, “Ha ha! I’m doing just well.” He said, “I’ve got a steady income.” He said, “You see that house? It’s paid for.” He said, “You see that car? It’s paid for.” He said, “You see me? I’m doing fine.” He said, “I’ve got a wife—she’s a good woman.” He said, “I really don’t need what you’re talking about.” I looked him right in the eye. I said, “Sir, would you be absolutely honest with me?” He said, “Of course.” I said, “No, no, no, no, don’t say it easily.” I said, “Would you be absolutely honest with me?” He sobered his demeanor. He said, “Yes, I will.” I put my eyes right into his eyes, and I asked him this question: “Sir, do you have peace in your heart?” He said, “I own my house.” I said, “No, you said you’d be honest. Do you have peace in your heart?” I saw his chin as it began to quiver. I saw his eyes as they welled up with tears, and he said, “No, I don’t have peace. How did you know?” I said, “Because the Bible says, *‘There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked’*” (Isaiah 57:21).

If you don’t have peace, you’re poor—I don’t care what else you have. If you have the peace of God that passes understanding, if you know that you have a hope that is steadfast and sure, my friend, how rich you are! *“Be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:5).

III. A Positive Practice

Now I want you to learn some steps very quickly. We've talked about a problem. We've talked about a perspective. Let me talk with you, very quickly, about a practice. What must you do? How can you teach your children contentment? What is the secret of satisfaction?

A. Trust in the Lord

Well, number one: Trust in the Lord—trust in the Lord. Get to know Him. A covetous person is a person who has not put his eyes on the Lord. Only God can satisfy the deepest longing of your heart. God has so engineered you, God has made you, where this world will not satisfy the hole in your heart.

B. Develop a Spirit of Thankfulness

Number two: Develop, in your heart, and in your children, a spirit of thankfulness. *“Be thankful unto him, and bless his name”* (Psalm 100:4). Children today, they go to the closet; there's not even enough room in the closet for all of the clothes, and they complain, “I don't have anything to wear.” They're surrounded by toys and gifts and trinkets and video games, and they say, “I'm bored; I want something new; I want something different.” They get their hair fixed. They get the right kind of perfume. They get the right kind of jeans. They get the little insignias. They get all of this, and they say, “I have a poor self-image.”

Teach your children. Go over the little list that I've just given you. Help them to understand just how wealthy they are. Do you know the problem, friend? It is not wanting more. Do you know what the problem is with most of us? It is not that we want more; we want more than somebody else. We can be perfectly satisfied with what we're wearing till we see somebody wearing something different. We can be perfectly satisfied where we live till we go off to visit the *Got-rocks*. And then they have something a little bigger, a little better, a little nicer; and then no longer are we satisfied. It's not that we want more; we want more than they have. Develop the habit of thankfulness.

C. Learn to Love Other People

Learn to love other people. Do you know why you covet what other people have? It's because you don't love them. If you loved them, you would rejoice that they have it. I make it a habit when I go into a home and I see all the finery and the nice things and the automobiles that someone may have, I make it a habit to bow my head and say, “Thank you, God, for blessing these people. I'm glad.”

Listen. I just visited with my children over in Knoxville. I've just come from there this past week after the Southern Baptist Convention. They were showing me around their home, some things they'd done. Do you think I felt bad because they had some pretty

things? Do you think I was envious of it? No. I was saying, “Thank you, God. You’ve been so good to my children.” Why? Because I love them.

When you love somebody else, you don’t covet what they have. You thank God that they have it. And if you’re jealous of somebody else, I can tell you one thing: you do not love that person. Learn to enjoy the grace of God in somebody else’s life.

D. Learn to Give

Last of all—and this is so very important—do you know what the best way to deal with covetousness is? Learn to give—learn to give.

I was listening to John Maxwell, a pastor, and he told about a congressman who he was talking with. This was a congressman from Ohio. This congressman was a believer. This congressman said to him—to this pastor—and I’m repeating it to you—he said, “I want to tell you what God taught me about stewardship.” He said, “I took my son to McDonald’s. My son wanted a large order of McDonald’s French fries; they just called them fries.” He said, “I put the money down on the counter, bought my son those French fries. We were having some father-and-son fellowship. And,” he said, “he sat down and began to eat those French fries. And,” he said, “you know what they smell like, don’t you? You know how good French fries smell. And,” he said, “I just put my hand over there to get about two of those French fries and put them in my mouth.” He said, “My son put his hand on my hand and said, ‘Dad, those are mine.’ And,” he said, “I thought to myself, ‘My son has a bad attitude’—‘My son has a bad attitude.’ And,” he said, “in five seconds, God spoke to me and gave me one of the greatest lessons I’ve ever had. And,” he said, “I thought this: ‘In the first place, my son doesn’t know where those French fries came from. I bought them for him. And he says, “Those are mine.” Secondly, my son doesn’t know this: that I have the power to take them away from him if I want to. And, furthermore, I have the power to get him a whole lot more. I’ve got enough money in my pocket, I could go up there and buy twenty large packs of fries and bury him in French fries if I wanted to. And the third thing he needs to know is that I don’t need those French fries. I could buy my own and eat them by myself. I don’t have to sit here and eat French fries with him.’” He said, “God spoke to me, and He said, ‘That’s the way you are when you’re covetous and selfish. Don’t you understand that everything you have I have given you? Don’t you understand that I could take it from you? Or, don’t you understand that I could give you more? And don’t you understand that I don’t need your French fries?’”

Conclusion

Don’t get the idea that God needs what you have. *“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof”* (1 Corinthians 10:26). God is not broke. You’re the one that has a

problem if this is your attitude: “That’s mine! God, get your hands off my life!” Friend, covetousness will kick your soul to death. Learn to give. Give your heart to God. Give your life to other people, and I’ll tell you, joy unspeakable and full of glory will burst out in your life. God keep us from covetousness!

The Secret of Satisfaction

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 25, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 20:17

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Perplexing Problem of Covetousness
 - A. A Deceptive Problem
 - B. A Debasing Problem
 - C. A Destructive Problem
- II. A Proper Perspective
 - A. You Have God
 - B. You Have a Family
 - C. You Have Friends
 - D. You Have Wisdom
 - E. You Have the Peace of God
- III. A Practice
 - A. Give Your Heart to God
 - B. Develop a Spirit of Thankfulness
 - C. Learn to Love
 - D. Understand Who You Are in the Lord Jesus
 - E. Learn to Give

Conclusion

Introduction

Exodus chapter 20 and verse 17: *“Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s”* (Exodus 20:17). Now Madison Avenue has done a job on Americans, and we all have to admit they have done a good job of giving of us all a bad case of the *I wants*. And we have been told that we cannot be happy unless we have something else that’s newer, bigger, better, brighter, shinier, different than what we already have; and it is their job to create needs in us—perceived needs—so we will go out and buy and buy and buy. We’re told we deserve it and we need to have it our way. And these things, we’re told, are going to make us happy. But the truth of the matter is this desire for more and more is making us unhappy—I mean, literally.

Statisticians and survey people have told us that as they’ve gone out to find out what is bringing about unhappiness—marital unhappiness, and unhappiness in the homes—

they find out it's not primarily sex, nor children, nor in-laws; but things—possessions, the attitude toward money. And it is very obvious what is happening to us. You know, couples who get married today, they expect to have in three years what their parents accumulated in thirty years; and they get it with the false god of credit. Of course, they pay the debt. I'm not talking about paying off the credit. The debt is often divorce—"Till debt do us part"—because they have not learned to live without certain things. They're not content. I want to speak to you today on this subject: "The Secret of Satisfaction: How to Have True, Honest Contentment." How many really, truly contented people and contented homes do you have? We never seem to get enough stuff. One philosopher said something that's very true: "To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough"—"To whom little is not enough, nothing is enough."

Now the Bible says, "Don't covet." Now, what does that mean? To *covet* means, "to have an unlawful desire—an unlawful desire—for that which is not rightfully yours." And covetousness is not limited to money. It could deal with influence, or fame, popularity, power, appearance. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's salary. Don't covet his education. Don't covet his advantages. Don't covet his good looks, his automobile, her dishwasher. Don't covet what belongs to your neighbor.

Now it's not a command against lawful desire. When God saves you, He doesn't neuter you. He doesn't make you a person without passion. It's not wrong to have ambition—godly ambition. It's not wrong to desire things. It's the Lord thy God *"that giveth thee power to get wealth"* (Deuteronomy 8:18). And, *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17). And God knows that you have a God-given desire for love. You want to love and be loved. You have a God-given desire for friendship, and a home, and happiness, and joy, and success, and victory, and peace. These things are not wrong. It is the unlawful desire that we're going to be talking about.

The Bible calls that *covetousness*; and this command is the last command in this chain of ten links. And why is it the last one? Because it sums up all of the others. You see, all of the others deal with action, but this one deals with attitude. All of the others deal with needs, but this one deals with desire. And this is the one that we must have in our hearts. This is the one that deals with the heart, because, until we've dealt with the heart, the rest of the commandments are only rules that we'll find onerous trying to obey.

Three things I want you to notice today, as we look at the secret of satisfaction.

I. The Perplexing Problem of Covetousness

First of all, I want you to see the perplexing problem of covetousness. And what a

problem it is! And do you know why it's such a big problem, folks? I'll tell you.

A. A Deceptive Problem

First of all, it's such a deceitful thing. Very few people realize that they're covetous. As a matter of fact, Charles Haddon Spurgeon said—he was a great preacher of yesteryear—he said, “I've seen thousands of people converted, but I've never seen a covetous person converted.” Now, obviously, covetous people do get converted, but what he meant by that—he was saying that tongue-in-cheek: “I've never seen anybody say, ‘You know, my problem before I got saved was covetousness.’”

Francis Xavier, a great Catholic theologian, who hears confessions—now we Baptists don't hear confessions; we teach that you confess your sins right to God, but Catholic priests hear confessions—and Xavier said, “I have listened to multiplied thousands of confessions. I've yet to have one person ever confess the sin of covetousness.” Isn't that an amazing thing?

You know, the Bible speaks of “*the cloak of covetousness*” (1 Thessalonians 2:5). Covetousness is something that none of us thinks we have. We think that the other person has it. But, you know, really, until we find out where the problem is, we're never going to get a solution. We'll never even really admit our own sinfulness.

The Apostle Paul was as a young Pharisee praised, petted, admired, looked up to. He seemed to have it all. He had birth. He had nobility. He had education. He had status. He had learning. He had respect. He had it all. And, one day, the Apostle Paul was taking a survey of himself. And he had the Ten Commandments out, and he was checking them off: “*Thou shall have no other gods*” (Exodus 20:3). “I don't do that. I just worship Jehovah God.” “*Thou shalt not make any graven images*” (Exodus 20:4). “Why, I certainly wouldn't do that. I'm not an idolater.” And “*Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain*” (Exodus 20:7). “Never!” “*Remember the sabbath day*” (Exodus 20:8). “I always do.” “*Honor thy father and thy mother*” (Exodus 20:12). “Yes! Yes! Yes!” “*Don't steal*” (Exodus 20:15). “*Don't kill*” (Exodus 20:13). “*Don't commit adultery*” (Exodus 20:14). He was doing fine, he said, until he got to the tenth and the last commandment. By the way, you can read about this in Romans 7, verse 7. He said, “*I had not known sin,*” until I got to this one that said, “*Thou shalt not covet*” (Romans 7:7). He said, “That one wiped me out. That one slew me. That one knocked the props out from under me, because, while I might say I have never done these things”—of course, that would be doubtful also, but he couldn't say, “I never wanted to.” Now, what he was saying is the desire, that lust, that desire: “that was in my heart.” He said, “I knew that I knew that I knew I was a sinner before a righteous and a holy God. That's the way I knew sin—by this Tenth Commandment that says, “*Thou shalt not covet*” (Exodus 20:17).

You know, outwardly, you can hold it in pretty good. I heard about a preacher who was golfing with some businessmen. They were a pretty rough bunch, and they were using language that I sometimes heard on the golf course when that little orb doesn't go just right. And the preacher had made some pretty bad shots himself, but he seemed to keep his composure. And one of them said, "You know, preacher, I admire you. You've got it all together. You never say any of those bad words like the rest of us." Preacher said, "Well, let me be very honest with you." He said, "If you'll notice where I spit, the grass never grows again."

Sometimes we can hold it in. I mean, it doesn't come to the surface. Maybe you don't take God's name in vain, but you want to. Maybe you didn't commit adultery, but did you want to? Maybe you didn't steal, but did you want to? Maybe you didn't kill, but did you want to? Did you covet? Did you have an unlawful desire, a desire for something that was not lawful for you to have?

B. A Debasing Problem

You see, it is a very deceiving thing. And, folks, it is a very debasing thing. Nothing shows our depravity more than covetousness. Take your Bibles, for example, and turn, if you will, to Mark chapter 7, and let me give you God's X-ray of your heart—Mark 7, verse 21: "*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,*"—a man is not an adulterer because he commits adultery; he commits adultery because he's an adulterer. A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he's a thief. A man is not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he's a liar. These things come out of the heart—"*thefts,*"—and then, notice this—"*covetousness,*"—verse 22—"*wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within, and defile the man*" (Mark 7:21–23).

Covetousness was born in you. Now, where did you get it? Well, you were born with a nature—a sin nature—that you received from your spiritual father, the devil. Jesus said to the unsaved, "*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do*" (John 8:44). Well, Satan was a covetous person. He coveted the throne of God. That's how he became the devil: wanting what was not his. He said, "I will be like the most High God. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God" (Isaiah 14:13–14). That, in plain language, is covetousness. That's how the devil became the devil. And all of those of us who are born with that sinful nature now, because of the sin of Adam, and the nature that we inherit from our father the devil, we do the lusts, the desires, the covetousness of the devil.

When you were a child, something like this may have happened. You were sitting in the corner of the room, a little two-year-old, and you were surrounded with about fifteen

toys. Your mother had a guest, a neighbor. She brought her little baby over, so the two of you could play, and they could talk and have a cup of tea. And so, there you are, Throckmorton, in this corner, and here's Alfonso, over here. And so she sets little Alfonso down, and Throckmorton is over there, playing with fourteen colors. That's you. And Alfonso, he just has one. But Throckmorton sees that Alfonso has one, so he leaves his fourteen and comes over here and bops him on the head to take that one. Is that not true? That is the way children are.

Well, I hate to tell you this, but little children are selfish. Their first words are *me*, *mine*. Right after *daddy* and *mama* are *me* and *mine*. And their first movements are this way: toward their mouth; and their instinct is to hold on to what they get. That is nature. Now it's kind of humorous when it's a child; but, folks, when he gets to be a grown man, it is not very funny.

Covetousness is a very debasing thing. It's an octopus that wraps itself around your soul. Charles Kingsley said these perceptive words—listen to them. He said, “If you wish to be miserable...”—how many people here want to be miserable? Don't lift your hand—“If you wish to be miserable, think about yourself: about what you want, what you like, what respect people ought to pay you; and then, to you, nothing will be pure. You will spoil everything you touch. You will make misery for yourself out of everything good. You will be as miserable and wretched as you choose: just be self-centered.” But that's the way we are; and that self-centeredness, we call it *covetousness*.

I was reading *The Charlotte Observer*. There's an interesting article in *The Charlotte Observer*, and the title is, “The Time of the Living Dead.” And what happened is this: that a reporter from *The Charlotte Observer* had gone to Duke University's business school, the Fuqua School of Business, and he found out what the MBAs there—those who are studying for a Master's degree in business—what they wanted, what their ambitions were, what their goals were. As a matter of fact, the school had these young students to write out their goals, their ambitions, their aspirations. And with few exceptions, here's what they were: money, power, and things. And they wanted very big things. They wanted things like vacation homes; expensive, fine automobiles; yachts; airplanes. And their primary concern was with their career and the growth of their financial portfolio. Their personal plans contained little room for family, for intellectual development, for spiritual growth, for social responsibility, or even more effective managing. Now this is not a religious article; this is just an article out of *The Charlotte Observer*.

And then after saying some other things, *The Charlotte Observer* quoted a psychologist, Eric Franz: one of the most incisive quotations that I've heard in a long time, and I want you to listen to it. This psychologist, looking at the people who identify themselves with things and who think their life consists of the abundance of the things

they possess, he asks this penetrating question: “If I am what I have, and what I have is lost, then who am I?”— “If I am what I have, and what I have is lost, then who am I?” That’s the reason, in the Great Depression, people were jumping off buildings, because they equated who they were with what they had; and when it was lost, there was nothing left. If you want to see what you really own and who you are, add up everything that you have that money can’t buy and debt can’t take away; then you’ll know where your real wealth is.

C. A Destructive Problem

You see, this covetousness—it’s so deceptive; it is so depraving; and it is so destructive. It will destroy you. Put this verse in your margin by Exodus 20, verse 17: 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 6 through 10. Listen carefully: *“But godliness with contentment is great gain...”*—now that’s what I’m trying to say in this whole message—*“godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.”* Now you didn’t bring it with you; you can’t take it with you. Now, here’s verse 8: *“And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.”* You’ve got something to wear and something to eat: that’s all you need. You say, “What about a house?” Well, Jesus slept out of doors sometimes. Food and clothes are really, basically, all that you have to have. But now, look in verse 9: *“But they that will be rich...”*—underscore the word *will*; the word *will* means that you have determined to be rich. That is your goal. You have set your heart, your mind, on being rich. We’re talking about those students back in the business school. Their desire is to be rich. Now, listen to what God says—*“they that will to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after...”*—there’s our word—*“which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (1 Timothy 6:6–10). The very thing—desire—did not bring them joy, did not bring them happiness, did not bring them peace. It afflicted them with many sorrows.

Now that is absolutely demonstrable today. You could say that the love of money is the mother of all sins. It is the root of all kinds of evil. Never ever, never ever, ever, ever tell your child, “Sweetheart, make all the money you can, just so long as you make it honestly.” That’s often what you hear at graduation exercises: “Make all the money you can; just be sure you make it honestly.” Well, no. If you’re making all the money you can, then you’re making money when you ought to be doing something else. You’re making money when you ought to be sleeping. You ought. You’re making money when you ought to be spending time with your wife and with your ten-year-old boy. You’re making money when you ought to be fishing. You’re making money when you ought to

be soul-winning, praying, attending church, or whatever. But if you have a desire to be rich, then everything else must go. *“No man can serve two masters”* (Matthew 6:24).

Jesus said, *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). Either God is first, or mammon is first. You cannot—you cannot—serve both God and mammon. And when you say, “I will be rich,” you have set up an idol in your heart, and that idol is money. And that causes you to break all the other nine commandments.

For example, the first two deal with no other gods. “I am the LORD thy God. Don’t have any other gods before me. Don’t make any graven images” (Exodus 20:2–4). Well, the Bible calls covetousness idolatry. You’ve broken those two. The Bible says, “Don’t take God’s name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). But how often do people misuse and abuse the name of God, and claim to be Christians, and put God in second place, and therefore take God’s name in vain? *“In vain do they worship me,”* Jesus said (Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7). We break that commandment when we have another god in our heart. *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy”* (Exodus 20:8). But rather than working six days and resting one, we work seven days. Why? Covetousness. Why do people steal? Covetousness. Why do people lie? Covetousness. Why do people commit adultery? They covet somebody else’s wife. They covet.

All of the commandments are broken when we have that spirit of covetousness. And that’s the reason the Bible says, *“The love of money is the root of all evil”* (1 Timothy 6:10). When you have this covetousness down in your heart, when you have this unlawful desire, then your life is bent and broken. As I say, that is an octopus that will wrap itself around your soul and literally drag you down into hell. You say, “Pastor...” All right, listen to this scripture—Ephesians 5, verse 5: *“For this ye know, that no whoremonger,”*—oh, you say, “Thank God I’m not a whoremonger”—*“nor unclean person,”*—there, he’s talking about a pervert. “Well, I’m not that”—*“nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God”* (Ephesians 5:5). God links covetousness with whoremongering, perversion, and idolatry. Don’t think this is a small sin. This is, as I say, the mother of all the rest of them. This is the root of all of the rest of them.

II. A Proper Perspective

Now there is what we call a perplexing problem. It is there. But now, let’s move a little bit. Let’s talk, not about the problem, but a proper perspective. How do we deal with this? Well, we’ve got to back off. We’ve got to back off; we’ve got to get another perspective on this whole thing. We need to understand who we are and what we have.

Let me give you a great, great verse on covetousness. It is found in the Book of Hebrews chapter 13, verses 5 and 6; and it really is dealing with the secret of

satisfaction and the answer to covetousness. Listen to it: *“Let your conversation...”*—and, by the way, the word *conversation* means, “lifestyle,” here—*“Let your [lifestyle] be without covetousness...”*—now that’s just a restatement of the Tenth Commandment—*“Let your [lifestyle] be without covetousness;”*—now, here’s the next thing—*“and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:5). You will always be covetous until you learn contentment, because all of us need satisfaction; and covetousness is just trying to find satisfaction in the wrong place. So, *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have.”*

Well now, that’s a very interesting thing. What do we have? What do we have that ought to content us? Ernest Hemingway, a brilliant writer—now I’ve been entertained by Ernest Hemingway—but he died of suicide. Let me tell what Ernest Hemingway said—and now you would say this man, he had it all. I mean, he was brilliant, witty, praised, adored, lionized, but he died by his own hand. And here’s what he wrote: “Life is just a dirty trick, a short journey from nothingness to nothingness. There is no remedy for anything in life. A man’s destiny in the universe is like a colony of ants on a burning log.” He killed himself. He said, “It doesn’t make sense. It’s a joke, and a bad joke.”

Now, you think about the man who doesn’t know God, and he gets all of the things, and there’s still a hole in his soul. And he says, “They don’t satisfy. I’m getting older. I’m getting sicker. All I can look forward to is a hole in the ground; to rot and decay. There’s no answer. There’s no meaning; from nothing to nothing.” It’s a shame he didn’t know Jesus, isn’t it? It’s a shame he had not found satisfaction and joy and meaning in the Lord Jesus Christ. He didn’t have the perspective that we have.

Now, listen. What does this say? *“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have”* (Hebrews 13:5). Well, what do you have? Think about it. If you’re a child of God, twice-born, blood-bought, in the family of God, what do you have? I’ll tell you what you have.

A. You Have God

First of all, you have God Himself. I mean, you have Him, and He has you. Psalm 73, verses 25 through 26: *“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever”* (Psalm 73:25–26). You’ve got Him! You’ve got Him!

B. You Have a Family

What else do you have? Well, you’ve got family. *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing”* (Proverbs 18:22). You’ve got children. Little *“children are an heritage of the LORD”* (Psalm 127:3)—Psalm 127 and verse 3. If you have children, count your blessings. You say, “Those pesky little ankle-biters?” Yeah. “Those little rug-rats?”

Yeah. “Those little curtain-climbers?” Yeah. Thank God for them. You know, there are people today who don’t want to have children, because they want things. They say, “Well, you know, children, they make a rich man poor.” You’ve got it backward, mister. They make a poor man rich. A rich man can’t take his riches to heaven. I’m taking my children to heaven. Thank God for the children, and they’re the *“heritage of the LORD”* (Psalm 127:3). If you’ve got children, you’re blessed. You say, “Well, I don’t have any children.” But if you can have some, let me suggest that you do. If you can’t have any, may God bless you. Maybe you can adopt some.

You know J. Paul Getty? Have you ever heard the name J. Paul Getty, one of the richest men that ever lived? He had an estate that exceeded four billion dollars. You know, a billion’s not what it used to be. But he had an estate that exceeded four billion dollars. He wrote his autobiography, and it was quoted in the *Los Angeles Times* in 1981, and this is what he said, talking about covetousness: “I’ve never been given to envy except for the envy I feel for those people who have the ability to make a marriage work and endure happily. It is an art that I have never been able to master. My record: five marriages, five divorces—in short, five failures.” Billions of dollars, but he didn’t have a happy home. If you’ve got a happy home, you’re rich. You’re rich. You’re blessed.

C. You Have Friends

If you have friends, you’re blessed. Proverbs 17, verse 17: *“A friend loveth at all times”* (Proverbs 17:17). This morning when we were having the welcome song—we guys get together on the platform and just speak a word—one of them put his arms around me and said, “I love you.” And, you know, he does. It is wonderful to be loved and know it. And I love them. We love one another. We have friends. If you have friends, you are a rich person.

D. You Have Wisdom

If you have wisdom, how rich you are! Proverbs 3, verses 13 and 14: *“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold”* (Proverbs 3:13–14). And I’m going to tell you something, and God is my witness. I would not trade my knowledge of this book for all of the money, the rubies, the diamonds, the gold, and silver that this world has put together. If you think I’m lying, there’s a God in heaven that hears me right now. I know what I’m saying is true—friend, the truth of God’s Word. There are millions who sit in darkness, who would leap for joy to know what you know, to have wisdom. It’s better than silver; it’s better than gold.

Satisfaction: do you have that? Can you say, *“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”* (Philippians 4:11)? Can you say that with the Apostle Paul?

Can you say, “Not only is Jesus necessary; He’s enough; I’m satisfied”?

*Friends all around me are trying to find
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;
I have the secret, I know where 'tis found:
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound.*

...

*Jesus is all this poor world needs today.
Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way.
O to draw back the grim curtains of night,
One glimpse at Jesus and all will be bright!*

—HARRY D. LOES

E. You Have the Peace of God

I am satisfied with Jesus—I am. I am not satisfied with my Christian life, but there is the peace that passes understanding in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was witnessing to a man; he was standing in front of his house. I couldn’t get very far with him. He was very seemingly satisfied. He said, “Mister, I’ve got a good income.” He said, “I don’t owe anybody anything.” He said, “You see that house? I own that house. It’s paid.” He said, “You see that car? I own it. It’s paid for. My wife is in that house. She loves me.” He didn’t say it, but he reminded me of that man in the Book of Revelation who said, “*I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*” (Revelation 3:17).

I said, “Sir, all right. I want to ask you a question. Will you be honest with me?” He said, “Sure.” “No, no,” I said, “No, no, don’t just say it; don’t say it lightly.” I said, “Come up close. I want to ask you, will you be absolutely honest with me?” I knew I had him, because he was a man who prided himself in his honesty. He said, “Yes, I will.” I said, “All right, I’m going to ask you a question, and don’t you tell me anything but the truth. Do you have peace in your heart?” He said, “I told you...” I said, “No, I’m not talking about all that.” I said, “You said you would answer the question. Do you have peace in your heart?” His chin started to quiver. His eyes brimmed with tears. He said, “No, I don’t have peace in my heart. How did you know?” I said, “Because the Bible says, ‘*There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked*’ (Isaiah 57:21). And these things cannot fill the longing of your heart. You need Jesus.”

And, friend, if you have Jesus, you have “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). And if you have that, you are a rich man.

Have you ever heard the name John Muir? If you go to San Francisco sometime, and you go near there, you can visit Muir Woods. He was a naturalist, and these big redwoods and so forth are there as a tribute to his instincts to help preserve these

beautiful trees—Muir Woods. John Muir one time was speaking to a railroad executive, a magnate, a man who had acquired millions and millions of dollars. And Muir said to this—and John Muir, by the way, lived a very simple life—Muir said to this man: “Mr. Harriman, I am richer than you are.” Harriman said to Muir—he said, “Well, how is that?” He says, “Because you have millions, but you’re not contented.” And he said, “I have enough.” Think about it.

You see, to whom little is not enough, nothing is enough. And so what you have to do: look, get a perspective. Understand who you are. *“Let your conversation be without covetousness...for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”* (Hebrews 13:5).

III. A Practice

Now, let me go from a problem, to a perspective, to a practice, and give you very quickly, very quickly, about three or four things that will help you to teach your children how to keep this commandment—things that you need to display in your home if you would have a home that wins.

A. Give Your Heart to God

Number one—we’ve already alluded to it: Give your heart to God. Find your satisfaction in the Lord. Let Him meet the deepest needs of your heart. And turn your eyes upon Him. You see, God engineered you so that this world will not satisfy you. You were made for God, and it’s in Him that we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28). You’ll never deal with covetousness unless you give all you know of you to all you know of Him. Let go of this world with both hands, and take hold of Him with both hands.

B. Develop a Spirit of Thankfulness

Now, here’s the second thing: Develop in your children—and demonstrate it by your life—a spirit of gratefulness and thankfulness. Be thankful and thank God for what you have. Take this list of things that I’ve just mentioned; add to them. Keep a family scrapbook of blessings. Keep baskets of blessings, like we did one day here at our church. And let your children know how blessed you are. Think often, talk often, of your blessings.

Teenage girls with a closet full of clothes will say, “I can’t find anything to wear.” Kids with a Nintendo, and a computer, and a bicycle, and this thing, and a baseball glove, and the latest toys say, “I’m bored.” Women with their hairdresser, the perfume, the jewelry: “I just don’t feel good about myself.” What’s wrong? We have failed to be grateful. We have failed to see what God has given us.

C. Learn to Love

Thirdly, learn to love. If you're a covetous person, you don't love. You might love things, but you don't love people. Nobody can be a covetous person who loves people. When you covet what somebody else has, that means you don't really love them. If you loved them, you would rejoice in what they have. I make it a practice, when I go into a fine home or see somebody that has nice things, whatever it may be, in that home—they don't know I do it—but I make it a practice to bow my head and thank God for His blessings on those people, to rejoice.

I've just visited my children in Knoxville, and they've been doing some remodeling and some decorating. And Janice took me around and said, "Papa, look at this, and look at this." My heart was just so singing with joy. I didn't say, "Well, I'm jealous, because what they have is nice and pretty," or, "I wanted it." I didn't want it. I rejoiced, because I love them so much.

Every person who loves another person rejoices in what that person has. Celebrate God's grace, and celebrate God's goodness to somebody else. Teach your children that somebody else's blessing is not your loss. Do you know the problem that many of us have? It is not wanting more; it is wanting more than somebody else. We have a fine home, and we're so grateful for our home, till we go see somebody else's. We have a fine car, and we're so grateful for it, till we see somebody else's. We have a fine job, and we're so grateful for it, till we see somebody else's. And we want more than they have. Just love them. Thank God that He has blessed them—if He has. Learn to love—learn to love.

D. Understand Who You Are in the Lord Jesus

Next, understand who you are in the Lord Jesus. Teach your children who they are: that they're saints, that they're the righteousness of God in Christ. Teach them to understand, to get their identity, not from Madison Avenue, but from the Word of God, and to celebrate their distinctiveness, and to celebrate their differences.

E. Learn to Give

Last of all—and I don't know of anything that will kill covetousness deader and quicker than this: Learn to give.

A pastor friend was talking to a U.S. congressman, and this congressman said, "Pastor, I'm going to tell you what God taught me about giving." He said, "I took my son to McDonald's. My son wanted a package, a large package, of French fries, McDonald's fries." They've almost cornered the market on those, haven't they? And he said, "I bought him a large pack of fries. We had father-and-son fellowship." So he went to sit down at the table, and he said, "I got to smelling those French fries—you know how those French fries smell. And so," he said, "I just thought I would have two of them. So,"

he said, “I reached over and started to get a couple, and that boy put his hand on my hand and said, ‘Those are mine.’” He said that just went right through him. He said, “I thought, ‘My son has a bad attitude.’”

And then he said, “In a moment, in less time than it takes to tell it, God had spoken to my heart, and God had given me one of the greatest lessons about stewardship I have ever learned.” Here was the lesson. He said, “I thought three things about my son. Number one: He’d evidently forgotten where those French fries came from; I’m the one that bought them. Number two: He doesn’t understand I have the power to take them all from him; or if I wanted to, I could go buy twenty more packs. I’ve got the money in my billfold; I could buy twenty more big fries and bury him in French fries if I wanted to. And,” he said, “thirdly, if I wanted more fries for myself, I’ve got the money to go up and buy them, and sit at another table, and eat them all by myself, if I wanted to. My son has an attitude problem. It’s a bad one. And God said to me, ‘And that’s exactly the attitude you have sometimes, sir. You need to remember where these blessings have come from. I’m the One who gave you these things. And you need to understand, secondly, that I have the power to take them from you or to give you more. And you need to understand, thirdly, I don’t need your French fries. I don’t have to have what you have. I can have my own.’”

Friend, God doesn’t need us. We need Him, don’t we? And how sweet it is to have fellowship with Him, when we say, “Lord, of your own have we given unto you”! And nothing will dynamite the covetousness out of our hearts more than learning to give to God and to give to others.

Conclusion

Teach your children to give, and show them how—and you’ll have a home that wins.

The Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 25

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Ark Speaks of Jesus, Our Deliverance
- II. The Ten Commandments Speak of Jesus, the Word of God
- III. The Budded Rod Speaks of the Jesus, the Giver of Life
- IV. The Golden Pot of Manna Speaks of Jesus, the Bread of Heaven

Conclusion

Introduction

Amen. That's a great song and a tremendous message. "Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up Lord." Now, if you'd like the Lord to fill your cup and you really want to have a blessing, you can have a blessing. I don't know how much of God you have but I'll tell you this much right now, you have all you want. If you don't have any more of the Lord it's because you don't want any more. You know, so often we pray prayers like this song, "Lord, please fill me. Oh Lord, fill my cup. I lift it up Lord," and nothing seems to happen. And so we beg and we plead, sometimes we may get prostrate on the floor, even beat our heads on the floor, against the wall, and cry, and say, "Oh God, do something for me." And we sometimes act as though we are the heroes and that God is a tyrant. That we want to be filled and that somehow we just can't talk God into it.

Now friend, that's wrong, that's wrong. God wants to bless you. God has commanded that you be filled with the Spirit and you have all of God you want. If you don't have any more of the Lord it's because you don't want any more. Now you may say that you do, but God knows your heart and the Bible says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled." A deep hunger brings a deep satisfaction; a shallow thirst, a shallow satisfaction. So many Christians are living beneath their privilege. They could have so much that they don't have and it's not God's fault, it's your fault. It's not our duty to persuade God to fill us but only to permit Him to do so.

But here's the whole thing, even God cannot fill that which is already full. Before He can fill your cup you're going to have to empty it. And the empty cup God will fill; when

you come empty of self. The only person that the Lord turns away unfilled is the person who comes stuffed full of himself. Not a very pretty package. Some people are beside themselves other people are inside themselves, all wrapped up in themselves and they're so full of self, there's no room for Jesus. But if you're willing, if you're willing to lay self aside, deny self as the Lord Jesus said, then He'll fill your cup.

And you know, my wife fixes dinner for my children and when she fixes dinner she doesn't say, "Now children dinner's ready. If you'll get down on the floor and beg and scream and plead and cry, Mama might let you eat it." She doesn't do that. She says, "Come on children dinner's ready." They sit down and eat. And so it is in the gospel banquet, "Come all things are now ready." We don't say, "Oh please dear God won't you do this?" Whenever you're ready God's ready. Now there may have to be some screaming and some crying and some pleading and some tears but not in order to get God ready, only to get you ready. God is ready. God has commanded in Ephesians 5:18 that you be filled with the Spirit. And then He says in 1 John if we ask Him anything according to His will, He heareth us. Isn't that wonderful? God's command and God's promise, be filled, this is His will. And then if we ask Him anything according to His will, He heareth us.

So many Christians are living beneath their privileges. You know, being filled with the Spirit is not a second blessing. Some people want to know, "Well Brother Rogers, have you had the second blessing?" Friend I've had the one-millionth one. I am blessed over and over and over again but being filled with the Spirit is not a second blessing, it's understanding the first blessing. Now there are a lot of people who don't really understand what they have when they get saved. When you receive Jesus you received everything, everything. But a man may have money in his pocket and refuse to spend it. He may have the books in his library that he has not read. Many of us have not yet possessed our possessions. When the Israelites left Egypt, God had already given them the Promised Land. He didn't say, "I will give it to you." He said, "I have given it to you. It's already yours." All they needed to do was to go in and possess their possessions.

Well that has something to do with our study tonight. But this song, "Fill my cup Lord, I lift it up Lord," is such a wonderful thing and this ought to be the desire of every person's heart that not only should our cups be filled but they ought to be overflowing. We ought to be able to say with the psalmist, "My cup runneth over," and just blessings flowing to everybody, everywhere. You don't have to be a great Christian to be used of the Lord. I mean great in the sense not many mighty, not many noble are called, you don't have to be brilliant or have a tremendous personality. I could fill a swimming pool with a thimble if it just kept overflowing. And you just take anybody who's just an ordinary person who has within him a river of life that just flows and flows and flows continually his cup is filled and not only is it filled, it's overflowing and blessing those

roundabout.

Now, would you look please in Exodus 25 and we're going to think for just a few moments about the holiest of all, the Holy of Holies and the Ark of the Covenant. If you're here as a visitor, a guest, and you've not been with us in our studies, where studying through the tabernacle and we're now speaking about the seven pieces of furniture in the tabernacle. The tabernacle pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, the tabernacle pictures the way of salvation. It also pictures the believer; body, soul, and spirit. I'm reading Exodus 25 starting in verse 10: "And they shall make an ark of shittim wood: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof"—that is three and three-quarter feet—"and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof,"—or two and a quarter feet wide—"and a cubit and a half the height thereof." This Ark was three and three-quarters by two and a quarter by two and a quarter. It's not a very big thing only about so big was the Ark of the Covenant. Now the Ark was in a room called the Holy of Holies, or the holiest of all or the inner sanctum, that was a perfect cube, fifteen feet this way, fifteen feet this way, and fifteen feet this way.

"And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. And thou shalt make staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee. And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof.

And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee,"—and here's the key—"and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel."

I. The Ark Speaks of Jesus, Our Deliverance

Now this Ark, and an ark speaks of safety, you remember the baby Moses was delivered by a little ark of bulrushes and Noah was delivered by a tremendous ark. And ark speaks of safety and security and here again the ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus

Christ, our deliverance, our safety, our security. This Ark is a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ because of its construction. It was made of wood and gold. The wood speaks of the humanity of Christ; the gold speaks of the deity of Christ. And what a wonderful time to put an emphasis on the humanity and deity of Christ because this is what Christmas is all about, that God was manifest in the flesh.

Let me show you a wonderful verse of Scripture, if you look in 1 Timothy 3:16 for just a moment. You know one of the great doctrines of the Bible is that God was manifest in the flesh. This is what Christmas is all about and the Bible says in 1 Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." Now don't you ever let anybody tell you that Jesus Christ was not God. One of the marks of most false cults is that they deny the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. They deny this. And when somebody comes to your door and they have literature and they talk about their religious leader and so forth, a good question to ask these people is this, "What think ye of Christ?" Now if they're wrong about Christ, it really doesn't matter what they're right about. If you take Christ out you've got nothing left. That's like taking the keys out of a piano or water out of a well, the blue out of the sky, there's nothing left when you take Jesus out and you take the deity of the Lord Jesus out.

Now there are lots of people who'd like to deify man and humanize the Lord Jesus Christ but great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh. Now the Bible says, "If any come to your house and bring not the doctrine of Christ, receive him not into your house neither bid him god speed lest thou also become a partaker of his evil deeds." Now if somebody comes to your house and you say, "What think ye of Christ? Is He co-equal, co-eternal with God the Father? Is He God in the flesh?" And they say, "No," don't you say, "Well come on into my house and we'll have some Bible studies and you can use my house for your headquarters. I'll show you how broad-minded I am." You know, you can be so broad-minded you'll mind will get thin in the middle. Now you don't do this, neither do you just give him a cheery smile and pat him on the back and say, "Well God bless you, brother. You go to heaven your way and I'll go to heaven my way." Friend there is but one way. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me," and this Christ is the virgin-born Son of God.

Jesus was born miraculously. People can't understand this. A college student wrote me a letter the other day and he said, "Pastor, at college they're putting some hard questions to me concerning the virgin birth of Jesus Christ. And I believe in the virgin birth but I wish you'd give me a little ammunition." Now friend listen, there are those who attack the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ but God's Word says in Isaiah 7:14, "Behold a virgin shall conceive and be with child." A virgin, the Lord Jesus Christ was

born of a virgin. As I said, He came into this world through the portals of a virgin's womb; Mary who never knew a man. Someone says, "I don't understand this. How can this be?" Well friend if you don't understand it it's because you don't have the spiritual comprehension. 1 Timothy 3:16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." He was as much God as though He were not man at all. And as much man as though He were not God at all. He was not half God and half man. Not a schizophrenic. He was not all God and no man, nor was He all man and no God. He was a God-Man, hyphenated, the God-Man—never another like Him. The wood speaks of His humanity, the gold speaks of His deity. He was born as other babies were born and yet He was born of a virgin, Mary His mother, God Almighty His Father.

Now this is basic and I hope that you'll see this in the ark. As a matter of fact, the whole Christmas story is not just the cradle nor is it the cradle and the cross but the whole Christmas story is the cradle, the cross, and the crown, the whole thing. The Angels said to Mary, "You're going to have a baby," that's the cradle. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sin," that's the cross. And, "Of the increase of his kingdom shall be no end and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever," there's the crown. The cradle, the cross, the crown, all of these go together. And you see all of these in the Ark of the Covenant. The wood, it speaks of His humanity, there we see the cradle. The gold speaks of His deity, there we see the crown. But on this apparatus of gold and wood, there was sprinkled blood and there we see His cross. And there in the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat we see the complete story of Christmas: the cradle, the cross, and the crown.

Now, we mentioned something about the blood being sprinkled on the mercy seat last Wednesday night. I'd like for you, if you would please, to turn to Hebrews, the tenth chapter, for just a moment. You can't really understand the New Testament without understanding the Old, nor can you understand the Old without understanding the New. But now we're reading Hebrews 10, verse 19, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh." When Jesus was crucified, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The way into the Holy of Holies was now accessible. What does this represent? It teaches that when Christ died on the cross His blood made a way for us to have full and free access to God.

Now what does this mean in the New Testament sense? This didn't happen until Jesus died; does this mean the people were not saved until Jesus died? No, people were saved in the Old Testament. Abraham was justified by faith. He was saved. Moses was saved. These Old Testament saints were saved. How were they saved if Jesus Christ had not yet died? Well, the blood of bulls and goats was not sufficient to take

away sin but it covered sin until Jesus died and it typified, and it was a promise, of the offering that would be made. How are we saved? We're saved by looking back to the death of Christ. How were they saved? They were saved by looking forward to the death of Christ. So people in the Old Testament were saved, people in New Testament times are saved. All of them saved one way.

People in the Old Testament were not saved by keeping the laws as some people erroneously think. God has never had but one plan of salvation and that's been grace through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's the only way it'll ever be. That's the only way it'll be in the millennium, in the tribulation, or any other time. Anytime anybody, the Jew, Gentile, bond or free, man or woman, boy or girl, comes to God it will be through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. There is no other way, no other way, never has been. Some were looking forward and others were looking back.

Well, what is the difference then? Why was the veil of the temple rent for New Testament Christians? What does this mean? In the Old Testament they had the sacrifices there at the altar and the people could come and go into the holy place but they couldn't come into the holiest of all. But in New Testament times a way was made into the holiest of all. I believe that this is not speaking of salvation. Salvation was way back yonder at the brazen altar when we had our sins forgiven. It's not even really speaking of sanctification or cleansing, daily forgiveness. But this way into this holiest of all speaks of the full, free communion that a New Testament saint can have.

You remember we said the key verse, God said, "There will I commune with you." Now friend, in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit of God came upon men and anointed men for service but in the New Testament the Holy Spirit of God dwells within. He lives in us. Our bodies become the temple of God's blessed Holy Spirit. This was not true in Old Testament times. It is true in New Testament times. I am the Temple of God; you're the temple of God. This building is not the temple, these bricks, these stones, they're not holy, you're the temple of God. Anything, my dear friend, that would disgrace this building would disgrace your body.

Now, some people wouldn't think of smoking a cigarette in here but they could hardly wait to get outside to light one up because they say, "Well, I wouldn't smoke in the church house." Friend, you're the temple of God. It's your body that's holy, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." And what does this mean? What does it symbolize for us that we can now enter right into this throne room? Well, it just simply means that Jesus Christ is no longer beside me. Is that bad? No, that's good. Jesus Christ is no longer beside me, He's inside me. There's all the difference in the world. He's inside me. He's a part of me and I'm a part of Him. Hallelujah!

Somebody told a little boy one time, said, "What if you lose your salvation?" He said, "I can't lose it." They said, "Why not?" He said, "Well Jesus holds me in His hand." "Ha," the man said, "What if you slip through His fingers?" He said, "I'm not worried about that, I'm one of the fingers."

II. The Ten Commandments Speak of Jesus, the Word of God

Oh, we are part of His body, and He's a part of us. We're in Him and He's in us and I think this is what all of this pictures so beautifully to me. You see the Ark is a wonderful picture of what the Lord Jesus Christ does for us. Inside was the law of God, the testimony, the Ten Commandments. Man had broken them but in the heart of this Ark, which pictures Jesus, was the law. Jesus had God's law in His heart.

III. The Budded Rod Speaks of the Jesus, the Giver of Life

Now also in this Ark was Aaron's rod. You remember there was a discussion, an argument, about who was going to be the priest and some folks said, "Why should Aaron be the priest?" And God said, "Well, I'll show you who will be the priest." He said, "All of you go get you some rods, some dry sticks, and lay them out," and they all did. And God caused one of the dry sticks to bud. It was an almond branch and it was dead, no life in it, but God caused miraculous life and the Bible says that it had buds and leaves and even more almonds. It was a miraculous thing. Out of death came life. And in this Ark, in this chest, was put Aaron's rod that budded. What does it speak of, if the Ten Commandments speak of the perfectness of the Lord Jesus Christ who had God's law in His heart and always did the things that pleased the Father? This rod that budded speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, the giver of life to all men. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life."

IV. The Golden Pot of Manna Speaks of Jesus, the Bread of Heaven

Then also in this Ark or in this chest was a pot, a golden pot, of manna and the manna representing the bread of heaven. Look in John 6, verse 51, Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." And so this is what the manna spoke of, the flesh, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ that He gives for the life of the world. And so here's a wonderful picture, a wonderful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this Ark represented a throne. As a matter of fact, if you read in Exodus 25:11, it even had a golden crown around it. There was a crown there. It represents the sovereignty of God. It's the throne of mercy and the throne of grace. On top of it was a mercy seat of beaten gold which speaks of the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ and

two cherubim which were guardians of God's holiness and their faces are toward each other and their eyes are fixed on a certain spot and the eyes of the cherubim are both fixed on the spot where the blood was sprinkled.

Now the Bible says in the book of Romans, if you'd look in the book of Romans for just a moment in 3 verse 24, and we'll be finished, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a"—what is that word—"propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Now read it again. Jesus Christ whom God has set forth to be a propitiation. Now what does the word *propitiation* mean? *Alastaireon*, which simply means, "God has set him forth to be a mercy seat." The word is literally translated "mercy seat." Jesus Christ is the mercy seat. Jesus Christ is the Ark. We are not forcing any of these things, they're all right there in the Word of God.

Conclusion

Well, is your cup empty tonight? Have you been to the brazen altar? Maybe even been into the holy place and yet you never really truly entered into the holiest of all. Most Christians, listen now, most Christians, and it breaks my heart to say it, are carnal Christians. They have been into the holy place, they've been to the brazen altar, they even have the light of God's Word and feed on the Bread of Heaven, but they have never really exercised their privilege to come inside the veil into the holiest of all, have you? Do you know Jesus Christ in such an intimate way, do you? Don't nod your head if you don't. You're cheating yourself out of a tremendous blessing

Now let me explain something to you and then I'll quit. But when you were saved, you were body and soul. You had physical life and you had psychological life, but spiritually you were dead. Your spirit was dead, spiritually dead. Physically alive, psychologically alive, but man is body, soul, and spirit. Now when man sinned in the Garden of Eden, his spirit died. It's with man's spirit that he knows God. Spiritually man was dead. But if you look at him outwardly you couldn't tell the difference. He has memory, personality, intellect, physical strength, saved man, the lost man, put them side by side they look alike, sometimes talk alike but one man has spiritual life and the other doesn't.

All right now, when you received the Lord Jesus Christ God gave you back spiritual life. When Jesus moved in, the life moved in. In Him was life and that life was the life of men. When the life came in, the light came in. Now you can see things that you couldn't see. In Christ is life and in that life is a light. All right, you got saved, you were now physically alive, psychologically alive, and spiritually alive; three kinds of life. But now here's what's happened, before you were saved your soul took over. Your spirit is dead.

And your spirit's down in the basement trampled on. Your soul is in the second story. Really the spirit's supposed to be the top story, the observation tower, but there was a moral earthquake and your spirit fell down to the basement. And now here's your soul giving orders to your body. So your mind, your soul, your being, your personality says to your body, "Go here. Do this for me. Do this for me. I want you to sleep some. I want to do this and so forth." And the soul drives the body like a machine. And the soul has been used to having its way and the soul has gotten fat and sassy and very, very strong and stubborn.

Now, when a man gets saved and the Spirit comes there's a new life and this spiritual life wants to take over. And there's a war and the Spirit says, "Do this," and the soul says, "No, I don't want to do that. I've had my way long enough. I don't want to take orders from you. I want to give the orders." And there's a war that goes on. The Bible says, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh." You know what I'm talking about? Sure you do. There's a civil war going on and this little ol' Spirit that's just a fledgling, a newborn thing, and hardly any muscles to flex, has to come up against this great big ol' bully the soul that's been having its way and doing what it wants to do for so long and driving this body around and making this body do what it wants it to do.

Now that's where most Christians are. They have spiritual life but that spiritual life gets whipped every now and then and it's back over here in the corner sort of covered and pushed down. And the Bible calls these men "carnal men" or "soulish men." The word carnal actually can be translated soulish. The thing that has the ascendancy in most people is the soul or the ego. Do most people really remind you more of themselves than they do the Lord Jesus Christ? I mean are they just full of self and you see self rather than Jesus? It's because the Spirit is pushed down and the big ol' strong soul is just having its way, a heyday.

Now when a person is filled with the Spirit there's a flip-flop that takes place. The soul, the self, becomes crucified and the Spirit takes over. And the Spirit again has ascendancy. Now that's what happens when you go past the veil into the Holy of Holies. Now you can only do this because Jesus died. Because Jesus died you reckon yourself to be dead with him. You can't crucify yourself. You can't put up one hand—you could nail that up on the cross but who would nail this one up? You can't crucify yourself, you have to be crucified. Well it was done when Jesus died for you. You just reckon it to be done. Just as you reckon that your sins were forgiven by faith in His blood, you also believe that your self, the old man, the ego, is also dead. Believe it and it'll be so. Try it. The only way to enter into the Holy of Holies is by faith in what Jesus did on the cross. May not make sense to you now but one of these days you'll see. It's going to be a great blessing to you. Now let's bow our heads in prayer.

Study of the Tabernacle #1

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 14, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 25:1–9

Outline

Introduction

- A. The Dimensions of the Tabernacle
- I. The Tabernacle Is a Description of Deity
- II. The Tabernacle Is a Blueprint of the Believer
 - A. The Outer Court Represents the Body
 - B. The Inner Court Represents the Soul
 - C. The Innermost Court Represents the Spirit
- III. The Tabernacle Is a Shadow of Salvation
 - A. The Brazen Altar Speaks of Christ, Our Sacrifice
 - B. The Laver Speaks of Christ, Our Sanctification
 - C. The Table of Showbread Speaks of Christ, Our Sustenance
 - D. The Candlestick Speaks of Christ, Our Sight
 - E. The Altar of Incense Speaks of Christ, Our Supplication
 - F. The Holy of Holies Speaks of Christ, Our Satisfaction

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn, please, to Exodus 25. That was an unusual song we just heard. Is that by Andrae Crouch? Is that right? That's new. Have any of you heard that before? Well, I'm just nowhere. I don't get the Grand Ole Opry till Monday, so I don't know. But, anyway, that's a blessed song. It's about Jesus, and it's well done; and I thank God for it.

All right, turn to Exodus chapter 25, if you will, please, and we'll read the first nine verses. And, tonight, we want to just give in the broadest spectrum an overview of our study; and then we'll come back in detail. Exodus 25, verses 1 through 9: *"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering which ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, oil for the light, spices of anointing oil, and for sweet incense, onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate.*

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it” (Exodus 25:1–9). Now that’s a key verse. God says, “Stick to the plans. I’m going to show you precisely how I want you to make this sanctuary.”

All right, the tabernacle was a sanctuary for the Jews as they were in the wilderness, as one man has said, “camping with God.” And the pattern was very, very important. Notice Exodus 25 and verse 40, if you will, for a moment: “*And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount*” (Exodus 25:40). God reiterates; God says it over and over again. And you’ll notice that in the Bible God repeats things when He wants to emphasize them. And God says, “Make it according to the pattern,” because, you see, there is a spiritual lesson.

Notice in Hebrews chapter 8, verses 1 through 2. Because we’re going to be going back and forth, you might as well put a bookmark in Hebrews and one in Exodus; not necessarily tonight, but all through this study. At least learn where Hebrews is. Hebrews chapter 8 and verses 1 through 2: “*Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum:*”—in other words, “this is what it’s all about”—“*We have such a high priest, who is set at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;*”—now the high priest in the Old Testament just was a prophecy of our high priest, Jesus—“*a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man*” (Hebrews 8:1–2). You understand that all of these things, therefore, that are happening in the Old Testament are but shadows, types, prophecies, pictures, predictions, illustrations, amplifications, and things that point to great spiritual truth in the New Testament.

A. The Dimensions of the Tabernacle

Now these things will come out later, and so I will not scripturally reference everything that I’m about to say; but let me give you something of the dimensions of the tabernacle. I want you to more or less get it in your mind.

The tabernacle had an outer court 75 feet by 150 feet in size. Now, children, that’s just about the size of a lot that an average house is built upon. Maybe a house lot would be a little bigger than that. But if you’re trying to get the idea in your mind, about 75 feet by 150 feet. And it had a fence around it, and the fence was seven and a half feet high. I’m six feet tall. So that means the fence was eighteen inches taller than I. And then it had a gate—one gate—and the gate was toward the east. So you just think of the gate behind me. That’s east, isn’t it? I used to remember east because the ocean was east; and now I have to remember west because the river is west. If I don’t remember something like that, I get mixed up. And so this is east, back this way.

Now in this outer court there was a gate—and I say the gate was very wide. It was

thirty feet wide: to represent that the way to God, under the proper circumstances, is wide open. And in this outer court there were two pieces of furniture. There was a brass—or brazen—altar, and there was a laver, or a great basin, that people washed in. They call it a *laver*, because *to lave* means, “to bathe.” And that’s why we call the thing we wash our hands in a *lavatory*, or a “laver-tory.” It’s a place that you bathe. And so there was the altar and the laver.

And then, next, you come to a tent-like structure—and this is the inner court. The tent was fifteen feet wide, fifteen feet high, and forty-five feet long, so you can imagine that in your mind. And this was divided into two sections: the front court, or the inner court. The front room was fifteen feet wide, fifteen feet high, and thirty feet long. That is, it was twice as long as it was high or wide—and that was called the *inner court*. And in that inner court there were three pieces of furniture. On the north—let’s see, which way is north? Is that north? Okay—okay. Okay, on the north there was a table. And on the south there was a lamp, or a lampstand—a menorah. And in the rear, and right in the center, was another altar—and this was the altar of incense. Now, remember, this is in the inner court.

And then, right behind that is another tent room that was fifteen feet by fifteen feet by fifteen feet. That is, it is perfectly square; it is a cube. And in there were two pieces of furniture: a piece of furniture known as the Ark of the Covenant. Now, kids, when we call it the Ark of the Covenant, that means it was a piece of furniture, not a boat.

Major Ian Thomas was eating supper with me one time in my home. How many of you know who Major Thomas is? Okay, wonderful. We’re going to have him here some day, the Lord willing, to preach to us. You get his book on *The Saving Life of Christ*. It is one of the greatest books on the deeper life and the victorious life, I think, that’s ever been written: *The Saving Life of Christ*, by Major Ian Thomas. And we were somehow talking about the Israelites carrying this Ark of the Covenant through the wilderness, and I said, “Major Thomas, I believe the Bible, but,” I said, “it’s awfully hard for me to believe that those Hebrews carried that great big boat all the way through the wilderness.” And he just smiled and he said, “My boy, you need to study a little more *ark-eology*. This ark is a piece of furniture, and not a boat, called the Ark of the Covenant.”

And then, also, there was a piece of furniture known as the Mercy Seat. Now we’ll explain what those mean later on, but we’re just trying to get you to get the parameters set in your mind so you can get some sort of a visual, mental image of this building.

All right now, may I say that there are three basic truths that we’ll be studying as we study the tabernacle. First of all, the tabernacle is a description of Deity—it is a description of Deity. Secondly, the tabernacle is a blueprint of the believers. And, thirdly, the tabernacle is a shadow of salvation: a description of Deity, a blueprint of the believer, and a shadow of salvation. The tabernacle describes Jesus; the tabernacle

also describes man; and the tabernacle also tells us how we can come to God.

I. The Tabernacle Is a Description of Deity

All right now, first of all, the tabernacle is a shadow of Jesus. You know, the Bible says, in John chapter 1 and verse 14, speaking of Jesus, *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us”* (John 1:14). But that word literally is, “The Word was made flesh, and *tabernacled* among us.” That’s exactly what that word is translated: “The Word was made flesh, and it *tabernacled* among us.” So Jesus was a tabernacle in which the Shekinah glory of God dwelt. And every detail of the tabernacle speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we’re going to show you this later on.

But let me say this: that had you seen that tabernacle from the outside, you would not have said, “My, how beautiful!” When you saw the Old Testament temple that stood there on the temple mountain like a mountain of snow itself overlaid with gold, you would have said, “How beautiful!” But when you saw the tabernacle, you didn’t say, “How beautiful!” It was as plain and drab as it could possibly be. There was just a plain white fence, seven and a half feet tall all the way around it. And then it was covered with badger skin: drab, dull, ugly badger skin. And had you seen it, you would have said, “That’s not very pretty.” But when you came inside the tabernacle and saw that tabernacle lighted by that seven-pronged candlestick, you would have taken a deep breath and said, “It’s beautiful!”—“It’s beautiful!”—all kinds of woven work and gold and shimmering beauty and purple and scarlet and blue and white colors and needlework. And you would have said, “This is one of the most beautiful sights I’ve ever seen!” But, outwardly, it wouldn’t have been beautiful at all.

You see, that tells me something about Jesus. There are a lot of people who are not impressed with Jesus. You know why? They’re seeing Jesus from the wrong side. The Bible says, in Isaiah chapter 53, *“When we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him”* (Isaiah 53:2)—that is, when you look at Him through the natural eye. And people say, “Well, the peasant from Galilee...” But oh, to those of us who’ve come in the door and seen Jesus from the inside, our eyes see the King—and it’s beautiful!

You see, it all depends. Some of you don’t understand what some of us know about Jesus, and you wonder why we get so excited about Jesus. And I’ll tell you why you don’t get excited about Jesus: because you don’t know Him like we know Him. You say, “Braggart.” The only way I know Him is God showed Him to me by His mercy and His grace. But I tell you, I never would have known Him through the natural eye. *“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know him, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). And I pray for you in this study, if you’re not saved, if you’re not born again, that the time will come when you will enter in through that door, and you’ll see the tabernacle from the inside and not from the

outside. The only way to see it from the inside is to come in through the door. And, incidentally, Jesus is not only the inside; He's also the door. All of it is about Jesus. He said, *"I am the door"* (John 10:9). So you've got to come in through Him.

II. The Tabernacle Is a Blueprint of the Believer

Now the second thing I want you to notice about the tabernacle: Not only will it be a description of Deity; it is a blueprint of the believer. Now, remember that the tabernacle had three rooms: the outer court, the inner court, and the innermost court. And these really picture the triune nature of man. You see, man is a house of three rooms. The Bible says, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23, *"And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Now we've said this before; I'll say it again: With your body you have physical life; with your soul you have psychological life. The Greek word for *soul* is *psuche*; it's the word we get *psychology*, *psychiatry*, *psychic* from. And then, with your spirit you have spiritual life: *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). And everybody is to have three kinds of life: physical life, psychological life, and spiritual life. And this is pictured by the tabernacle.

A. The Outer Court Represents the Body

What does that outer court represent? It represents the body. You see, you're looking at my outer court right now; you see the outer man. And who remembers what two pieces of furniture were in the outer court? What was there? All right, you see, in the outer court there was the altar—the brazen altar. And what happened at the brazen altar? The sacrifices were made. You see, the body is the place of sacrifice. That's where the sacrifice is made. Romans 12, verse 1, says, *"I beseech you therefore, brethren...that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice"* (Romans 12:1).

B. The Inner Court Represents the Soul

And then they came into the inner court. And the inner court, representing the soul, was the place of worship and fellowship. And, you see, that represents the inner man. You can't see my inner man, but my inner man is talking to you; and he's being vocalized through the old house that I live in. But I have an inner man; and I can share my inner man with you, and you can share your inner man with me. And so we're just sharing. Our souls are communicating: the soul, the mind, the emotion, and the will. And my soul is touching your soul. And so the believers communicated with one another in that inner court.

C. The Innermost Court Represents the Spirit

But then there was that innermost court. That was called *the Holy of Holies*; it was called *the inner sanctum*. Remember that back room—fifteen feet by fifteen feet by fifteen feet, a perfect cube? That corresponds to the Holy of Holies in man, which is his spirit, you see. And God's Shekinah glory dwelt in that back room, in that Holy of Holies. And where does God dwell in me? In my Holy of Holies. And what is my Holy of Holies? My spirit. God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am a child of God (Romans 8:16). And so the Holy of Holies was the place of deepest, individual, personal communion. And we'll see more of this, and will be making some applications later.

Now we're not trying to make any applications; we're just trying to give an overview right now. The tabernacle is a description of Deity: "*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*" (John 1:14). The tabernacle is also a blueprint of the believer. Look in John chapter 14 and verse 17 for a moment: "*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he [tabernacles] with you, and shall be in you*" (John 14:17). You see, you are a tabernacle.

III. The Tabernacle Is a Shadow of Salvation

All right now, the third thing that the tabernacle pictures: It is a shadow of salvation. Now I want you to think about the furniture with me for a moment. We'll just take the idea of the furniture and just give you an illustration, though we could give it in many ways. I want you to notice the furniture as it was set up.

If you came in the door—*here's* the door; we'll just let the baptistry represent the door—and right there at the door would be the altar—the brazen altar. And if you came right past the altar, you'd come to what? You'd come to the laver. And then, as you walk right past the laver, you would come to a table of showbread; that is, there would be a table on the north, and that table would have bread on it—loaves of bread. It would be right over *here*. And then if you turned to your left and you looked right over *here*, there would be a candlestick glowing and burning. And it would be made of gold, and it would have seven prongs in it: actually, one main stem representing God, and six branches representing man, because six is the number of man; one is the number of God; seven, the number of perfection. We'll get into that later on. But over *here* is this candlestick. And then if you went past just a little further, you would see an altar of incense; and there would be smoke going up—sweet-smelling, perfumed smoke burning all the time, just going up out of this. And then, as you would go a little further, you would come right on into the Holy of Holies, and there would be two more pieces of furniture. There would be the Ark of the Covenant, and the Mercy Seat.

Now the interesting thing is this: that, if you look at those pieces of furniture, they make a cross. Starting at the foot of the cross, you just come right on through. The table

on one side, the candlestick on the other, and back to the altar of incense, and so forth, they form a cross. I don't think that's by chance, or by accident; though some may. But I do feel quite strongly that the order and the sequence of these pieces of furniture is very logical, and yet very spiritual.

Now I want you to notice how each of them speak of Christ and of our salvation at the same time.

A. The Brazen Altar Speaks of Christ, Our Sacrifice

For example, the altar—the brazen altar—speaks of Christ, our sacrifice, because it was there that the blood was shed, right? The animal had his blood shed; the animal was offered there on the brazen altar. And the brazen altar speaks of Christ, our sacrifice.

B. The Laver Speaks of Christ, Our Sanctification

And then, what was the next thing you would do after you pass the blood? Then you came next to a laver, and you washed in the laver. There was water in the laver, and you washed. And what does that speak of? That speaks of Christ, our sanctification. See? Christ, our sacrifice; and then Christ, our sanctification, because the Bible says once we are forgiven by Jesus' blood, there is the cleansing by the washing of water of the word (Ephesians 5:26).

C. The Table of Showbread Speaks of Christ, Our Sustenance

All right, and then next, over *here* at my right-hand side is a table, because there was showbread in there, and the worshipers were to taste of that bread. What does that represent? Notice, first of all, Christ, my sacrifice; then, Christ, my sanctification; and now, Christ, my sustenance. I feed on Jesus. You see, not only does He forgive me, not only does He cleanse me; He sustains me. I must feed on Him. He is the bread of life (John 6:48). And that bread over there, that showbread, as it was called—and we'll tell you why later—but that represents the Lord Jesus Christ. So He's Christ, my sustenance.

D. The Candlestick Speaks of Christ, Our Sight

And then *here* on the left-hand side is a light, and it's shining. There was no other illumination in that room except this candlestick. And what did it represent? Christ, our sight—Christ, our sight—because, you see, He is the light of the world (John 8:12). And not only is He my substance, and sustenance, but He is my sight. It is in Christ that I can see. And *“Except a man be born again,”*—that is, except he come this way—*“he cannot see...”*—don't you understand that?—*“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3).

E. The Altar of Incense Speaks of Christ, Our Supplication

All right, and then right past that is an altar of incense, and the incense is sending up sweet, perfumed smoke. Now, what does that represent? Symbolically, it stands for prayer. You see, the sweet odors are called, in the Book of Revelation, “*the prayers of the saints*” (Revelation 5:8). And the Lord is teaching that, just as that smoke ascended up and into the nostrils of God, our prayers, like a sweet-smelling savor—not *Savior*, but *savor*—are ascending to God continuously, continually. And what does that represent? Christ, our supplication, because, you see, it is through Christ that we pray in the name of Christ, and Christ is also praying for us. For, “*He ever liveth to make intercession for [us]*” (Hebrews 7:25). And so that altar of incense speaks of Christ, my supplication: the One to whom I pray, and the One through whom I pray. All right, so Christ, our supplication. And it is through Him that we pray.

F. The Holy of Holies Speaks of Christ, Our Satisfaction

And then we’ll come right on into the Holy of Holies. And let me just, without going into detail, say this is the most intimate relationship, and it represents Christ, our satisfaction, our all in all—Christ, our satisfaction. When you come the way of the cross—when you start with the blood, and come past the laver, and feed on the bread, and walk in the light, and pray in the Spirit—then you will know something of the communion in that inner cube. Christ, our satisfaction.

Now you say, “Brother Rogers, do you think that’s what it means?” Let me show you something. Take the Gospel of John for a moment. We won’t be much longer. By the way, is it six after seven? Is that right? I’ve got more time than I thought. Okay, I want you to notice something here. I want you to notice the Gospel of John, and I want you to think of those seven pieces of furniture again.

Turn to the Gospel of John chapter 1 and verse 29: “*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). That is Christ, our sacrifice, amen? The Lamb of God—the sacrificial lamb. “*Behold the Lamb of God*” (John 1:29). There He is: Christ, our sacrifice.

Then I want you to notice, in John chapter 3 and verse 5, “*Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5)—water. What was in the laver? Water. This is not talking about baptism now: don’t mistake it. It’s talking about being born again by the washing of water by regeneration—the washing of the Word of God. Christ, our sacrifice. Christ, our what? Sanctification. See? Christ, our sanctification—right there!

Now, let’s just continue to go right through the Gospel of John, and I want you to look, if you will, in John chapter 6. What was the next thing? Christ, our sustenance. All right, look in John chapter 6, verse 35: “*And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of*

life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). Wonderful!

Now, let’s continue right on through this Gospel of John and come to John chapter 9 and verse 6—here’s the story of the healing of the blind man: *“When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloan, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing”* (John 9:6–7). And then Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (John 12:46). Notice verse 39: *“Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and they which see might be made blind”* (John 9:39). You see, Jesus is our sight; Jesus is our golden candlestick.

And then, let us go right on through the Gospel of John, if you will. And as we continue to turn the pages, we come to John chapter 14—and I want you to notice verse 13: *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it”* (John 14:13–14). Christ, our supplication. You see, He is our altar of incense. And when you come to the Lord to pray, friend, don’t come to God and offer God the brass of your emotions. Don’t wait till you feel juicy before you pray. Come with both hands full of the incense of His dear name, and offer that to God. Christ—Christ—is our altar of incense. Christ is our supplication. “If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.”

All right, let’s go right on through the Gospel of John here, and notice in John chapter 17, verse 20—we’re getting right down to the very heart of the thing now—*“Neither pray I for these alone...”*—here’s Christ now at the Mercy Seat, offering His own worth on our behalf, praying through the atoning blood—*“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:”*—listen to it. Now here we are in the Holy of Holies; here we are—*“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and...”*—watch it. This is one of the greatest statements in all of the Bible. Listen to it—*“and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me”* (John 17:20–23).

Have you ever thought how much God loves you? He loves you, if this verse means what it says, as much as He loves His dear Son, the Lord Jesus. We’re in the Holy of Holies now—we are in the Holy of Holies. Christ, our satisfaction. We are in Christ; Christ is in us. Christ is in God; God is in Christ. And together, at the Mercy Seat, we worship in the sweetest and highest communion that man could ever know. And all of these truths we’re going to see later on one at a time. But isn’t it beautiful?

Conclusion

Do you think it just happened by chance: that we walk through the tabernacle and walk through the Gospel of John the same way? Do you think that these events just came by chance, beginning with the altar, and going on to the water, and going on to the bread, and going on to the sight, and going on to the prayer, and going on into the Holy of Holies? Friend, no man could have written a book like this apart from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Study of the Tabernacle #2

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 21, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 30:11–15; 26:1, 7, 14–30

Outline

Introduction

- I. Overview of the Previous Week's Sermon on the Tabernacle
 - A. The Tabernacle Consisted Largely of Three Areas
 1. The Outer Court
 2. The Inner Court
 3. The Innermost Court
 - B. The Structure Illustrates Three Primary Truths
 1. It Is a Description of Deity
 2. It Is a Blueprint of the Believer
 3. It Is a Shadow of Salvation
 - C. The Furnishing of the Tabernacle
 1. The Brazen Altar Speaks of Christ, Our Sacrifice
 2. The Laver Speaks of Christ, Our Sanctification
 3. The Table of Showbread Speaks of Christ, Our Sustenance
 4. The Candlestick Speaks of Christ, Our Sight
 5. The Altar of Incense Speaks of Christ, Our Supplication
 6. The Holy of Holies Speaks of Christ, Our Satisfaction
- II. The Major Structure of the Tabernacle
 - A. The Silver Foundation of the Tabernacle
 1. The Source of the Silver: A Required Tax
 2. The Symbolism of the Silver: Atonement and Redemption
 3. The Significance of the Silver: Its Preciousness Ties It with the Blood of Jesus
 - B. The Boards That Are Built upon That Foundation
 1. The Cutting of the Boards
 2. The Covering of the Boards
 3. The Configuration of the Boards
 4. The Connection of the Boards
 - C. The Covering
 1. The Symbolism of the Colors and Their Correlation to the Four Gospels
 - a. White: The Sinlessness of the Savior
 - b. Blue: The Son-ship of the Savior
 - c. Purple: The Sovereignty of the Savior
 - d. Scarlet: The Sacrifice of the Savior

2. The Cherubim Speak of the Holiness of God
3. The Curtains
 - a. The Linen Curtain Represents Christ, Our Security
 - b. The Goats' Hair Curtain Represents Christ, Our Sin-Bearer
 - c. The Rams' Skins Curtain Represents Christ, Our Substitute
 - d. The Badgers' Skins Curtain Represents Christ, the Suffering Servant

Conclusion

Introduction

I. Overview of the Previous Week's Sermon on the Tabernacle

A. The Tabernacle Consisted Largely of Three Areas

Now we told you that it consisted roughly of three areas:

1. The Outer Court

First of all, an outer court that was 75 feet by 150 feet in dimension.

2. The Inner Court

Then, there was an inner court that was fifteen feet wide, fifteen feet high, and forty-five feet long.

3. The Innermost Court

And then, as a part of that inner court—the back part: a perfect cube, fifteen feet by fifteen feet by fifteen feet.

B. The Structure Illustrates Three Primary Truths

The outer court, the inner court, and then the innermost court, which was called the *inner sanctum*, or *the Holy of Holies*: this structure has many, many truths, but three primary truths.

1. It Is a Description of Deity

First of all, it is a description of Deity. The tabernacle speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. It prophesies Jesus. It tells us—in figure, and type, and illustration—what Christ would be like, and what Christ would do. The Bible says, in the Book of John, that, “*The Word*”—Jesus—“*was made flesh, and [tabernacled] among us*” (John 1:14). That’s literally what the word *dwelt* means: “He *tabernacled* among us.” In another place, Jesus described Himself as a temple, which was but a glorified tabernacle. He said, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (John 2:19).

2. It Is a Blueprint of the Believer

But not only was the tabernacle a description of Deity; it was also a blueprint of the believer. Not only does it describe Jesus; it describes me; it describes you. It was a house of three rooms: an outer court that corresponds to our body; an inner court that corresponds to our soul; and an innermost court—the Holy of Holies—that corresponds

to our spirit, for we are body, soul, and spirit. First Thessalonians chapter 5: “*I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). I’m tempted to slow down there, but this is all by way of introduction.

3. It Is a Shadow of Salvation

So let me go on and say that, not only is it a description of Deity, and a blueprint of the believer, but it is also a shadow of salvation. In the tabernacle, we see God teaching how people are to be saved. And so it is prophetic of the salvation that the Lord Jesus offered.

C. The Furnishing of the Tabernacle

There was furniture in the tabernacle.

1. The Brazen Altar Speaks of Christ, Our Sacrifice

And the first piece of furnishing in the tabernacle was a brazen altar, as you came in the door of the outer court. And that brazen altar, where the blood sacrifice was made, speaks of Christ, our sacrifice.

2. The Laver Speaks of Christ, Our Sanctification

Right beyond that was a basin filled with water, that they washed in, called the *laver*. And the laver, speaking of the cleansing of the Word of God, also speaks of Christ, our sanctification; because after He becomes our sacrifice, He becomes our sanctification.

3. The Table of Showbread Speaks of Christ, Our Sustenance

And then, as you go on, the next thing you would come to would be a table, and this table would have bread upon it—actual bread, loaves of bread, called *showbread*, or *shewbread*. And this bread was there for a reason, because it spoke of Christ, our sustenance; because we feed upon the Lord Jesus, who is the bread of life (John 6:48).

4. The Candlestick Speaks of Christ, Our Sight

And then, right across the room, on the other side, was a candlestick with seven arms: one central arm and six side arms. And that candlestick that was burning with oil, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, speaks of Christ, our sight. You see, Christ is our sacrifice; Christ is our sanctification; Christ is our sustenance; Christ is our sight.

5. The Altar of Incense Speaks of Christ, Our Supplication

And then, right behind that there was an altar that burned with sweet-smelling perfume called *incense* that burned continually. And that incense went up to God the Father. And that reminds us and tells us of Christ, our supplication; for it is through Him that we pray, and He prays for us continually. “*He ever liveth to make intercession for [us]*” (Hebrews 7:25). So He is Christ, our supplication.

6. The Holy of Holies Speaks of Christ, Our Satisfaction

And then, you proceed into that innermost room, where the glory of God dwelt. And there was the Ark of the Covenant, and the Mercy Seat, and that was the place of the sweetest, purest, rarest communion, where the very Shekinah glory of God dwelt. And that spoke of Christ, our satisfaction.

Now that's just a very, very brief overview of what we did last week, but just to bring the newcomers up to date.

II. The Major Structure of the Tabernacle

Now we're going back and looking at the tabernacle with a little more detail, and we'll be doing this right on. Tonight, I want us to look at that major structure, the tent-like structure, that was inside the outer curtains, or the wall around. There was a curtained wall all the way around—75 feet by 150 feet. And then, inside of that was a tent-like structure.

A. The Silver Foundation of the Tabernacle

And I want us to look now in Exodus chapter 26 and verse 19—Exodus chapter 26 and verse 19. I want you to notice now the foundation of the tabernacle building itself—the foundation itself—the silver foundation, or the base of the tabernacle. Exodus chapter 26 and verse 19: *“And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another board for his two tenons”* (Exodus 26:19).

All right. And then turn, if you will, please, for a moment, to Exodus chapter 38 and verse 25—by the way, you won't get a whole lot out of this study if you don't bring your Bible and use it; you won't get as much—Exodus chapter 38 and verse 25: *“And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation was an hundred talents, and a thousand seven hundred and threescore and fifteen shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary: a bekah for every man, that is, half a shekel, after the shekel of the sanctuary, for every one that went to be numbered, from twenty years old and upward, for six hundred thousand and three thousand and five hundred and fifty men. And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the vail; an hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket”* (Exodus 38:25–27).

All right now, let me just tell you what we're talking about. We're talking about the foundation of the tent-like structure. And you're going to find out that the foundation of this entire building called the *tabernacle* was made of solid silver. It is made—the entire building is resting on 100 blocks of solid silver, and each block of silver weighed approximately 100 pounds. There was more than five tons of silver that made the

foundation for this tent. Can you imagine lugging five tons of silver through the desert? They did. Every time they moved, they said, “Heigh-ho, silver! Here we go!” And they just picked it up, and away they went, because they had to carry this silver. Incidentally, you talk about an expensive building: this building, overlaid with gold and with the cutting work and the silver, was probably the most expensive building for its size ever built. A conservative estimate is over two million dollars for a little room—fifteen feet by fifteen feet by forty-five feet—over two million dollars of pre-inflation money. It was a very, very expensive building.

Now here’s over five tons of silver—100 silver blocks—and they were the foundation. And as you think about it, a foundation of five tons of silver is an awful lot for a tent, because it’s just made out of boards and other coverings: a tent-like structure. Of course, the boards were overlaid with gold, but you didn’t need this kind of a foundation—not for the weight. But God is teaching a very special lesson, and we’ll see that in a moment.

Now we’re talking about the silver foundation, and there are three things I want you to notice about the silver foundation: first of all, the source of the silver; secondly, the symbolism of the silver; and, therefore, the significance of the silver.

1. The Source of the Silver: A Required Tax

Now, what was the source of the silver? When you understand where this silver came from, then you will understand something of the symbolism and the significance of it.

Now, what was the source of the silver? Well, look in Exodus chapter 30, verse 11, and you’ll see it. Exodus 30 and verse 11—okay: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel...”*—that is, when you count up the six-point record system—*“When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul”*—underscore it: *“a ransom for his soul”*—*“unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them.”* Incidentally, David did not do this one time. He numbered the people without taking this offering, and 70,000 of them died in the plague. Read it in the Scripture. God was very clear about what He said. He said, “Now, when you go to count the soldiers, and you’re going “one, two, three, four, five, six,” every one that you count, you take a ransom tax from him: some blood money, a ransom for his soul. And then He goes on to say, in verse 13, *“This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:)”*—you knew that, didn’t you?—*“an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they*

give an offering unto the LORD,”—now, watch this word—*“to make an atonement for your souls”* (Exodus 30:11–15). The word *ransom*—the word *atonement*—is very important.

Now, where did they get this money? It was a tax that was levied. It was not an optional thing. You know, the remarkable thing is this: that the tabernacle was built of offerings that came from the free will. They were what we would call a *love offering*, a *free will offering*. The people just said, “Here, take my wealth; take my substance; take whatever I have, and use it to build the tabernacle.” They gave willingly of a free heart. But they didn’t have a choice in this offering. This is not a free will offering; it’s the only thing in the tabernacle that was not a free will offering. The silver that was used for the foundation was a required offering. And if it was not made, there was no ransom; there was no atonement; the plague was upon them; and there was sudden death, as failure to make this offering. That was the source of the offering: an imposed, a required, tax.

2. The Symbolism of the Silver: Atonement and Redemption

All right. Therefore, you’ll understand the symbolism of the silver. The symbolism of the silver is in verse 15: it makes atonement for your souls (Exodus 30:15). It symbolizes the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. The Bible says we are not redeemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Jesus, making a contrast. And that’s what Peter is doing in 1 Peter chapter 1, verses 18 and 19: he is making a contrast between the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the silver that symbolized that blood (1 Peter 1:18–19). Just as we’re not redeemed with the blood of bulls and goats, but the blood of bulls and goats symbolized the blood of Jesus that did redeem, we’re not redeemed with silver and gold, but the silver and the gold symbolizes the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood that does redeem. And so what is the symbol of the silver foundation? The symbol of the silver foundation is atonement and redemption. Verse 15—Exodus 30, verse 15: it is a symbol of atonement and a symbol of redemption.

3. The Significance of the Silver: Its Preciousness Ties It with the Blood of Jesus

Now, what, therefore, is the significance of it all? It means, dear friend, that the entire tabernacle building rested upon the foundation of redemption; the entire building was built upon the foundation of atonement. You see, the foundation of the would-be tabernacle building rested on the desert floor. That is, it rested upon the sand. You know what Jesus said about a man who builds upon the sand? “He’s foolish” (Matthew 7:26). But, you see, a lot of religion in America today is just that: it is built upon the sand, because it is not built upon atonement; it is not built upon redemption. Much religion in America today has no foundation, because it leaves out the blood of Jesus Christ. That’s what I’m saying: it is a bloodless religion. They are building their house of

worship on the sand and not on the Savior. *“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11). And this is the reason this silver, a very precious metal, symbolizes the blood of Jesus, which is exceedingly precious. The Bible says, *“Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]”* (Hebrews 9:22).

And some fail to understand just what the blood of Jesus Christ stands for. Do you know why Peter called it the precious blood? Let me show you something that many people have never understood. Look in Acts chapter 20 and verse 28—Paul is saying that we are to take care of the church of God, *“which he hath purchased with his own blood”* (Acts 20:28)—with His blood. Whose blood was spilled on the cross? Or, let me choose another word. Whose blood was poured out on the cross? Because *spilled* sounds like an accident. Whose blood was shed on the cross? Whose blood was given on the cross? Friend, it was the blood of God—*“the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood”*—His blood.

You see, the bloodline is given by the father; the blood type is determined by the father, not by the mother. And there’s not one drop of that mother’s blood that flows through that baby’s body when that baby is carried in its mother’s womb. Now if Jesus Christ was sired by the Holy Spirit, God was His Father. The bloodline was determined by the Father. And the blood that was given as a ransom on Calvary was precious blood, for it was the blood of God. That’s what the Bible says—the blood of God: *“the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”* And that’s the reason that Peter calls it *the precious blood*.

*My faith is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.*

—EDWARD MOTE

And the tabernacle was built upon silver. And silver was atonement money, ransom money, and it speaks of the silver of His own precious blood.

B. The Boards That Are Built upon That Foundation

All right now, the next thing I want you to notice: not only the silver foundation, but I want you to notice now the boards that are built upon that foundation.

Go back to Exodus chapter 26 again—Exodus chapter 26, beginning in verse 15: *“And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of shittim wood”—or, “acacia wood,”* as some translations have it—*“standing up. Ten cubits shall be the length of a board, and a cubit and a half shall be the breadth of one board. Two tenons shall there be in one board, set in order one against another: thus shalt thou make for all the boards of the tabernacle. And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle, twenty boards on the south side southward. And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons, and two sockets under another*

board for his two tenons. And for the second side of the tabernacle on the north side there shall be twenty boards: and their forty sockets of silver; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. And for the sides of the tabernacle westward thou shalt make six boards. And two boards shalt thou make for the corners of the tabernacle in the two sides. And they shall be coupled together beneath, and they shall be coupled together above the head of it unto one ring: thus shall it be for them both; they shall be for the two corners. And they shall be eight boards, and their sockets of silver, sixteen sockets; two sockets under one board, and two sockets under another board. And thou shalt make bars of [acacia] wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the side of the tabernacle, for the two sides westward. And the middle bar in the midst of the boards shall reach from end to end. And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold, and make their rings of gold for places for the bars: and thou shalt overlay the bars with gold. And thou shalt rear up the tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which was shewn thee in the mount” (Exodus 26:15–30).

Now after the board, after the foundation—the five-ton silver foundation—is laid, which speaks of atonement; now that the foundation is laid, the structure begins to rise. And there are several things I want you to notice about these boards.

1. The Cutting of the Boards

The first thing I want you to notice is the cutting of the boards—the cutting of the boards—in verse 15: *“Thou shalt make boards”* (Exodus 26:15). How do you make boards? Well, you cut down trees. And what does a tree symbolize in the Bible? It symbolizes humanity—humanity. A righteous man, the Bible says, in Psalm 1, is *“like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season”* (Psalm 1:3). The Bible, speaking of the humanity of Jesus, said, “He shall grow up like a root out of a dry ground” (Isaiah 53:2), speaking of the humanity and the earthly origin of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the righteous are called a *palm tree* in the Bible (Psalm 92:12), and so forth.

And so, what does this mean? Well, here, I think, the Lord is symbolizing the humanity that will rest upon that silver foundation. You see, we were all once trees growing in a barren wilderness. And then, the axe of God’s truth—that sharp axe—was laid to the root of the tree; and it was severed, and laid low, and reshaped. And this is a picture of what must happen to every man. Before he can be built into the house of God, he must be cut off from that old way and that old life; he must be brought low by the axe of truth.

2. The Covering of the Boards

There is the cutting of the boards. But then there was the covering of the boards. Notice in verse 29: *“And thou shalt overlay the boards with gold”* (Exodus 26:29). Now

the wood speaks of humanity, but the gold speaks of glory and Deity. And so here is wood overlaid with gold. And what does it speak of? It speaks of those of us who have rested upon the finished work of Calvary. And we receive the golden covering that God gives us.

You see, the Lord Jesus Christ is also pictured by these boards. He took the wood of our humanity that we might take the gold of His glory. He clothes us with His golden righteousness when we stand upon the silver of His redemption. And that's what it's talking about. It's talking about the new nature, the nature from above, that we receive when we're cut off from the old life, and when we rest upon His blood atonement, the foundation of the whole business.

3. The Configuration of the Boards

Now there is the covering of the boards; but I want you to notice the placing, or the configuration, of the boards. Notice in verse 19: *“And thou shalt make forty sockets of silver under the twenty boards; two sockets under one board for his two tenons”* (Exodus 26:19). Now, kids, if you'll just say, “two feet,” that's exactly what it means: two feet. Each board had two feet, and these two feet rested upon a silver foundation.

Now they were cut down, but now they're not cut down anymore; they're not laid low anymore. Now they are standing. Notice verse 15: *“And thou shalt make boards for the tabernacle of [acacia] wood standing up”* (Exodus 26:15). Cut down at first, but now standing. And what are they standing upon? They're no longer standing upon the desert floor, no longer rooted in the earth; but now they are standing upon a silver foundation covered with gold, representing the stand that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And notice there are two tenons, or two feet; and those feet are placed upon that silver foundation, for, you see, when you get saved, you can't keep one foot on the desert floor and the other foot on God's salvation. Both feet are to be placed safely, firmly, upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You can't have one foot on the sand and the other foot on the silver. Now all of the boards were of equal height, showing that, when we are rested upon the Lord Jesus Christ, we are all equal in Him.

4. The Connection of the Boards

But not only do I want you to notice the cutting, the covering, and the configuration of the boards; I'd like for you to notice the connection of the boards. Notice in verse 26: *“And thou shalt make bars of [acacia] wood; five for the boards of the one side of the tabernacle, and five bars for the boards of the other side of the tabernacle”* (Exodus 26:26–27). That is, these boards are all standing up straight and tall all around there on the foundation.

But now there are some bars that go this way—horizontal bars that are fastened to the perpendicular boards. And that's to keep them all standing up straight, side by side, because, you see, the boards represent believers who have been born again, cut off

from the old life, resting upon redemption, covered with the gold of God's glory, representing the new nature that we receive in Christ. You see, the Bible doesn't teach a Lone Ranger Christianity. And all of these boards were standing on redemption: the same height, shoulder to shoulder, because they had an equal foundation. And there are five unifying bars that go along the side of every board to hold them all together, to hold them all straight, and to tie them together.

Now, what do those five bars represent? I believe I know. I may be wrong, but you see if it doesn't seem right to you. Look in Ephesians chapter 2 for a moment. Five bars that hold the boards that represent the redeemed together. All right, in verse 21, God speaks of a building, and He says, *"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit"* (Ephesians 2:21–22). That is, all of us are to be fitly framed together, just like those boards—all of us fitting together, all of us standing side by side. And when we're all together—"all," as the Bible says, *"fitly framed"*—then we make a habitation for God.

That's what the tabernacle was. It was a dwelling place for God. That's what the church is to be: a place where God dwells. *"Ye are the temple of the living God"* (2 Corinthians 6:16). Now I believe that's what this Old Testament tabernacle pictured, exactly what Paul is talking to the Ephesians about: these boards standing side by side, all of them of equal height, because we're all one in the Lord Jesus.

All right, but what do the five bars stand for? Well, just keep in mind what Paul has already said to the Ephesians in chapter 2, and then turn to chapter 4 and verse 11: *"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying"*—that means, "the building"—*"of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:"*—and there's the reason—watch it—in verse 14—*"that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine"* (Ephesians 4:11–14).

Now, what would have happened to this tabernacle when a desert storm came up, if these crossbars had not been there? It would have flown down, and these boards would have gone sailing away. But God gave five bars to strengthen the boards. And I believe they are God's chosen ministries to the church. He mentions them here, in Ephesians, beginning in chapter 4, verse 11: apostles—one; prophets—two; evangelists—three; pastors—four; and teachers—five. And God has given these leaders to the church, these God-called servants and gifted men, that they might be a unifying force.

You see, the Bible doesn't teach a Lone Ranger Christianity. There are some people who say, "Jesus, yes; church, no." But, friend, let me tell you something. When you

know the Jesus of the Bible, and when you're standing upon the silver of His redemption, and when you're covered with the gold of His glory, you're also going to be united in fellowship under authority. And God has given five bars to hold His Church together that we be not blown about by every wind of doctrine. This tabernacle building is not to blow down. But you take away the five bars, and it will scatter.

C. The Covering

All right, we won't elaborate, but we'll just go on to elucidate. Let's go on to something else. We have talked about the foundation. We have talked about the boards that make up the sidewalls. Now, let's talk about the covering—and we'll go as far as we can. Go back to Exodus chapter 26 again. And all of this is really just getting us ready for the good part that's to come. But you've kind of got to close in on this thing. There are so many truths and so many symbols that you kind of have to get it in your mind, and then we'll be able to really start making some applications later on in our study.

But, so far, you've seen the foundation: five tons of silver. Now you've seen the boards standing upright, covered with gold, and banded together by five bars that run through golden rings. And now all of this is overlaid with the tent-like structure itself. Now, look in Exodus chapter 26 and verse 1: *“Moreover thou shalt make the tabernacle with ten curtains of fine twined line, and blue, and purple, and scarlet: with cherubim of skillful work shalt thou make them”* (Exodus 26:1). Now this was on the inside. This pictured Christ in all of His beauty.

1. The Symbolism of the Colors and Their Correlation to the Four Gospels

And the colors—we might as well talk a little bit about the symbolism of these colors. Remember we said from the outside the tabernacle was a hideous-looking building; it wasn't beautiful at all. But when you went inside, you would go, “Oh, I've never seen anything quite as beautiful.” Illuminated by the seven-pronged golden candlestick, you would see this beautiful needlework in these exquisite colors.

a. White: The Sinlessness of the Savior

First of all, there was the color of linen, which is white. And linen stands for purity in the Bible, and it stands for holiness. And, you know, the robes of the saints, in the Book of Revelation, are of linen, which stands for the righteousness of the saints (Revelation 19:8, 14). But this is picturing the Lord Jesus Christ, and it speaks of Christ in His sinlessness, all right?

b. Blue: The Son-ship of the Savior

But notice again, he mentions blue. Now, what is blue? When you think of blue, you think of the day that we had today. And we looked up at the sky. Didn't you enjoy that bright blue day today? Well, you see, blue speaks of heaven. And so, not only is Jesus sinless, but He is the Son of God from heaven. He came down from heaven. And this

speaks of His heavenly Son-ship.

c. Purple: The Sovereignty of the Savior

And then, purple is the next color. Purple is the color that sovereigns wore in that day, and it's the royal color; and it speaks of the kingliness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Or if we're going to illiterate it, you let white stand for sinlessness, blue stand for Son-ship, and purple stand for sovereignty.

d. Scarlet: The Sacrifice of the Savior

And then, next, is scarlet—and scarlet is the earth color. The word *Adam* comes from a word that means, “red earth.” And, actually, the earth in the Holy Land, as some of you will see who'll be going with us this summer, will be reddish in color—most of it. But it speaks—scarlet, the color red—speaks not only of humanity, earthliness, but it speaks, primarily, therefore, of blood and blood sacrifice. And so the scarlet speaks of the sacrifice of the Savior.

The sinlessness of the Savior: the white; the Son-ship of the Savior: the blue; the sovereignty of the Savior: the purple; the sacrifice of the Savior: the scarlet.

Now it's interesting to note that we have four Gospels. And did you know that each of those four Gospels has a different color? For example, Matthew pictured Jesus as the King of the Jews: Matthew is the purple gospel. Mark pictures Jesus as the suffering servant: and so, therefore, Mark is the scarlet gospel. Luke pictures Jesus as the virgin-born Son of God: therefore, Mark is the white gospel. John pictures Jesus as the Lord from heaven; therefore, John is the blue gospel. And you're going to see that all of these symbolisms just fit together so beautifully, and you'll find that God, in dozens of ways, has given us portraits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The Cherubim Speak of the Holiness of God

And then, worked onto this covering were cherubim, which are angelic creatures. And you know that the cherubim speak of the holiness of God. If you read Isaiah 6, you'll find these are they who are crying out, “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts*” (Isaiah 6:3). And they have their outstretched wings, and they're covering their face even, because of the holiness of Almighty God.

Now all of this glory that is described by the purple, and the scarlet, and the white, and the blue, and the covering cherubs, all of this was hidden to the outsider; but it was not hidden to those who came on the inside. And what does it all picture?

Well, look in Psalm 91 for just a moment. Psalm 91—Psalm 91—verses 1 and 2: “*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High...*”—that is, in the holy place, the Holy of Holies—“*He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust*” (Psalm 91:1–2). Notice verses 7 through 9 of this same Psalm: “*A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not*

come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, who is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation” (Psalm 91:7–9).

That is, when a person dwells within this tent, this becomes his habitation. And remember, the whole tent is a description of Deity; it all speaks of Jesus. All of the colors speak of Jesus. The entire tabernacle speaks of Jesus. And when a person was inside, it pictured someone being in Christ; it pictured someone dwelling in the secret place of the most High under the shadow of the Almighty. It pictures the place of perfect security.

Now we’re going to see that the covering, therefore—and we’ll elaborate on this later—but it represents Christ, our security—Christ, our security. We’re safe when we’re there. And you’ve heard me teach that salvation is in Christ and security is in Christ. You’re not secure because you get to heaven. The angels fell from heaven. And if you’re not secure down here, you wouldn’t be secure up there. Security is not in a place; it’s in a person—and that person is Christ.

3. The Curtains

All right now, let’s go on and notice, very quickly—and we’ll come back next week and elaborate—but I want you to notice the next part of the covering. Go back to the Book of Exodus for a moment, and chapter 26 again, and notice verse 7: *“And thou shalt make curtains of goats’ hair to be a covering upon the tabernacle” (Exodus 26:7)*

a. The Linen Curtain Represents Christ, Our Security

So the first layer on the inside resting over the boards was the linen curtain. That pictures Christ, our security.

b. The Goats’ Hair Curtain Represents Christ, Our Sin-Bearer

And then, there’s a goats’ hair curtain that pictures Christ, our sin-bearer—Christ, our sin-bearer.

Look in Leviticus chapter 16 for a moment. It will make sense to us. I hope this is not too tedious to you. I don’t know any way to give it to you except to kind of break it down. And, actually, we’re just really hitting the very high spots. But look in Leviticus chapter 16 and verse 19: *“And he shall sprinkle the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited:”—praise God—“and he shall let go the goat into the wilderness” (Leviticus 16:19–22).*

Now, what on earth is all of this speaking of? Now, remember in Exodus chapter 26 that the next covering is goats' skin. Now, what does it speak of?

This is what was known as the *scapegoat*. You see, the priest, on a certain day, would take two goats. He'd take one goat, kill it, take his blood, and sprinkle the blood as an atoning sacrifice. But then he would take the other goat, and he would lay his hands upon the head of that other goat, called the *scapegoat*—I just read to you about that—and he would confess his sins. And then he would confess the sins of the people upon the head of that poor goat. That poor old innocent goat didn't even know what was happening to him. But the priest would lay his hands on this goat's head—this perfect, unblemished goat—and pray over it, and say, "Father, we've sinned. We've done this; and we've done this; and we've done this. And we put our sins upon the head of this goat." And then a man would take that goat—a fit man—lead him out in the wilderness to a land not inhabited, and let him go, never to be seen again in the land of forgetfulness.

You see, what does that picture? It pictures Christ, who is our sin-bearer. Jesus is that goat; Jesus is our scapegoat. Our sins were laid upon Him, and He bore them away into the wilderness. "*As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us*" (Psalm 103:12). And, oh, I thank God for that! I just bless God for Christ, our sin-bearer!

c. The Rams' Skins Curtain Represents Christ, Our Substitute

Now, remember, He's Christ, our security: that's the innermost. Then, He is Christ, our sin-bearer. Now, next, look in Exodus chapter 26 and verse 14. This will be the last one. I've got four, and I don't know what to do. But, anyway, there are four coverings. We'll just cover the last covering next Wednesday and review some of these others. But look in Exodus chapter 26 now, and verse 14: "*And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins*" (Exodus 26:14). Well, we'll mention the rams' skins.

But, first of all, there was the linen. Then, there's the goats' skin. And now, here is the rams' skin. Rams' skin is not normally red, but it is dyed red for blood. And it pictures the blood atonement. You see, not only is Christ our sin-bearer, but Christ is our substitute. Now, listen. Christ is our security, Christ is our sin-bearer, and Christ is our substitute. And this ram pictures the sacrificial, atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I don't have time to elaborate on that.

d. The Badgers' Skins Curtain Represents Christ, the Suffering Servant

But let me get, last of all, to the badgers' skin. Look again in verse 14—this is the outermost covering: "*And thou shalt make a covering for the tent of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering above of badgers' skins*" (Exodus 26:14). Now you would never see the blood; you would never see the rams' skin; you wouldn't see the goats' hair; and you

wouldn't see the linen, if you were there on the outside. All you would see on the outside is badgers' skins. Now, don't think of the badger as whatever the American animal, badger, is, because those were not known in the Middle East at all. The word is only used one other time in the Bible, where it describes this, where it's making shoes out of it. It's very dark, rough-looking skin. And this is on the outermost thing. And had you walked up to the tabernacle and seen it, all you would have seen was old, tough badgers' skin.

You see, why? Because when you see Jesus from the outside—*“When we . . . see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him”* (Isaiah 53:2), and all the stranger who walks up to the tabernacle would see when he looked at the outside is just the old badgers' skin. Tough, yes, because He is strong, even in His humanity. But you have to come in through the door in order to see the beauty.

And what does the badgers' skin on the outside, taking the storms, taking the abuse, taking the howling winds of the desert, what does that represent? It represents Christ, the suffering servant.

Conclusion

Now, listen. He is Christ, our security. He is Christ, our sin-bearer. He is Christ, our substitution. He is Christ, the suffering servant. He is the white Christ of purity. He is the purple Christ of royalty. He is the blue Christ of divinity. He is the red Christ of Calvary. And all of these coverings represent Jesus, who “tabernacled” among us (John 1:14). Now, remember, friend, that the only way to know the beauty of the tabernacle is not to have Adrian Rogers teach it to you; it's to come in through the door and trust Christ, of whom the tabernacle speaks.

Study of the Tabernacle #3

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 28, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 27:1–8; 29:11–14

Outline

Introduction

I. The Brazen Altar

A. The Pattern of the Altar

1. The Dimensions: Divine Grace

2. The Wood Was Overlaid with Brass: Divine Judgment

3. The Altar Had Horns on it: The Power of the Cross

B. The Position of the Altar: At the Door

C. The Purpose of the Altar: A Sin Offering

Conclusion

Introduction

Tonight, we're going to be speaking on this: "The Way of the Cross Leads Home." As we study the tabernacle, I want you to notice in Exodus 27 the first eight verses: *"And thou shalt make an altar of [acacia] wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits. And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof: his horns shall be of the same: and thou shalt overlay it with [bronze]. And thou..."*—or, as some have, "brass." Actually, brass is an alloy that they most likely did not have, but we say brass so often we'll probably continue to say it—*"And thou shalt make his pans to receive his ashes, and his shovels, and his basons, and his fleshhooks, and his firepans: all the vessels thereof thou shalt make of [bronze]. And thou shalt make for it a grate of network of [bronze]; and upon the net shalt thou make four [bronze] rings in the four corners thereof. And thou shalt put it under the compass of the altar beneath, that the net may be even to the midst of the altar. And thou shalt make staves for the altar, staves of [acacia] wood, and overlay them with [bronze]. And the staves shall be put into the rings, and the staves shall be upon the two sides of the altar, to bear it. Hollow with boards shalt thou make it: as it was shewed thee in the mount, so shall they make it"* (Exodus 27:1–8).

Now we are going to begin for seven Wednesday nights to talk about the furniture. You know, there were seven pieces of furniture in that tabernacle.

I. The Brazen Altar

And this is the first piece of furniture—not necessarily the first mentioned in the description of the tabernacle, but the first by the way that you’re introduced to, as you come into the tabernacle: It is the brazen altar—the brass altar, the bronze altar, whatever you wish to call it—and it illustrates and symbolizes the cross of Jesus Christ. It illustrates—prophesies, typifies—Calvary and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you again that *all of the Bible is about Jesus. If you read the Bible and you don't find Jesus standing somewhere in the shadows, you'd better go back and reread your Bible.* Jesus is the hero of the Bible. The Old Testament says somebody is coming; the Epistles, the Revelation, say somebody is coming again. And that somebody is Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords. And the Bible tells us, on the Emmaus road, after His resurrection, when He had that Bible conference with those two bewildered disciples—I would have loved to have been there, to have heard what He told them—but the Bible says that He showed *“them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”* (Luke 24:27).

Now, notice, not, “all the things concerning Himself in the Scriptures”; He showed them *“in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”* (Luke 24:27). You see, He’s in all the Scriptures—Jesus is in all the Scriptures. Jesus said of Moses, *“He wrote of me”* (John 5:46). Now everybody else said, “Oh, he was talking about the tabernacle.” Jesus said, “No, he wrote of me.” And this altar here is a picture of our dear, suffering Savior, who died for us.

A. The Pattern of the Altar

1. The Dimensions: Divine Grace

Now, first of all, notice the pattern of the altar: *“Thou shalt make an altar of [acacia] wood, five cubits long, and five cubits broad; the altar shall be foursquare: and the height thereof shall be three cubits”* (Exodus 27:1). It was five by five by three—five by five by three—five cubits by five cubits by three cubits. Now we’ve given you the meaning of numbers, and five is the number of grace. You’ll find it used in the Bible as the number of grace. Three is the number of Deity. *“There are three that bear record in heaven”* (1 John 5:7). We worship a triune God. And so, what is this altar that is five by five by three? What does it tell us about? It tells us of divine grace; it tells us of the grace of God. That’s the symbolism there in the dimensions of this altar.

2. The Wood Was Overlaid with Brass: Divine Judgment

And then, it was wood overlaid with brass. This is what God says here: *“an altar of [acacia] wood”*—and then it says that—*“thou shalt overlay it”*—the last part of verse 2—*“with [bronze]”*—or, “with brass” (Exodus 27:1–2). Now brass speaks always, in the Bible, of judgment. Wood speaks, in the Bible, of humanity. A righteous man is like a

tree. Psalm 1:3: *“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.”* Even the Lord Jesus Christ—and this is a prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ—He shall come up *“as a root out of a dry ground”* (Isaiah 53:2). And so, being attached to the earth, coming up out of the earth, wood symbolizes humanity. But here is humanity overlaid with bronze; that is, humanity under judgment. Again, that’s the cross—that’s the cross. You see, it speaks of divine grace, but it also speaks of divine judgment. Five by five by three: divine grace; wood overlaid with brass: divine judgment, because mercy and judgment meet at Calvary.

3. The Altar Had Horns on it: The Power of the Cross

Now, also, this altar had horns on it. This is what the Bible says here: *“And thou shalt make the horns of it upon the four corners thereof”* (Exodus 27:2). And what does a horn stand for? A horn, in the Bible, now it’s talking about a horn just like moo-cows have, just like billy goats have; not the kind of horn that an automobile has, and not the kind of a horn that you play in a band, but a horn like an animal has. And if you had seen this altar, this square piece of furniture, it would have had horns that would look very much just like an animal’s horn coming out of each corner. And horns were used by these ancient people to symbolize power, because you will remember, as we studied the Book of Daniel, that the Antichrist is called the *“little horn”* (Daniel 7:8; Daniel 8:9)—that is, the person of power. And horns stand for kingdoms and strength and power.

Look in 1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 10, for a moment, and you’ll see something of the symbolism here—1 Samuel chapter 2, verse 10: *“The adversaries of the LORD shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the LORD shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed”* (1 Samuel 2:10). Again, the idea of a horn being symbolic of strength.

And so the four horns upon this altar speak, really, of the power of the cross. You know, in Revelation, I believe in chapter 5, verse 6, there’s a lamb, who pictures Jesus, having seven horns (Revelation 5:6). Of course, if a horn pictures power, and this lamb has seven horns, and seven is the perfect number, then Jesus has perfect power. And so the four horns upon the four corners of the brazen altar speak of the power of the blood, the power of the gospel. That’s the reason Paul said, in Romans 1:16, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the”*—what?—*“power of God unto salvation.”*

*There is power, power, wonder-working power
In the precious blood of the Lamb.*

—LEWIS E. JONES

And, also, you’ll notice there are four corners. Now, what number is four? Does anyone remember? The earth number—the earth number. You see, there are the four winds of the earth. The Bible speaks of the four corners of the earth. And, incidentally, when the Bible says, *“the four corners of the earth,”* it doesn’t mean the earth is square;

it means the four points of the compass—north, and south, and east, and whatever the other one is—the four points of the compass. That’s what he’s talking about. And what is the Lord saying here when He speaks of the four corners with four horns? He’s telling us that the gospel is for everybody: red, yellow, black, white, they’re precious in His sight. You see, it’s a universal gospel for all people: every clime, every condition; all of God’s creation. Again, it’s Romans 1:16: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God...to every one that believeth.”*

B. The Position of the Altar: At the Door

All right now, notice not only the pattern here—and we’re not going to get into the rest of these accoutrements that go with this, because, frankly, we don’t have time—but let’s notice not only the pattern of the altar, but let’s notice the position.

Turn to Exodus chapter 29 for a moment, and look in verse 11—Exodus chapter 29, verse 11. Here God is talking about making an offering upon this altar, and He says, in Exodus chapter 29, verse 11, *“And thou shalt kill the bullock...”*—now, kids, that’s a young bull—*“thou shalt kill the bullock before the LORD, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And thou shalt take of the blood of the bullock, and put it upon the horns of the altar with thy finger, and pour out all the blood beside the bottom of the altar”* (Exodus 29:11–12). Now I read this scripture to show you that the altar is right there at the door—right at the door. This is the position of the altar.

Now, why is it there at the door of the tabernacle? Because, friend, you can’t come in except by blood. That’s what it’s all about. You see, the way of the cross leads home.

I must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There’s no other way but this.

—JESSIE B. POUNDS

And you cannot go any further until you come to the cross through the shed blood. Now there’s a lot of learning you can do, and lot of growing in grace you can do, and a lot of praying you can do, and a lot of serving you can do, and a lot of loving you can do, and a lot of giving you can do, and lot of shouting you can do, and a lot of rejoicing you can do. There’s a lot that you can do, but you can’t do anything worthwhile, anything lasting, anything holy, anything that has the approval of God upon it, until you come past this altar.

Now there are some other pieces of furniture in that tabernacle, and they speak—you remember, the altar spoke of Christ, our sacrifice. The laver spoke of Christ, our sanctification. The showbread spoke of Christ, our sustenance. The candlestick spoke of Christ, our sight. The altar of incense spoke of Christ, our supplication. And the Ark of the Covenant overlaid with gold, with the cherubim, speaks of Christ, our satisfaction, right in the Holy of Holies, where the Shekinah glory of God dwells. But you’ve got to

come past the altar of blood. *“Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin]”* (Hebrews 9:22).

You know, the devil would like to get rid of this bloody religion. And some denominations have gone through their hymnals and taken out all the songs concerning the blood, because that’s uncouth, and that offends the sensibilities of the people on Sunday morning. And so they don’t want to sing these old gory blood songs. They call that *slaughterhouse religion*—the religion of the shambles.

Billy Graham said, when he first started to preach, a professor at Cornell University told him, “Young man, I enjoyed your message. You’ve got a lot of talent. But if you ever want to be used, you’re going to have to leave out that blood stuff.” That’s what he told him. Graham said, “I purposed to preach more than ever on the blood, when he told me that.” Somebody told Moody the same thing—said, “Mr. Moody, if you want to get somewhere in this world, and if you want to be an acceptable clergyman, you’re going to have to quit preaching on the blood.” Moody said the same thing: “I determined to preach more than ever on the blood of Jesus Christ.”

You see, God honors the blood. We’d better honor the blood. Hebrews 9:22: *“Without shedding…”*—and don’t turn to it—*“Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin].”* Here it is right at the doorway. There’s more to it after this, but no more until this.

C. The Purpose of the Altar: A Sin Offering

Now, notice not only the pattern of this altar, and the position of it, but, again, the purpose of it. Now we’re in Genesis 29, if you haven’t moved. And look in verse 13—Exodus 29, verse 13: *“And thou shalt take all the fat that covereth the inwards, and the caul that is above the liver, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is upon them, and burn them upon the altar. But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering”* (Exodus 29:13–14)—“it is a sin offering.”

*What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.*

—ROBERT LOWRY

It’s a sin offering. You see, you’ve got a problem. So do I. It’s sin—sin.

Wouldn’t it be something if somebody stood up in the Pentagon and said, “Gentlemen, the problem in the world is sin”? Wouldn’t it be something if somebody stood up in one of our great halls of philosophy and said, “The problem is sin”? Somebody stood up in the U.N. and said, “The problem in the world is sin”? You know it is, isn’t it? But you never read that in the newspaper, do you? They say the problem is poverty, or the problem is ignorance, or the problem is prejudice, or the problem is this,

or the problem is that. The problem, friend, is sin. That's your problem; that's my problem. You don't have a problem but what it is a sin problem; I don't have a problem but what it is a sin problem. *The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart*, and the human heart is desperately wicked—mine and yours.

You say, "I've been saved." Your heart's still wicked; mine is still wicked. If you don't believe it, you take your eyes off Jesus and see what's still in there—see what's still in there. Don't you trust that deceitful heart! The problem is sin. And if you think you can go to heaven without being born again, you just don't know how sinful your heart is, and you don't know how holy God is, you see.

All right now, I want you to notice there is a fire upon this altar, according to the scripture we just read. Where did that fire come from? Look in Leviticus chapter 9 and verse 24 for a moment—Leviticus 9 and verse 24: "*And there came a fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces*" (Leviticus 9:24). Did you know who kindled the first fire upon the altar in the tabernacle? Jehovah God. And this was an eternal flame, a perpetual flame. They were not to let the fire go out; they kept the fire burning. But it was fire that was ignited from above, and they could not have offered strange fire. Some tried it and were killed. It had to be fire that came from above. It was God that sent the fire.

Now I don't know whether it was a bolt of lightning, a lambent flame that came down—I don't know. But I know that, when they had finished building that tabernacle, and when they were ready, and they put their first sacrifice upon that altar, fire out of heaven fell and consumed it. What does that tell us? What does that fire picture? Well, you know that, in the Bible, fire pictures the consuming wrath of God. The Bible says that, "*God is a consuming fire*" (Deuteronomy 4:24; Hebrews 12:29), that He's "*angry with the wicked every day*" (Psalm 7:11). And when that fire fell upon that altar, it symbolized the wrath of God, as it burns against sin. That ought to frighten every one of us.

I tell you, there are several reasons I don't sin any more than I do. I do sin, but there are several things that keep me wanting and striving and praying to live like I ought. One of them is the fear of the Lord. You say, "Well, that's not a worthy motive." Well, I don't know. The Bible says Noah was moved with fear when he built an ark (Hebrews 11:7). You know, the Bible says, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*" (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 9:10). You know, if you've got good sense, you'd be afraid of that fire. Now I tell you, I serve the Lord because I love Him. Fear is not my only motive. But any time I get an idea I don't want to love Him, there's another one hanging back there too: fear of the Lord. You know, "*Our God is a consuming fire.*" And God's wrath burns against sin.

You know, today, everybody's talking about, "Oh, *the Man upstairs*," and, "Jesus is my best friend." There's no friend like the lowly Jesus. Well, in the first place, He's not the lowly Jesus, friend; He's the exalted Christ. He was the lowly Jesus. Now Jesus called us His friends, and I call Jesus my friend, but, you know, I think most of the time we'd better be calling Him *Lord*, rather than *friend*. Let Him call us *friend*; we call Him *Lord*.

You know, if I say, "Gerald Ford is my friend"—well, he's not—but if I say, "Gerald Ford is my friend," you know what I've done, in your eyes? I've exalted myself. All right, let's pick out somebody else. All right—all right. You know, you say, "Well, look, the pastor is friends with the President." "Gerald Ford is my friend." See, what I have done, really, is to bring Gerald Ford down to my level. But suppose he says, "Adrian Rogers is my friend." Then he's brought me up to his level. You see, you let Jesus call you *friend*; you call Him *Lord*—you call Him *Lord*.

Oh, He is our friend. And I'm not saying He's not a friend. He is a friend. He's "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24). But I want to tell you, we'd better get away from this *buddy-buddy* type of business, talking about *the Man upstairs*, and this sort of namby-pamby old God, sitting up on a throne with a long, white beard, saying, "Tut, tut, children." He's a consuming fire. He's the thrice-holy God of Israel. And we live in a generation that has forgotten something of the fear of the Lord. I'm preparing a message on the fear of the Lord—about to preach it, but I'm not going to. The fear of the Lord—the fear of the Lord: Fire from heaven came and consumed that sacrifice.

Who crucified Jesus? Who did? You say, "We crucified Him." Well, yes. The Jews, yes; the Greeks, yes; the Romans, yes; the disciples, yes. But no! We didn't really crucify Jesus. He was crucified because of us. But God the Father crucified Jesus. You read Isaiah chapter 53, and the Bible says, "*It pleased the LORD to...put him to grief*" (Isaiah 53:10). God the Father put Him to grief.

You say, "I don't understand it." Jesus Christ took your sin; He took my sin. And when He took your sin and my sin, He took your penalty and my penalty. And that's the wrath of Jehovah. And if there was ever a time when God might have been lenient with sin, it was when His darling Son was upon the cross. But Jesus Christ cried out upon that cross, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). Explain it? I cannot understand it; I cannot fathom it—I cannot. But I believe it—I do—that Jesus Christ took my sin upon that cross, and the flame of God's wrath fell upon Jesus. And when that fire came from heaven and consumed that sacrifice, it prophesied one day that the fire of God's wrath was going to fall upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

You ought to love Jesus for that—you ought to love Jesus for that. Jesus didn't cry

when they put those nails in His hands. Jesus did not whimper when they put that crown of thorns upon His brow. And Jesus did not complain when they lashed His back. “As a lamb before [his] shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). They spat upon Him. He never said a word. The old Negro spiritual says, “Not a mumbling word—not a word.” But when God the Father withdrew, Jesus cried, “My God...”—He cried—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

When David died, he said, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4). Jesus walked that lonesome valley all by Himself, and the fires of God’s wrath were burning upon Him all that time. Jesus walked the burning corridors of the damned. Jesus baptized His soul in hell.

You say, “Wait a minute, brother. If a sinner goes to hell, he’ll stay there for all eternity. Jesus was only there on the cross for a little bit of time. So how did He take my hell?” I’ll tell you how He took your hell. You, being finite, could only suffer that much in an infinite period of time. He, being infinite, could suffer that much in a finite period of time. The eternities were compressed upon Jesus at Calvary, just as the sin of the world was distilled upon Jesus. And all of the sins of all of the world, all the suffering of all of the world, fell upon one man at one point. And Jesus took it all. Praise His holy name!

The fire of Jehovah fell upon that altar. It was fire from heaven. It wasn’t what men did that hurt Jesus.

Conclusion

What a Savior! And how we ought to love Him!

Study of the Tabernacle #4

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 4, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 30:17–21

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Laver: Christ, Our Sanctification
 - A. The Materials of the Laver
 1. Brass
 - a. The Word of God That Judges
 - b. The Word of God That Reveals
 2. Water
 - a. The Word of God that Cleanses
 - B. The Placement of the Laver
 - C. The Method of the Laver

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn, if you will, to Exodus chapter 30—Exodus chapter 30. For those of you who are here for the first time tonight, may I say that the tabernacle was a tent-like structure that God had given to the Jews when they were on their way from Egypt to Canaan, and it was their house of worship, and it was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a prophecy, a type, a symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ; also, of the way to be saved. It was God's object lesson, telling us even before Jesus came to this earth how we could be redeemed and how we could be saved.

Now we discussed the dimensions and something of the structure. And then we have started to discuss the seven pieces of furniture. And you will remember that each of these pieces of furniture tells us something about our Lord's salvation.

First of all, there was the brazen altar, and we discussed that last Wednesday night. And you will remember that the brazen altar speaks of Christ, our sacrifice. And then, right past the brazen altar, the object of furniture that we're going to discuss tonight is the laver. This is the next piece of furniture; and we'll discuss that in detail in a moment, but suffice it to say that the laver speaks of Christ, our sanctification.

Next, you would come on one side to a table, and on that table would be some loaves of bread called showbread. And that speaks of Christ, our sustenance, because

He's the bread of life and we feed upon Him. And over on the other side of the tabernacle, across from the table of showbread, would be a candlestick that would be the illumination—a seven-armed candlestick. And that speaks of Christ, our sight, because He is the light of the world. And then, right beyond that would be the altar of incense with sweet-smelling perfume going up to the Lord. And that reminds us of prayer, and Christ, our supplication. And then, we go beyond that on into the Holy of Holies, where the Mercy Seat was, and the place of propitiation. And that speaks of Christ, our satisfaction: the One who satisfies the Father on our behalf, and the One who satisfies us completely. And I'm satisfied with Jesus. The Holy of Holies speaks of that innermost communion with our dear Lord.

I. The Laver: Christ, Our Sanctification

Now, let's go tonight to the passage that talks about Christ, our sanctification. Notice in Exodus chapter 30 and verse 17: *"And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver..."*—now the word *laver* means, "a place to wash." *To lave* means, "to wash." That's the reason we call a washbasin a *lavatory*; it's a place that we wash in—*"Thou shalt make a laver"*—or "a place to wash"—*"of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD: so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations"* (Exodus 30:17–21).

Now the laver was a great washbasin; that's what it was.

A. The Materials of the Laver

Now I want you, first of all, to notice the materials of the laver.

1. Brass

Verse 18 tells us that it was made of brass, or some translations have it—and more correctly—"of bronze" (Exodus 30:18). Brass, being an alloy... it's bronze.

a. The Word of God That Judges

And what does that speak of? It speaks of judgment. Just keep that in mind. We've already told you that. And brass is a symbol of judgment in the Bible—of sin being judged.

b. The Word of God That Reveals

And the remarkable thing, though, is the source of this particular brass. Now there was a lot of brass used for various things in the tabernacle, but the source of this brass

is remarkable. You ladies will be interested to learn from where the brass came. And notice in Exodus chapter 38 for just a moment, and verse 8—Exodus chapter 38 and verse 8: *“And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the lookingglasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation”* (Exodus 38:8).

Where did Moses get all this brass? He got it from the ladies. And why did the ladies have all of this brass? Their mirrors were of brass. Now, ladies, they didn’t have glass mirrors like we have them today. Of course, the Bible—the King James—calls them *“lookingglasses,”* but they weren’t made of glass at all. That’s just simply a translation. They were mirrors, reflective surfaces, of high polished bronze. I’ve seen these mirrors in museums that date back even before the time of Christ: highly polished brass or bronze. And you could hold up that highly polished brass and get a reflection. You could look in there and see how beautiful you were.

You know, isn’t beauty wonderful? But we can just look in the mirror. And you know, I was thinking of that little thing: what is it?

*Beauty is skin deep;
But ugly goes all the way to the bone.*

*Beauty fades;
But ugly holds its own.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

You just look in that mirror. And these ladies had the mirror that they could look in and get a reflection of themselves. And God laid it upon the hearts of these dear ladies to donate their mirrors, that the laver might be formed, and for a very particular reason. Now this is the only thing that this particular kind of brass was used for—for the laver—because we’re going to see in a moment that it therefore becomes a symbol of the Word of God. The laver, I’m very certain, symbolizes the Word of God.

Notice in James chapter 1 and verse 22 for a moment—in James chapter 1 and verse 22: *“But be ye doers of the word,”*—now he’s talking about the Word—*“and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was”* (James 1:22–24). And so here God tells us that the Word of God is like a mirror.

And this laver symbolizes the Word of God, made of brass that speaks of judgment, but made of mirrors that speak of reflection and revelation. And so when I open the Bible, I see myself, but I see myself judged. It’s a mirror, but it’s a glass mirror. It tells me what I look like, and it tells me that I’m under judgment. It tells me that I’m under condemnation. And the laver speaks of the Word of God: the Word of God that reveals us, and the Word of God that judges us.

2. Water

a. The Word of God that Cleanses

But let's go on. We're not finished with the symbolism here, and the materials of this laver. It does speak of the Word of God that reveals. It does speak of the Word of God that judges. But it also primarily speaks of the Word of God that cleanses. But we'll never be cleansed until we've been revealed and judged. First, we're revealed. Then, we're judged. And then, we're cleansed. Notice in verse 18: "*Thou shalt also make a laver of [bronze]*"—and so forth, and so forth, and the last part of it—"*...and thou shalt put water within*" (Exodus 30:18).

Now, what is the water symbolical of? We don't have to read into this or guess. It's very clear to anyone who understands the figures of the Bible that water is also a picture, a type, of the Word of God. Let's just thumb through some passages of Scripture and note them.

Look in Ephesians chapter 5—Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 26—the Bible speaks of Christ, who gave Himself for the Church, in verse 25: "*That he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*" (Ephesians 5:26). Do you see that? Jesus sanctifies His Church, and He cleanses His Church with water. What kind of water? "*The washing of water by the word.*" That is, the Word of God is to my spirit what water is to my body. It is the Word of God that cleanses, because it is His Word.

Look in John chapter 15 and verse 3 for a moment, and you'll get the same idea—John chapter 15 and verse 3: "*Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you*" (John 15:3). Jesus says that the Word of God cleanses us. Just as water cleansed those Old Testament priests in the Old Testament, the Word of God cleanses us today. Look in John 17 and verse 17. The Lord Jesus Christ is praying that His disciples might be sanctified, or cleansed, and He says, in John 17, verse 17, "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17). God says His Word is like the rain that cometh down from heaven, in the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 55:10). Paul says it's like water that washes (Ephesians 5:26). And so now you have it all together.

What does this laver stand for? Well, the brass that was made from the mirrors speaks of the Word of God that reveals our sin; then, the Word of God that judges our sin; but then, bless God, the Word of God that cleanses us from our sin. And so all together, this brass laver speaks of the sanctifying power of the Word of God—the materials of the laver.

B. The Placement of the Laver

Now the next thing I want you to notice is the further meaning of the laver. If we see that it speaks of the Word of God, let's see if we can delineate the meaning a little more by seeing something of the placement of the laver. Where was it placed? Notice in

Exodus chapter 30 and verse 18: *“And thou shalt put it...”*—I’m reading in the middle of the verse—*“thou shalt put it”*—that is, the laver—*“between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein”* (Exodus 30:18).

Now, what was the placement of the laver? Well, first of all, you come to the altar, and immediately past the altar is the laver. And then, past the laver is the holy place—the place of service. So in order to get to the place of service you had to wash at the laver. Now if a priest tried to go into the place of service without washing at the laver, the result was death—first, the altar; then, the laver; and then, the holy place.

So what is the meaning? What is God telling us? God is telling us that, after we have been reconciled by the blood of Jesus, we need to be sanctified by the Word of God. First, the altar; and then, the laver. The altar comes first: that speaks of reconciliation. The laver comes next—and that speaks of sanctification. You see, we come to the cross, but we don’t stay there. They went to the altar, the cross, and then on to the laver. And the laver speaks of the forgiveness, the cleansing, of daily sin. You see, it’s not enough just to come down here and give your heart to Jesus and get saved. Salvation begins there, but that’s not all there is to it.

I performed a wedding ceremony a while back. And the very nervous groom, after it was over, said, “Preacher, is it all over?” I said, “No, it’s really just beginning.” And that is true about salvation. When a person receives Christ, he has gone through the crisis that puts him in the Body of Christ; but, from there on, it’s really just beginning.

C. The Method of the Laver

Now I want you to notice the method, therefore, that the Lord ordained. Notice verses 19 through 21—we’re still in Exodus chapter 30: *“For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat: when they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not”* (Exodus 30:19–20). That is, before they could minister, they had to be clean. *“Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD”* (Isaiah 52:11). That’s what the Bible says over and over again.

You see, before I came in here to preach, I washed at the laver. Before Brother Tommy can sing, he must wash at the laver. Before you can teach, you must stop by the laver and wash. You see, the laver is between the cross and the place of service. And this is where we must go continually: hundreds and hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times. Those priests, as they ministered, would stop and wash their hands and wash their feet—wash their hands and wash their feet. The laver, doubtless, was the most used piece of furniture in all of the tabernacle, for it speaks of our coming to our Lord daily in His Word, and getting our lives cleansed and fit for service.

How do you spend time at the laver, friend? You just simply open this book and dive in: that’s it! This is the laver: the Word of God! The brass of it judges our sins; the

reflection of it reveals our sins; the water of it cleanses our sins. But we're not fit for service until we come past the laver. And if you're not spending time washing every day at the laver, just as those Old Testament priests had to do, then your ministry will be a ministry of death, rather than a ministry of life.

You see, it's not a matter of the priest getting saved, when he comes to the laver. When a priest was put into the priesthood, the sons of Aaron—Aaron and his sons—they brought them to the door of the tabernacle, and they gave them a ceremonial bath. That is, they were washed all over. Look in Exodus chapter 29 and verse 4 for a moment: *“And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shalt wash them with water”* (Exodus 29:4). This had nothing to do with the laver. They weren't washed at the laver; they were washed right there at the door, and right by the altar. It symbolized a man getting saved and getting all of his sins forgiven: being washed from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet. That's the way the priest was washed.

Now once a priest had had this kind of a bath, he never had another one of these ceremonial baths. That was once for all. They bathed him right there at the door. That was the once-for-all bath. But then he had to go by the laver every day and wash his hands and wash his feet before he could serve. In order for him to be a priest, he had to be bathed all over. But before he could serve, day by day, he had to wash at the laver. Do you get the connection? Do you see what God is saying?

You see, when I get saved, I'm bathed all over. When God saved me, I was made clean from the crown of my head to the soles of my feet. I came to Jesus, and I was born again. The Bible calls that, in Titus chapter 3, verse 5—listen to it now—*“the washing of regeneration”* (Titus 3:5)—*“the washing of regeneration.”* Just as those Old Testament priests were washed, I was washed; I was sanctified; I was made whole and clean.

But there was something remarkable about those Old Testament priests who had this bath all over. When they would go into the tabernacle to minister, they were walking on the ground. Did you know that there was no floor in the tabernacle? You read the description of the tabernacle. The little building cost over two million dollars, and it didn't even have a floor in it. Just a small building not much bigger than this choir and platform up here—over two million dollars worth, and probably four to six million, by today's prices; but it didn't even have a floor in it.

And, furthermore, it had seven pieces of furniture; but it didn't even have a chair in it. There was no way that that priest, when he was ministering, could sit down and take his feet off the ground. Constantly, his feet were walking on the dirt, on the dusty desert floor. But when he was in that tabernacle, this is symbolic of our being in Christ, because the tabernacle spoke of Christ. The Bible says, *“The Word was made flesh,*

and [tabernacled] among us” (John 1:14). “If any man be in Christ,”—in the tabernacle—“he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). And the priest was in the tabernacle, but he was on the ground.

Does that ring a bell with you? It is the position that every one of us is in tonight. We live in a very dirty world, even though we’re in Christ. And even though we stopped at the door by the altar, and we were washed from the top of our head to the soles of our feet when we got saved, yet we walk in a dirty world. And we must constantly come to our dear Lord and bathe at the laver our hands and our feet, because we’re defiled by the things we touch.

You can hardly walk into a drugstore, a 7-11, or one of these quickie food stores without being defiled almost by just looking at the magazine rack. You can hardly turn on the television without having some sort of filth and suggestive idea spewed out at you. You can hardly go into an office without hearing the name of our Lord blasphemed, without having somebody make some filthy suggestion. We live, folks, in a dirty world. We may be in Christ, but we’re walking on a very, very dirty surface: this old world. And I’m not talking about physical dirt, and God wasn’t trying to teach a lesson about physical dirt.

What was He saying? God was saying, friend, that we get saved once for all—that’s the bath all over; but we come to Jesus daily and wash in the laver of His Word, because we get daily defiled. And that’s the reason our Lord, when He taught us to pray for daily bread, taught us also to pray for daily forgiveness: because we need to be cleansed daily; we need to be sanctified by the Word of God.

Now, having said all of that, it will make it much more clear to you what Jesus was doing when He washed the disciples’ feet. Turn to John the thirteenth chapter for a moment. People have really misunderstood this thing of foot washing. But if they understood the principles of the tabernacle, they would understand some of the New Testament teachings. You cannot understand the New Testament without understanding the Old; and you cannot understand the Old without understanding the New.

Notice how Jesus here is washing His disciples’ feet—John chapter 13, verse 1: “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world...”—just underscore that: “in the world”—“having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end” (John 13:1). Now they’re His own; that is, they’re in the tabernacle. But they’re also in the world—no floor in that tabernacle. They’re His own; they’re in Him. But they’re in the world, and He loved them unto the end.

And so the Bible goes on to say, in verse 2, “And supper being ended...”—and what supper was it? It was the Passover supper. And what did the Passover speak of?

Christ, our sacrifice; the altar—the brazen altar; the cross, if you will—“*And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper...*”—now this was the supper that symbolized His death for our sins—“*He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet...*”—and we could put that, without doing any corruption to it at all, and say, “He poureth water into a laver,” for that’s precisely what it means—“*he poureth water into a [laver], and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.*” And right away Peter should have known there was more going on here than ordinary foot washing. “*Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet...*”—he ought to have wanted them washed, because he’s about to put them in his mouth—“*Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.*” That is, “Peter, it is absolutely imperative that I wash your feet, if you want to have anything to do with me.” “Well,” Peter says, “then, if that’s the case,” “*...Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.*” That is, “Give me a bath all over.” Now, watch, and you’re going to remember something we said a while back: “*Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit*” (John 13:2–10).

Now it doesn’t show here in the English, but in the Greek there are two different words for *wash*—two different words for *wash*. Jesus said, “When a man’s had a bath all over, he doesn’t need another bath all over; he just needs to wash his feet—just to wash his feet.”

You see, in this day and age they had public baths. Many places don’t have hot running water like we have. And they would go out to the public bath and bathe; and they’d come home—and just so sweet and clean. But all the way home they had to walk with their sandaled feet upon the dusty roads of those ancient cities. And so, out in front of any well-to-do home would be a laver. And before they would go into that home and have fellowship in that home—and to keep from tracking up the house, and to make themselves refreshed, and to feel well—there would be a laver here. And they’d put their little *tootsies* in there.

And, generally, there was a slave in a well-to-do house who would wash feet. You see, Jesus was taking on slave labor. If you understand what Jesus was doing when He girded Himself with a towel, that’s the way the most menial, lowly servants would do. And Jesus washed their feet.

Now a person who had just come from the bath would not have a bath all over again, but he would wash his feet. Those of us who have been saved, we don't need to keep getting saved. Friend, that's a bath that lasts; it's once for all, just as the priest was bathed one time from head to foot as he was consecrated and set aside as a priest. But, daily, when he ministered, he had to wash his hands, his feet, before he could minister, because his hands, his feet, were defiled.

Now, what is Jesus teaching now? It ought to become more and more obvious to us. "And Jesus said, he that is washed"—let me paraphrase—"he that is saved needed not except to get his feet washed,"—now, what does that mean? To get his daily sins forgiven—"but is entirely clean: and ye are clean, but not all of you." That is, He was talking about Judas. Judas had never had a bath at all. Judas—they had bathed down at the public bath, but he had never been to Calvary; he had never been washed. And Judas was unsaved altogether.

And so our Lord is teaching here, in John the thirteenth chapter, just as He taught over there in Exodus so long ago, that once we come to God and get saved, that is once for all. "He that is washed doesn't need to be washed again." You don't have to keep getting saved, friends: it's once for all. Isn't that great? If you don't believe me, you find anywhere in the Bible where anybody was saved twice, and I'll give you a hundred dollars. You just find it. You won't find it. People don't get saved twice; they only get saved once. "*He that is washed needeth not...*"

You say, "That sounds so crass for you to say, 'I'll give you a hundred dollars.'" Well, the reason I put it that way is not because I've got money to throw around, but sometimes people think, "Well, that's just an opinion," or something like that, and I want to tell you, friend, that in the Bible salvation is a once-for-all experience. You'll never find where anybody got saved twice in the Bible. People get saved once, and that's all. But you will find that after they get saved they must come to the laver—that is, the washing in God's Word—so that they can be cleansed, as God wants them to be. You see, the Bible says, in Psalm 119:9, "*Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word*"—"by taking heed thereto...to thy word." And as we wash in the Word of God, we're made clean.

Now, let's look at this for a moment more before we leave John 13. And notice verses 12 through 15: "*So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet*" (John 13:12–14).

You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, why don't we have foot-washing services here at Bellevue?" We do. We do, but not where we get a basin of water and kneel down in front of somebody and wash their feet. There's no indication at all that the early church

ever did this as an ordinance in the church—none whatever! And for people to want to do that, I think they miss the meaning. Now I'm not really putting them down for it, because many sincere people do it. But they say it's a show of humility. Well, humility is never humility when it's put on show. You see, that misses the point. I would say most folks, if they knew they were going to have a foot-washing service in church, would be careful to wash their feet before they went to church, and put on clean socks—wouldn't you?—if they knew that they were going to have a foot washing service at church.

No. Jesus, here, was not trying to inaugurate a ceremony. Listen to what He said. He said, "What I do now you don't understand. You'll understand later" (John 13:7). And then Jesus made it very clear that He was not talking about dirt. He was talking about sin when He said, "You're clean, but not all of you are clean," and He was speaking of Judas. And then He said, "If I've washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). What is He talking about? "If I have forgiven you your daily sins against me, you ought to forgive one another their daily sins against you." That's what He's saying. "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet." That's what Paul meant when he said, in the Book of Ephesians, chapter 4, verse 32, "*Be ye kind...tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*" (Ephesians 4:32). If God has forgiven us, if Christ has washed our feet, then we must wash one another's feet.

So how can you wash my feet tonight? Have I hurt your feelings some way? Have I failed you some way? Have I done something that has offended you? Would you like to wash my feet tonight? Then, forgive me, will you, please? How can I wash your feet? By forgiving you, if you've hurt me or wronged me. I mean, if my Lord is willing to wash my feet, I ought to be willing to wash your feet. "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). What is He talking about? He is saying, dear friend, that daily, daily, daily, daily, we are to come to the Word of God and dive in; and this Word will cleanse us. "*Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you*" (John 15:3).

Conclusion

How does the Word of God cleanse us? The Word of God cleanses us, first of all, because it's like a mirror. Remember the mirrors? We see us. And then, it's like brass: it condemns us, and we feel bad. But then, it's like water: it points us to Calvary, and it points us to forgiveness and confession. And the Bible says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*" (1 John 1:9).

Now, you Sunday School teachers, before you come this Sunday to teach, don't fail to stop by the laver. And, you choir members, before you sing this Sunday, don't fail to

stop by the laver. And, those of you who are working in Training Union, and those of you who are working tonight on the finance committee, don't fail to stop by the laver and wash—because, if a priest went from the altar, and circumvented the laver, and went with dirty hands and dirty feet to the place of service, death, just like that.

You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, will I die physically?” No, but you will minister death. You'll not minister life; you'll minister death. Rather than bringing people to Jesus, you'll turn people away from Jesus. Your Sunday School class will have a deadening, a stultifying, effect. Your music will not bring glory to Jesus. It may be faultless; but, rather than blessing, it will curse. Your preaching, your theology, may be correct; but if you haven't washed at the laver, you'll minister death, rather than life. Friend, the priest had to wash. *“Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD”* (Isaiah 52:11).

This is the laver; it's the Word of God—*“the washing of water by the word”* (Ephesians 5:26). *“Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word”* (Psalm 119:9). *“Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you”* (John 15:3). *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”* (John 17:17). *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Psalm 119:11).

First, the altar; then, the laver. Christ, our sacrifice. Christ, our sanctification through His Word.

Study of the Tabernacle #5

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 11, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 25:31–37

Outline

Introduction

- I. A Lesson Concerning the Savior
 - A. Christ Is the Light
 - B. Christ Is the Lord
 - C. Christ Is the Life
 - II. A Lesson Concerning the Saint
 - III. A Lesson Concerning the Spirit
- Conclusion

Introduction

Now, you take your Bibles, if you will, please, and turn, if you will, to Exodus chapter 25—Exodus chapter 25. We're thinking tonight about Christ, our sight—Christ, our sight. You remember that there were seven pieces of furniture in the tabernacle. And, by the way, if you're here visiting tonight, we are studying the tabernacle, and we're jumping right in. I will recapitulate for just a moment.

And while you're turning, let me thank you for praying for us while we were in Oklahoma. Brother Tommy said, "Amen." I don't know whether you heard him or not. We were up there, and I asked about Brother Lane and got all of the information about him. And now I'll never have any more trouble with him. But we had a wonderful time. I thank you for praying. I made the mistake of asking Joyce to speak to the ladies while we were there at First Baptist Church of Bartlesville. I was over there getting ready for a city-wide stadium meeting this July, and we let Joyce speak, and they just said, "Well, as far as we're concerned, we'll keep her and send you back." But, anyway, we had a wonderful time, and God did bless. And I thank you for your prayers.

And by now we ought to be in Exodus chapter 25. And so we will begin reading now in Exodus chapter 25, beginning in verse 31. Now before we read, let me say what I started to say a moment ago. There are seven pieces of furniture in that tabernacle. And each of them speak of Christ, and they also speak of salvation. These seven pieces of furniture are arranged in a particular order so that they give us a pathway to glory.

The first piece of furniture that we've already discussed was the brazen altar, where the animal sacrifices were made, and where the blood was poured out. That speaks of Christ, our sacrifice. It pictures the cross, for Jesus died for us upon the cross. And that Old Testament altar pictured the cross of Jesus Christ. And then we spoke that you came past the cross to the laver; and we spoke about the laver, to my recollection, last Wednesday night. And the laver, the washbasin, symbolized the living Word, and the written Word, and Christ, our sanctification, because they washed in the laver, and washing is symbolic of sanctification—that is, being cleansed.

First, Christ, our sacrifice; then, Christ our sanctification. And now we are coming to the golden lampstand, which represents Christ, our sight. And we're going to talk about this tonight, beginning in verse 31: *“And thou shalt make a [lampstand]...”*—now some translations may have the word *candlestick*, and that is not quite apt. That's not the best translation, because this was not a candle. There was no candle involved. And it's important that we understand that, and I'll tell you why in a moment—*“And thou shalt make a [lampstand] of pure gold: of beaten work shall the [lampstand] be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his [knops],”*—or, as some have it, “its knops”—*“and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the [lampstand] out of the one side, and three branches of the [lampstand] out of the other side: three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds on the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the [lampstand]. And in the [lampstand] shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the [lampstand]. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold.”* And that's important. *“And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it”* (Exodus 25:31–37). And we'll stop right there for the time being.

May I tell you that this golden lampstand that speaks, in the broadest sense, about Christ, our sight, really has a three-fold message: a message, number one, concerning the Savior; a message, number two, concerning the saints; and a message, number three, concerning the Spirit—that is, the Holy Spirit. Three wonderful, glorious truths are taught in this golden lampstand.

I. A Lesson Concerning the Savior

Now, first of all, a lesson concerning the Savior, in verse 31. As you look at verse 31, it is obvious that here is a type, a picture, a prophecy, and illustration of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. Christ Is the Light

You see, it speaks of Christ, who is the light of the world. Notice again in verse 31: *“Thou shalt make a [lampstand]”* (Exodus 25:31). And there’s but one purpose of a lampstand—and that is to give light.

And the Bible teaches very clearly that Christ is the light of the world. Look at this scripture. In John chapter 1, verse 4—John 1 and verse 4—the Bible prophesies, or proclaims, concerning Jesus, *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men”* (John 1:4). And then, look, if you will, while you’re still in the Gospel of John, in John chapter 9 and verse 5. Jesus said, *“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world”* (John 9:5). And so it is natural for us to see that this lampstand pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who gives light, for that is the purpose of a lampstand, and that is the purpose of our Savior in this world. *“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”*

Now, had an ordinary man looked at the tabernacle, he would have said, “The architect who drew this made a terrible mistake: he didn’t put any windows in it.” Well, God didn’t want any windows in it. Inside that tabernacle it was to be pitch dark, and there was to be no illumination except the illumination of the golden lampstand, because, God is saying, there are two kinds of light. There is natural light; and then there is supernatural light. Christ represents supernatural light. The world lives in natural light. The Christian dwells in supernatural light. And, you see, there’s such a vast difference between the two.

The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14—and you needn’t turn to it—but the Bible says, *“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). The natural man lives in natural light, and he doesn’t understand the supernatural things of the Word of God. As a matter of fact, you can sit here tonight and listen to me teach about the tabernacle, but you’ll never really understand the tabernacle by hearing someone teach about it. You have to enter into the tabernacle to understand it. That is, you’ll have to know the Lord Jesus Christ that the tabernacle proclaims and portrays before you’ll ever really understand the tabernacle. In order to see this light, you have to come to the inside. Those on the outside never saw the light of the golden candlesticks. And so here is Christ, the light of the world.

And may I tell you, friends, that the thing that Memphis, Tennessee, needs is the light that Jesus gives. You know, every time I pass these nightclubs, and these strip joints, and these liquor stores, I just have a ritual on my way home every day. I just pray against them. When I just pass, I put a solemn curse in the name of Jesus upon every one of them. I don’t cuss them. Don’t misunderstand what I’m saying. I put a curse upon them in the name of Jesus. Not upon the owner; I love the owner. I pray for the people who work there, and the poor benighted girls, and so forth. But I say, “God, in the name

of Jesus, I put a curse—a solemn, holy, righteous curse—upon all that business.” But let me tell you, sometimes we feel like, you know, that we want to organize; and sometimes I feel like getting a group of people and going down and picketing; and sometimes I feel like, you know, just doing all sorts of things. But, friend, those are carnal weapons.

Do you know what the real weapon is? Light! You can’t take a shovel and shovel darkness out of this room. You can’t take a broomstick and beat it out. But there’s one thing darkness cannot stand—and it’s light. Did you know that? When you turn on the light, the darkness must go. And, so many times, we’ve done everything else but preach Jesus; we’ve done everything else but exalt Jesus. *Friend, what this world needs is Jesus Christ, and what this city needs is Jesus Christ. And anything we do that is less than proclaiming Jesus Christ is destined to fail.* Darkness knows not two enemies—not three—but one. The only enemy darkness knows is light. And, oh, how foolish we are if we don’t preach Christ, who is the light of the world! He’s the only One who can do anything about the stygian darkness that this world and this city dwell in.

All right. And so, first of all, we’re saying that there’s a lesson concerning Christ. And we see, in verse 31, that Christ is the light.

B. Christ Is the Lord

But we’ll also see, in verse 31, that Christ is the Lord. Christ is the Lord, because also it says, “*Thou shalt make a [lampstand] of pure gold: of beaten work*” (Exodus 25:31)—“*pure gold: of beaten work.*” And this pictures Christ the Lord.

Gold is a symbol of deity; brass is a symbol of judgment. But now that we’ve come inside the building itself, we’re no longer in the courtyard, but we come inside the building itself. We leave the brass behind. From now on, we’re dealing with the gold. There was the brazen altar. There was the brazen laver. But now we’re with the gold. The shimmering, beautiful, expensive, glorious golden candlestick pictured the Lord Jesus Christ. But note, it was beaten gold, for the Bible says, “*He was bruised for our iniquities*” (Isaiah 53:5). And the Lord Jesus Christ let the blows of this world fall upon Him that you and I might be made like unto our dear, sweet, and precious Savior.

C. Christ Is the Life

And so, in verse 31, we see that Christ is the light, because it is a lampstand. Christ is the Lord, because it is pure gold. And then we see that Christ is the life: the light, the Lord, and the life. Now, notice, as we continue to read in verse 31, the Bible says that—it speaks of “a shaft with its branches, its bowls, its knobs, and its flowers, shall be of the same” (Exodus 25:31).

Now, what does this mean? Well, really, the knobs, the bowls, and the flowers are speaking of the bud, the flower, and the fruit that grows on a branch—the bud, the

flower, the fruit—and a very special kind of fruit: almonds. Now, why almonds? Well, what's so interesting about almonds? Well, in the Near East, they call the almond tree the "wakeful tree," or, "the tree that awakens first," because it speaks of resurrection; it speaks of life.

Let me give you just a little clue here, if you'll turn back to Numbers chapter 17 and verse 8. Turn on to Numbers. If you're in Exodus, take a right turn. All right, Numbers chapter 17 and verse 8: *"And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds"* (Numbers 17:8). Can you imagine a walking cane? That's what it was: just a walking cane. Aaron's rod that he had out in the desert, that he'd used to strike at snakes with, that he would use to herd the sheep with, that he would lean upon his staff: just a dead stick. And they looked at it—and there are leaves; and there are buds; and there are flowers and fruit. And all of this is a type, a picture, of life out of death. It typifies—it pictures—resurrection.

And here we see on this candlestick the same thing. We see the bud. We see the flower. We see the fruit. And it speaks to me of Christ, our life. It speaks of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, in verse 31, I see Jesus as light, as Lord, and as life.

II. A Lesson Concerning the Saint

All right, but now, not only is there a lesson concerning the Savior; there's also a lesson concerning the saint. And we continue to read now. We go back to our passage in Exodus 25 and continue to read. And we'll find out that the Lord also speaks about those of us who are here tonight. *"And six branches"*—this is verse 32—*"shall come out of the sides of it;"*—now you know by now that six is the number of man. Six branches shall come out of the side of it. All right—*"three branches of the [lampstand] out of the one side, and three branches of the [lampstand] out of the other side"* (Exodus 25:32). And then he goes on to describe the fruit, the blossoms, and the buds that are also to be upon the branches, because our life is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, what does this speak of? Here is a central shaft. And out of that central shaft there come three branches on this side and three branches on that side. Now, listen very carefully. One is the number of deity, or the number of unity. *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD"* (Deuteronomy 6:4). And there is that central shaft, representing the vine. And then, coming out on either side are three branches on one side and three branches on the other, making the number of man. And so here is man and God in perfect union. And then, when you get man and God together, you don't have six—nor one—but you have seven, which is the perfect number.

I was traveling on a boat across the Sea of Galilee with a Jewish guide, and we had just recently been to the Israeli place of government, the Knesset, the Israeli parliament house there. And out in front was a big piece of statuary. Well, I don't guess you would call it a statue, but a figure: the menorah; a great, huge, bronze lampstand, which is a nationally known symbol in Israel. Here was the central shaft, and here were six branches: three on one side and three on the other. And our guide had just shown us this. And I'd been trying to witness to him all the whole trip. And finally I found my place to hone in on, and I spent one of the most delightful hours I've ever known, riding across the Sea of Galilee, describing to that dear friend what I'm describing to you tonight: how all of this is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, who said, "*I am the vine, ye are the branches*" (John 15:5). Jesus said that in John chapter 15, verse 5: "*I am the vine, ye are the branches*"—well, all the whole fifteenth chapter of John. And then Jesus said, "You abide in me, and let my words abide in you, and then you'll be fruitful" (John 15:7).

You see, they understood what Jesus was talking about, because here in the central shaft, here are the arms abiding in that central shaft covered with buds and flowers and fruit. Jesus said, as we abide in Him, then our lives will become fruitful. And, you know, there's such a wonderful lesson tucked here in the menorah or the golden candlestick.

Say, have you learned to abide? You see, it is only as these six branches would abide in that central branch that they could either give light or bear fruit. Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world*" (John 9:5). But then He said, "You are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14).

Now, how do we become the light of the world? Well, as we stay attached to Jesus, who is the light of the world. It's very simple, isn't it? "*I am the light of the world.*" "You are the light of the world." Why? Because all of this was one solid piece. You know, it was all made out of one piece of gold. And then, Jesus is the One who gives life. "*In him was life; and the life was the light of men*" (John 1:4): that's what John says. You see, this pictures light and life at the same time: "*In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.*" And just as we abide in Him, and we give forth light, when we abide in Him, we bear fruit. And that's all: that's the only business I have in the world; that's the only business you have in the world, is to bear light and to bear fruit. Isn't that right? We're not generators; we just bear light—that's all. We just bear it; we don't produce it. And we're not the tree; we're just the branch. We don't produce the fruit; we just bear the fruit. And so there's only one thing necessary for us to do—and that's to abide in Jesus.

You know, the Christian life really isn't very complicated at all. You can reduce the Christian life to one word: abide. That's all: just abide in Jesus. You don't have to worry about anything else. I see Christians running around knocking things over with the religious heebie-jeebies. Somebody said, "If Baptists had a patron saint, he'd be St. Vitus." We're just so nervous. You know, the Christian life is never meant to be

drudgery, and it's not meant to be complicated. It's just one thing: abiding in Jesus; just living our lives in complete union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And the light, the life, the fruit: it all comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. One, the central shaft: a symbol of sovereignty; six: a symbol of man. Sixes by themselves are nothing, but the one plus the six—seven—make perfection: perfect fruitfulness, perfect light, perfect life, all in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, oh, would to God that I could learn to abide in the Lord Jesus more than I do! This is my job; it's your job: to abide in the Lord Jesus.

III. A Lesson Concerning the Spirit

All right now, not only is there a lesson concerning the Savior, and not only is there a lesson concerning the saints, but there's also a lesson concerning the Spirit.

Now we said at the beginning that it was imperative that we understand that there were no candles on this configuration. And we call it a candlestick in some translations; but it was a lampstand, not candles, as we know them. The Jews did not use candles, as we know them, in their worship. They never would have thought of such a thing. They used lampstands that were fed by oil. And oil is a symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Look, if you will, please, in Exodus chapter 27, for a moment, and verse 20—Exodus chapter 27 and verse 20: *“And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always”* (Exodus 27:20). So here was a lamp that burned on pure olive oil. And if you understand the Old Testament types, you will understand that pure olive oil was used for anointing. And the anointing was symbolic of the presence of the Holy Spirit of God.

Let me show you how the oil is used for anointing. Look, for example, in Leviticus chapter 8 and verse 12—and you're right in the neighborhood of Leviticus—Leviticus chapter 8 and verse 12: *“And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him”* (Leviticus 8:12). So Aaron the high priest, when he was sanctified, getting ready to be a high priest, had oil poured on his head. And that pictures the Holy Spirit being poured out upon Aaron the high priest.

But it pictured more than the Holy Spirit being poured out upon Aaron the high priest, for that was but a prophecy of the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the Lord Jesus Christ and upon the Church. And so the oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit. And so, remember now that this central shaft that had a lampstand on it, which was higher than the others, and then the other six branches, represent the Holy Spirit energizing both the Savior and the Church. Let me say that again. It pictures the Holy Spirit energizing both the Savior and the Church.

Now, listen, and draw up closely for a moment. I want to tell you something I've told you before, but you may not have heard it. Jesus Christ did all that He did in the power and the anointing of the Holy Ghost. His ministry was under the anointing oil. The light

that Jesus gave forth was the light of the Spirit burning in Jesus' life. Now this may not seem important to you. As a matter of fact, that truth may have gone right over your head, and it may seem quite bland to you that I say that. But when I finish, if you'll listen, it will be one of the most thrilling lessons you've ever learned in your life: that the Holy Spirit energized Jesus for all the work that He did for the Father.

Now you say, "Why is that so important?" Because Jesus Christ is our example, and Jesus Christ is our pattern. Now, look, and you'll see what I mean in just a moment. Look in Acts chapter 10, verse 38—Acts 10:38—and here we read "*how God anointed...*"—that means, "poured out the oil of the Holy Spirit"—"*how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.*" God the Father anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit. And, therefore, Jesus' ministry was in, and through, and by, the Spirit.

Look—go back to the Gospel of Luke for a moment. Luke wrote Acts. Luke also wrote the Gospel of Luke. And so, look for a moment in the Gospel of Luke. And it's so crystal clear. Now, just stay with me and pay very much attention, because, when you get the import of what I'm about to say, it will really bless your heart—unless your *blessor* is missing. Luke chapter 3 and verse 21: "*Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased*" (Luke 3:21–22). Here is Jesus Christ, not receiving the Spirit; but here is Jesus Christ being anointed by the Spirit for power, for ministry.

And so the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jesus. And Hebrews says, "Thou art anointed with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Hebrews 1:9). You see, the central shaft was the highest of all. Jesus Christ was perfectly filled with the Spirit. None of us are. But "Jesus Christ was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows"—that is, "His brethren." Here is Jesus, the very pinnacle; and here God has poured the holy oil out—the Holy Spirit—upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's why Jesus was such a light: because Jesus was burning the oil of the Holy Spirit.

Now, watch. You're in Luke chapter 3, verses 21 through 23; now, look in Luke chapter 4, verse 1: "*And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness*" (Luke 4:1). Here Jesus is now filled with the Spirit. Here's Jesus being led by the Spirit. Notice in verse 14: "*And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee*" (Luke 4:14). Jesus went to face the devil under the leadership of the Spirit. Jesus defeated the devil and came out of that temptation experience in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Notice, in chapter 4, verse 18, Jesus stood in the synagogue and opened the Word

of God—and this is what Jesus read from the Word of God. Listen to it: “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel*” (Luke 4:18). Not only did Jesus face the devil in the power of the Holy Spirit; Jesus preached in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And how did Jesus Christ come forth out of the grave? The Bible tells us—and we won’t turn to this—but in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 14, that Jesus, by the Spirit, “*offered himself*” (Hebrews 9:14). And then—that is, Jesus died in the power of the Holy Spirit—and then we find out that, in Romans chapter 8, Jesus Christ was raised by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:11). All of Jesus’ ministry was in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, understand, Jesus is God. But when Jesus came to this earth, He became man. And, as man, Jesus received the anointing of the Holy Spirit, just like I must and just like you must. Now if Jesus had come to earth and behaved as God, He couldn’t be my example. If Jesus had gone into the wilderness and as God defeated the devil, He could never have been my example. I imagine—though the Bible doesn’t say it, I believe it is within the realm of sanctified imagination—that Jesus said to Satan when He met him there in the wilderness, “Satan, I want you to know that as God, which I am, I could obliterate you this very moment. I could defeat you as God. But I’m not going to do it, Satan. I’m going to defeat you as man.” Jesus met Satan, not as God; Jesus met Satan as man. Jesus was man, just as much as though He were not God at all. And Jesus was God, as though He were not man at all. He wasn’t half-man and half-God; not all God and no man; not all man and no God. He was the God-man: never been another like Him. He is the *monogenes*, God’s only begotten Son: never another like the Lord Jesus Christ.

But when Jesus performed His ministry—now, watch—Jesus never pulled rank on us. Jesus never did something that you and I don’t have the privilege and the prerogative of doing. Jesus never said, “Well, I’m going to use my prerogatives as deity and defeat Satan.” Jesus said, “I’ll depend upon the same power that Adrian Rogers must depend upon in Memphis, Tennessee: the Holy Spirit.” You see, both the central shaft and the branches all burn from the same oil. And that oil represents the Holy Spirit. God anointed Jesus with the Holy Ghost and with power; and Jesus, through the Holy Ghost, went about doing good—or, the Holy Spirit.

I had a lady ask me, in Oklahoma—she said, “What’s the difference between the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit?” There’s none: same word in the Greek. Some of us are just used to saying, “Holy Ghost,” because that’s the way the King James translates it. “Holy Spirit.”

This is the way that Jesus Christ did His work: in the power of the Holy Spirit. And what a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful lesson it is to me, that the very same power that Jesus Christ used in His life is available to me! And the very thing that caused Jesus to

be a bright and shining light, and caused Jesus to be the light of the world, causes me to be the light of the world. The very same force that energized Jesus and gave Him life can energize me and give me life; the very same force that caused Jesus to be fruitful can cause me to be fruitful, as long as I abide in the vine and receive the oil. What a wonderful, wonderful lesson!

On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, there sat upon every man's head what? Cloven tongues of fire. You see, the Lord, when He poured out the oil, He lit the fire. That's what it's all about—that's what it's all about: that we are to be light of the world. We are those six branches, now unified with that one central branch, making perfection. And so all I have to do, friend, is to abide and shine; all I have to do is abide and bear fruit. You never saw a lamp trying to burn; it just burns. You never saw a branch trying to bear fruit; it just bears fruit, when it abides in the vine. Jesus said, "You abide in me, and I in you, and then you're going to bring forth much fruit" (John 15:7).

Now, you see, if this had been a candle, the candle will burn itself out in a while. And the candle gives of its own substance, but the lampstand burns the oil. Say, don't you think that it's about time you started burning the oil and stop trying to be a candle? You see, you'll not make nearly so much smoke, and you'll burn a whole lot longer. And what a beautiful fire it will be when you stop burning the wick and start burning the oil! The oil is the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

It's wonderful being a Christian. It's great to abide in the Lord Jesus Christ. And it's wonderful just to take the Bible and just turn to something just as simple as a golden candlestick, and see such a wonderful picture of the Savior, who is the light, the Lord, the life; see a picture of the Church—six—imperfect—united with One—who is sovereign—making seven—perfection; ourselves giving the same light and giving the same life, because we're united to the same source. What a wonderful lesson to learn that both the central shaft and the six arms were all fed by a single source—oil—that represents the Holy Spirit of God!

Study of the Tabernacle #6

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 25, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 25:23–30

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Table of Showbread
 - A. The Specifications of the Table
 1. The Table Was Made of Wood and Gold: The Lord's Human-Divine Nature
 2. The Table Had a Crown 'Round About It: The Lord's Sovereignty
 3. The Table Had Four Rings of Gold in the Corners: The Omnipresence of the Lord
 4. The Table Had Utensils: The Availability of the Lord
 5. The Table Lifted Up the Showbread: Christ in His Glory
 - B. The Setting of the Table
 1. The Preparation of the Bread
 - a. It Pictures the Lord, as He Was Crushed and Beaten
 - b. It Pictures the Lord, as He Was Sifted
 - c. It Pictures the Lord, as He Was Baked
 2. The Portion of the Bread
 3. The Preciousness of the Bread
 4. The Partakers of the Bread
 - i. They Were to Partake of It on the Sabbath
 - C. The Satisfaction of the Table
 1. Bread Is Food to Sustain Us
 2. Bread Is Fellowship to Entertain Us
 - a. Fellowship with One Another
 - b. Fellowship with the Lord
 3. Bread Is Fullness to Maintain Us

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, turn, if you will, please, to Exodus chapter 25, as we continue our study on the tabernacle. And we're studying the tabernacle in the wilderness. And you will remember—those of you who have been here—that the tabernacle is a blueprint of every believer: the outer court representing our body; the inner court representing our soul; and that innermost place, the Holy of Holies, representing our spirit, where the

Shekinah glory of God dwelt, for God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we're children of God (Romans 8:16). And for the past few Wednesday nights we have been studying the pathway to glory, taking each piece of furniture in the tabernacle and discussing the spiritual significance of each piece.

First of all, we started with that brazen altar, which speaks of Christ, our sacrifice, where the blood was shed. And then, after you came to that first piece of furniture, the brazen altar that was there at the gate, the next piece that you came to was the brazen laver filled with water, representing the Word of God—the living Word and the written Word—and it speaks of Christ, our sanctification. For not only is He our sacrifice; He is our sanctification. And then you came on past that to the golden candelabra—or, more exactly, the golden lampstand, the seven-pronged lampstand—that represents the Lord Jesus Christ—Christ, our sight—for He gives us sight when we are born again. And we walk in the light of His love and in the light of His revelation. And so Christ is our sacrifice; Christ is our sanctification; Christ is our sight.

I. The Table of Showbread

And now we come to the table of showbread that tells us that Christ is our sustenance. He is the One that we feed upon. And so, let's continue to read here in the Bible in Exodus 25, beginning in verse 23: *"Thou shalt also make a table of shittim"—or, "acacia"—"wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about. And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about. And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of [acacia] wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway"* (Exodus 25:23–30).

Now, first of all, I want you to notice the specifications of the table; and then, I want you to notice the setting of the table, and the satisfaction of this table.

A. The Specifications of the Table

Now, the specifications of the table.

1. The Table Was Made of Wood and Gold: The Lord's Human-Divine Nature

First of all, we learn, in verses 23 and 24, that the table was made of wood and of gold. Now you will remember already that wood speaks of the humanity of Christ. "He

shall grow up...as a root out of a dry ground" (Isaiah 53:2). "A righteous man is like a tree planted by the rivers of water" (Psalm 1:3). And so the Lord, our righteous Branch, is represented in the wood—in the wood—of this table.

But it is overlaid with gold, and gold speaks of deity and royalty. And wood overlaid with gold speaks of the human-divine nature of our Redeemer. He was the God-man. Now, remember, not half-God and half-man; not all God and no man; not all man and no God: He is the God-man. Never another like Him: God's only begotten Son, unique in all creation. Man, that He might die for us; God, that He might be worthy to die for us. And how we praise God for this! And so the wood and the gold speak of His nature.

2. The Table Had a Crown 'Round About It: The Lord's Sovereignty

But then I want you to notice, in verse 24, that this table had a crown 'round about it. That's what the King James Version of the Bible calls it—and I think that's a good translation: "a crown." And this crown speaks of His sovereignty, of His royalty, because our Lord is crowned with glory and with honor. He is a royal Savior.

3. The Table Had Four Rings of Gold in the Corners: The Omnipresence of the Lord

And then, notice also, in verses 26 and 27, the Bible says that there are going to be four rings of gold in either corner of it, and there would be long rods, or staves, that would be slipped through those rings of gold. And what does that tell us of? Well, it tells us that this table was to be carried through the wilderness. That is, everywhere they went, it went. And it speaks to me of the omnipresence of our Lord Jesus Christ: that His presence is with us always. And just when I need Him, Jesus is near, amen? Isn't that true of you? It's been true of me. I tell you, He's always there to feed upon. And I thank God for His sovereignty. And I thank God for His nature. But, oh, how I thank God for His nearness!

4. The Table Had Utensils: The Availability of the Lord

And then, in verse 29: "*And thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof*" (Exodus 25:29). And all of the utensils are there. And what do they speak of? Well, they speak of the way in which the bread was brought in, and which the bread was carried out, and through which the bread was served, that rested upon this table. And this tells me of the dear Holy Spirit, who makes the Lord Jesus Christ real to us and available to us. And so it speaks to me of His availability. Not only is He near, but, bless God, being near, He's always available.

5. The Table Lifted Up the Showbread: Christ in His Glory

Then, I want you to notice, in verse 30: "*And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway*" (Exodus 25:30). Here was a table that lifted the bread up and held it up on four legs off the earth. Now this speaks of Christ in His glory; Christ

lifted up from the earth; Christ exalted. You see, the Lord is revealed to us as bread, but two kinds of bread.

He's already been revealed in the Book of Exodus as manna. Manna lay upon the ground. But this bread is not upon the ground; it's up—it's lifted up. It's on a table. You see, the manna spoke of Christ too. It came down from heaven miraculously. Christ came down from heaven. He's the virgin-born Son of God. The manna was round: that spoke of Jesus' perfection. The manna was white: that spoke of His purity. The manna lay upon the ground: that spoke of His humility. The manna sustained life: that spoke of His Saviorhood and His life-giving properties. And so the manna represented Christ, the bread of life, in His humiliation.

But the showbread represents the same Christ now, not as manna, but as showbread, in His glorification lifted up from the earth; but, still, the bread upon which every believer must feed. And so these are the specifications of the table—just all of these things. And in all of them they speak of Christ. And we could go in more detail, but, of course, time will not allow.

B. The Setting of the Table

I want you to notice the setting of the table. It was covered with bread. Notice again, in verse 30—chapter 25 and verse 30: *“And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread”* (Exodus 25:30)—*“thou shalt set upon the table shewbread.”* Now I want you to notice several things about this showbread that was set upon the table.

1. The Preparation of the Bread

I want you to notice the preparation of that bread, because both the table and the bread upon the table picture Jesus, the bread of life. And, incidentally, before we turn to the preparation for that bread, would you turn in John the sixth chapter for a moment, and note these verses? In John chapter 6, note with me verse 35: *“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst”* (John 6:35). And then, notice verse 48: *“I am that bread of life”* (John 6:48). And then, notice verse 51: *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”* (John 6:51). Now all of this that Jesus is preaching about and talking about to the Jews in John the sixth chapter is typified, prophesied, pictured, and illustrated in the Old Testament tabernacle by this bread set upon this table.

And so, notice the preparation of the bread. It doesn't tell us about it here in Exodus chapter 25. You're going to have to turn to Leviticus for a moment. And look in Leviticus, if you will, chapter 24—the next book over, Leviticus chapter 24—and let's begin reading in verse 5. God is telling now how the bread is to be prepared, and God says,

“And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron’s and his sons’;”— now, remember that Aaron and his sons were the priests—*“and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute”* (Leviticus 25:5–9).

Now, notice—let’s go back to verse 5: *“And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes.”* You know how bread is made? Well, in this day, they would take wheat; and then they would take that wheat and crush it. And then, after they would crush it very fine, they would sift it. And then, after they would sift it, they would mix it, and they would put it in the oven and bake it. Very simple. But it pictures the Lord Jesus Christ.

a. It Pictures the Lord, as He Was Crushed and Beaten

First of all, it pictures the Lord Jesus, as that wheat was crushed and beaten. It pictures the Lord Jesus, who said, *“Except a [grain] of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit”* (John 12:24). Jesus was speaking of Himself. Jesus was speaking of His death, burial, and resurrection. And Jesus likened Himself unto a grain of wheat, taken, first of all, and crushed—for *“he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him”* (Isaiah 53:5).

b. It Pictures the Lord, as He Was Sifted

And then, not only was He crushed; He was sifted. He said, *“Which of you convinceth me of sin?”* (John 8:46). You see, there was no impurity in Jesus. His life was very fine, very consistent. This bread was baked without leaven; for leaven, in the Bible, always is emblematic of evil and sin. And so this was unleavened bread—this showbread—because Jesus, whose body was crushed, and whose life had the pressures of God upon Him, was without sin, but ground exceedingly fine.

c. It Pictures the Lord, as He Was Baked

And then, it was put in the oven and baked, for the fires of God’s wrath fell upon that divine loaf that we might feed upon it. And Jesus Christ suffered the agonies of the damned for us, and Jesus Christ walked the burning ovens of hell for us, that we might feed upon Him. Jesus became our bread, because He went through the oven of affliction.

And that’s what this bread pictures, as it was crushed and beaten and sifted and baked that we might feed upon it. This was the preparation of the bread. And you see that in verse 5.

2. The Portion of the Bread

And then, in verse 6, I want you to notice the portion of the bread: *“And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD”* (Leviticus 24:6). That is, there were twelve loaves. Why twelve loaves? Because there were twelve tribes. And who were the twelve tribes? The people of God. What is God saying? “This bread is for my people. None of the world can feed at that table. This bread—this showbread—is for those who name the name of the Lord.” And Israel, in the Old Testament, pictures and typifies the Church, which is the Israel of God. And so this is the portion. That bread’s for you, dear friend; it’s for me.

3. The Preciousness of the Bread

But I want you to notice, not only the preparation, and the portion of it; I want you to notice the preciousness of it, in verse 7: *“And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row”* (Leviticus 24:7). They sprinkled it with frankincense. Or some commentators believe that, perhaps, there was a little bowl, or dish, of frankincense sitting upon each loaf of bread—frankincense: extremely valuable, extremely precious, a rare and a holy ointment that burned with a sweet incense. That speaks of the fragrance, and the preciousness, and the worth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Oh, friend, to you who believe, He is indeed precious (1 Peter 2:7).

4. The Partakers of the Bread

And then, I want you to notice, not only the preparation, and the portion, and the preciousness, but the partakers of this bread, as is illustrated here in verses 8 and 9: *“Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron’s and his sons”* (Leviticus 24:8–9). Who partook of this bread? The priests. Well, you say, “That leaves me out. I’m a Baptist.” Well, friend, you’re a Baptist priest, amen? He’s made us a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). We are a kingdom of priests.

I think all of you remember the story that Dr. Lee told about sitting on that train beside that Catholic priest. And Dr. Lee said he made up his mind he wasn’t going to talk to anybody. But that priest finally turned to him and said, “Who are you? And what do you do?” Dr. Lee couldn’t hold it any longer. He said, “I’m a king and a priest.” And then you remember the rest of the story—how it went on from there. But, finally, the priest said, “I know who you are. You’re a Baptist preacher.” He said, “That’s right.”

But listen, friend. We are *“kings and priests unto God”* (Revelation 5:10). We are a royal priesthood. It is for Aaron and his sons; that is, for those of us who, through the precious blood, have been made priests unto God. And we are a kingdom of priests.

i. They Were to Partake of It on the Sabbath

But notice, they were to partake of it on the Sabbath. “Well,” you say, “we don’t keep the Sabbath anymore.” I beg to differ with you. We do keep the Sabbath. But don’t get

up on Sunday and pray, “Lord, I thank you for this beautiful Sabbath day”—not if you’re thinking in the parlance of the Seventh Day Adventists, or not if you’re thinking in the usage of the Jewish people; because the Sabbath, in that sense, is not the first day of the week. That’s the Lord’s Day: Sunday, the first day of the week. The Sabbath is Saturday. And we don’t keep a Sabbath day.

But, friend, we do eat this bread on the Sabbath. Do I keep the Sabbath? I do keep the Sabbath. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, I keep all ten of the commandments. But when do I keep the Sabbath? I keep the Sabbath seven days a week. Every day is a holy day. Every believer is a priest. Every place is a holy place. And when we enter into the Lord Jesus Christ, we enter into that faith rest that only Jesus can give. And the Sabbath pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered, bled, and died in agony and blood that we might cease from our works and rest forever in Him. He is our rest. He is our continual, perpetual Sabbath. He is the rest that remains to the children of God.

And so, when do you feed, ye priests? Every Sabbath day. When is that? Every day, every day, every day, every day, you’re to be feeding upon this bread: this bread that was beaten, this bread that was sifted, this bread that was baked, this bread that is for the people of God. You’re to be feeding upon it. And this is the setting of the table.

C. The Satisfaction of the Table

Now I want you to notice, finally, the satisfaction of the table. You know, what is bread, when you think about it? What does it mean? Well, there are several things bread does.

1. Bread Is Food to Sustain Us

In the first place, bread is food to sustain us. Friend, you can’t live without food. You can’t live without bread. And this bread represents Jesus. Now, how do we feed upon Him, in actuality? Well, we feed when we read the Word. You remember, in John chapter 6 that we just read—and you can go back and study it when you get home—but the Lord said to them, “Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood, you don’t have any life in you” (John 6:53). And He’d said, before that, that His flesh was bread. As a matter of fact, the early Christians were accused of cannibalism, because some people, you know, didn’t understand the spiritual meaning that Jesus was affixing to this.

“Well,” you say, “how, really, do you eat His flesh? How do you drink His blood? How do you feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ? How do you partake of the bread from the showbread, the table of showbread?” Well, Jesus went on, in the sixth chapter of John, to say, “*The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life*” (John 6:63). Now, watch it—watch it now. Jesus said, “Except you feed upon me, you don’t have any life.” Then He said, “The words that I speak unto you, they’re spirit; they’re life.” Now, what does He mean by that, in John 6? He means, friend, if you want to feed upon

Jesus, you feed upon this—you feed upon this: *“The words that I speak unto you.”*

When Jesus met Satan in the wilderness, He said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matthew 4:4). You’ll live by this book, friend. This book is the written Word that tells of the living Word. And if you want to feed on the living Word, you’d better feed on the written Word. That’s what it’s about—that’s what it’s about. “The word”—“the word”—“that I speak unto you, it’s spirit; it’s life.” And you’re going to be emaciated; you’re going to be anemic; you’re going to minister deadness rather than life, preachers, if you don’t learn how to take the Word of God, and break it, and feed the multitudes with it—the Word of God.

2. Bread Is Fellowship to Entertain Us

You see the satisfaction of this table. It is food to sustain us. But it is more than food to sustain us; it is fellowship to entertain us—fellowship to entertain us.

Some people say, “I think entertainment is wrong for a Christian.” Well, you’re wrong if you think that. You’re just getting your entertainment in the wrong places. Brother, some of the sweetest times Jesus Christ ever had with His disciples were times of entertainment around a table, where He broke bread with them. And they had a whale of a good time. And don’t you ever let the devil maneuver you away from having a good time in Jesus. It is your legacy—it is your right—to have a wonderfully good time. Jesus is not a *cosmic killjoy*.

a. Fellowship with One Another

And I tell you, in the Bible, when you think of the breaking of bread, you think of fellowship. The Bible says, in Acts chapter 2, verse 42, “They continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread and in fellowship” (Acts 2:42), because bread is not only food to sustain us; it’s fellowship to entertain us. Don’t you hate to eat by yourself? I really do. I love to sit down with friends, as I had the joy of doing this afternoon, and just sit around a table. And it seems as though the food and the fellowship are meant one for the other. This is the reason that, when we have times of fellowship, we call it *breaking of bread*. And I’m so grateful—I’m so grateful—that I can have fellowship with one another, when I feed on Jesus.

You know, I just had fellowship sitting down there with ol’ Tommy when they were singing, you know, about the Lord Jesus Christ:

*Alas! and did my Savior bleed
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?*

—ISAAC WATTS

*Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Tommy said, “Isn’t that true, preacher? Oh, isn’t that true that He would die for me?” Tommy just blessed my heart just saying that to me, because together we were feasting. See? It’s one thing to be off by yourself and be feasting, but isn’t it wonderful when you can feed on Jesus together and love Jesus together? And, “As iron sharpeneth iron; so the countenance of a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 27:17). And, “*Two are better than one*” (Ecclesiastes 4:9). “*For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them*” (Matthew 18:20). And I’m so grateful that food speaks not only of that which will sustain us, but it speaks of that which will entertain us.

b. Fellowship with the Lord

But, you know, not only fellowship with one another, but fellowship with the Lord Jesus. Have you ever thought of that verse where the Lord says, in Revelation chapter 3, verse 20, “*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and*”—what?—“*sup with him, and he with me*”? (Revelation 3:20). You can’t have better company than that.

And notice He comes in, first of all, as the guest, because that’s the only way He’ll ever come in: when you invite Him in, when you open the door. But He doesn’t stay the guest very long. Notice He becomes the host—in just a few minutes. Oh, when you say, “Lord Jesus, I want you to have my all,” He says, “I want you to have my all. I’ll come in and sup with you, and you’re going to sup with me. When I sit at your table”—bless God—“you’re going to sit at my table.” And I’ll tell you, He sets a better table than you do. He really does! Oh, when you open the door, when you invite the Lord Jesus in! I feel sorry for people who’ve never done that. Oh, they believe in Jesus, but they’re not saved! Every now and then, they go to the door, and whisper a prayer through the keyhole, and shove an offering under the door; but they’ve never opened the door and said, “Come on in, Lord, and let’s sit down and fellowship together.” He with me; me with Him.

3. Bread Is Fullness to Maintain Us

You see, bread—listen—bread is food to sustain us. It is fellowship to entertain us. And this bread was fullness to maintain us—fullness to maintain us. Notice, in Leviticus chapter 24, and notice, in verse 8—Leviticus chapter 24 and verse 8: “*Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant*” (Leviticus 24:8). That is, this bread was not to run out.

There was to be plenty of it. They were to be maintained.

You know, the breads of this world run out. You remember that prodigal son in Luke the fifteenth chapter? And he took his father's inheritance and went off to a far country, and he spent everything he had. And the recession came; there arose a mighty famine in that land. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into the fields to feed the swine. And the Bible says, *"He would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him. And when he came to himself, he said,"*—what?—*"How many hired servants of my father's have"*—what?—*"bread enough and to spare..."*—*"why, even the servants, even the slaves, even the lowest in my father's household, have more bread than they know what to do with."* You see, listen. God sets a lavish table. *"Even the servants, even the hired servants"*—*"have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"* *"I know what I'll do"*—*"I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father"* (Luke 15:16–20). And you know the rest of his story.

But let's use a little sanctified imagination. Let's just imagine that there was a pig there in the hog pen who said to the prodigal, "You know, I'm tired of living in this pigpen. Where are you going?" The prodigal said, "I'm tired of the pigpen too. I'm going to my father's house." The pig says, "That sounds like a pretty nice place. Explain it to me." So the prodigal, as best he could, tried to tell the pig what his father's house was like. The pig said, "Well, I just believe I'm going with you." So he went to his father, and he said, "Father, you give me the husks that belong to me. I'm going..."—this is the prodigal pig—"I am going to leave home."

Now you just notice this prodigal pig as he goes with the prodigal son. And they arrive at the father's house. And the prodigal pig comes in, and he has to eat what the prodigal son eats. You know, the prodigal son had been eating what the pig had been eating. Now the pig starts to eat what the son eats. Why, they have the fatted calf. They have the sweet breads. They have the delicious libations. They have all of this. And after that the pig says, "You know, this doesn't taste quite like that swill we used to have. No, it doesn't have the same flavor. It has no real zing to it." And then it's time for the pig to lie down and go to sleep. And they put that prodigal pig, put him in a nice bedroom there with clean sheets. They say, "Be careful where you walk. Don't mess up anything. Mama doesn't like you to mess things up. Don't track the house now. This is Mama's place and Daddy's place. It's all clean. Here are some nice clean sheets. But be sure that you take a bath before you go to bed, because..." Well, you know, this old pig, he tries to adapt for a while. But, after a while, you know what the pig says? "I don't belong here. I'm going back home. I will arise and go to my father." And it's happened,

according to the true proverb, the sow that was washed, it returned again to the wallow (2 Peter 2:22). Isn't that right?

Listen, friend. Let me tell you something. Before long, your true nature's going to show up. A child of God may stray away for a while, but I want to tell you something. If he loves the Lord Jesus Christ, if he's really saved, if he's really born again, there's going to be something in him that says, "I can't stand it here. I've got to get back to my Father's house. I will arise and go to my Father. I'm tired of these husks."

You women sitting around watching television and these soap operas—"As the Stomach Pumps" and "As the World Turns"—if you're content to feed on that sort of thing; and if you're content to read the newspaper and watch television; and if you're content with football games, and ball games, and this thing, and that thing; and there is not a hunger in your heart to leave the husks of this world and go to your Father's house, where there's bread enough and to spare, I believe you've never known the Father that I know. And there are some of you who wonder why people for a while come to the Father's house and they try it for a while, and then they go back to the pigpen. I'll tell you why: They're prodigal pigs—prodigal pigs! They've never been born again. They've got that old nature. And the sow that's washed has returned again.

And I want to tell you, this is bread to maintain us. The Father will never wear out, never give out. In our Father's house, there's bread enough, and to spare. And I thank God for it. You don't have to be in the back alley eating tin cans with the devil's billy goats, and you don't have to be down in the far country eating husks with Satan's swine; but you can sit at the table with the King of kings, and feast upon Jesus.

Conclusion

I'd be a Christian if there were no heaven and no hell. *"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever"* (Psalm 23:5–6). But if there were no house of the Lord forever, I'm content to sit at this table, my Father's table of showbread, that represents Jesus, the bread of life.

Study of the Tabernacle #7

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 3, 1976
Main Scripture Text: Exodus 30:1–10, 32–33, 37–38

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Altar of Incense
 - A. The Purpose of the Altar
 1. Incense Speaks of God's Intercession for Us
 2. The Incense Speaks of God's Intercession Through Us
 - B. The Pattern of the Altar
 1. The Dimensions of the Altar
 2. The Materials of the Altar
 3. The Horns of the Altar
 4. The Golden Rings of the Altar
 5. The Crown Upon the Altar
 - C. The Position of the Altar
 1. The Altar Was in Front of the Mercy Seat
 2. The Altar Was Linked with the Lampstand
 - D. The People of the Altar

Conclusion

Introduction

Christ, what? Christ, our sacrifice—Christ, our sacrifice. You've got it right the third time. All right, Christ, our sacrifice. And then, secondly, we come to the laver; and the laver speaks of Christ, our sanctification. Okay now, we're doing better. And then, we go from the laver—and, of course, there are two sides—and we'll just cross over on the side to the right; and there's the table of showbread—and that is Christ, our sustenance. You're doing better yet. All right. And then, on the other side, across from the table of showbread is a what? The lampstand, or candlestick. Really, the KJV—King James Version—says that it's a candlestick, but a more apt and proper translation is a "lampstand," because these are lamps that burn with oil—and not picturing a candle that burns and consumes itself, but a lamp that burns from another power. And Christians, of course, are to operate on the power of the Holy Spirit, who is God's heavenly oil. And the lampstand pictures Christ, our sight. Okay now, that's very good. You get an A-minus.

I. The Altar of Incense

And now we want to go on and consider the golden altar. And this is the altar of incense; and it speaks of Christ, our supplication—Christ, our supplication.

A. The Purpose of the Altar

And let's look now in Exodus chapter 30 and verse 1: *“And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon”* (Exodus 30:1). Let's just stop right there and speak of the purpose of this altar. The purpose of this altar is to burn incense upon. *“And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon.”*

1. Incense Speaks of God's Intercession for Us

Now, what does incense stand for, and what does incense teach? Incense, boys and girls, is a perfume that you burn. When you burn it, it gives off a sweet-smelling odor. And it just fills the room with the smell of the burning of incense. And, in the Bible, incense illustrates and is symbolical of prayer, or intercession, to God.

Let me give you an example of where you can check this out for yourself. For example, in Psalm 141, verse 2—it's a very key verse; you might want to write it right out by verse 30—Psalm 141, verse 2—David said, *“Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice”* (Psalm 141:2)—*“Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense.”* Now this incense that was burned in the tabernacle burned continually and continuously. It kept burning as it was fed by the coals from all the brazen altar. And as the priest would take this mixture of spices and put it upon the altar of incense, continually, the smoke was going up there inside the tabernacle and perfuming the tabernacle.

Now, what does it speak of? It speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, who continually ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Now we're not just reading that into this. This is actually, literally, the meaning. That Old Testament tabernacle is a picture of Jesus Christ. Sometimes people think, when you study the tabernacle, and you see this in one particular thing, and that in another particular thing, that our imagination is just running wild, and that we're just imagining things or reading things in. But that's not the case.

Look, for example, if you will, please, in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25. In Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25, we read about the unfinished work of Christ. The finished work of Christ is the brazen altar. Christ died for our sin. But the unfinished work of Christ is the golden altar, the altar of incense. And the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25, *“Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them”* (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus constantly, always, just as this sweet incense went up—Jesus, who is our intercession and our supplication—ever lives. Day after day after day, in the heavenlies, Jesus is

making intercession for us.

Now, just keep that in mind: that is what Jesus is doing. That's Hebrews 7:25. And then, look in Hebrews chapter 8, and read about the first five verses with me. Paul says—and I believe Paul wrote Hebrews, but I'm not dogmatic about it—or, they say the writer of Hebrews says, *“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum...”*—this is it! You want to understand what the Book of Hebrews is about? Well, look at it—*“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary,”*—now, watch it—*“and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”* Now there was a tabernacle in the wilderness, but that was just a picture, just an illustration, just a prophecy, of the true tabernacle. There was a priest in the wilderness, but that priest was just a picture, just a prophecy, just an illustration, of Jesus, our high priest. Now, watch: *“For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:”*—now, watch verse 5—*“who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things,”*—this Old Testament tabernacle and the Old Testament priests were examples and they were shadows of heavenly things—*“as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount”* (Hebrews 8:1–5).

Now, when God came to Moses and said, “Moses, I want you to make this tabernacle,” He said, “Moses, you do everything just like I tell you to do it, for it is an illustration, an example, a shadow, of a true tabernacle that's in heaven.” And Jesus is the high priest. And just as these Old Testament priests offered incense that went up to God continually, Jesus is now in that tabernacle in heaven offering incense that is going to the Father continually. And what is that incense? *“He ever liveth to make intercession for [us]”* (Hebrews 7:25).

Continue to read. Look in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 24: *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true;”*—the holy place is made with hands. The tabernacle and the temple were just figures of the true place—just types, illustrations, of the true—*“but”*—where is Christ entered?—*“into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”* (Hebrews 9:24). Where is Jesus? He's in heaven. What's He doing? Carrying on the function of a priest. How? Offering incense. What is that incense? Intercession—*“He ever liveth to make intercession for [us].”* And so when an Old Testament priest offered intercession upon the golden altar, it was just a picture of Jesus, our great high priest, who offers intercession for us.

Isn't it great to know that Jesus is praying for us? Isn't that wonderful? See, this is the reason we have eternal security. The Bible says, "*Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him*" (Hebrews 7:25). Now, what does that mean: "able to save unto the uttermost"? Does that mean He's able to save the worst sinner? He is, but that isn't what that means. When the Bible says, "He's able to save unto the uttermost," it means, He'll save you all the way—all the way. He'll never let you go. He'll save you to the uttermost. He'll save you right down to the end. He'll never let you go. Why? Because "*He ever liveth to make intercession.*"

I want to ask you a question. Did Jesus ever pray a prayer that wasn't answered? The answer, of course, is, no. Jesus, when He prayed, He said, "Father, I thank you that you always hear me—always" (John 11:41). Jesus always prayed, "*Not my will, but thine, be done*" (Luke 22:42). And Jesus always prayed in the will of God. And Jesus' prayer was always answered. "I thank thee, Father, that thou always hearest me."

And let me tell you what Jesus Christ has prayed for you and what He is praying for you. Look, please, in John the seventeenth chapter for a moment. People don't understand the eternal security of the believer. They think that we are eternally secure because we're so good, because we hold out. That's not what it is, friend. It is that Jesus Christ is praying for us.

Now Jesus prayed for His disciples in John the seventeenth chapter. And look in John 17, verse 9. He said, "*I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine*" (John 17:9). Now, notice what He prays for His disciples. He says, in verse 15, "*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil*" (John 17:15). Jesus didn't pray that we'd be taken to heaven when we get saved, but Jesus said, "Now, Father, I'm not praying for the people of the world. I'm praying for my sheep. There's a very special prayer that I'm praying. Here's the incense that I'm offering. I pray, Father, that you will keep them from the evil." Literally, this means, "from the evil one—from the devil." "I pray for this."

You say, "Oh, that's so wonderful! Jesus prayed for the disciples! Would to God He had prayed for me!" Friend, He did, and He does. Notice, as you continue on down this chapter, and notice, in verse 20, Jesus said, "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word*" (John 17:20). He might as well have said, "Not only am I praying for Peter, James, and John, but I'm praying for Adrian Rogers, and Tommy Lane, and Dale Palmer, and you, and you, and you, and you. I pray for these disciples. I pray not that you'll take them out of the world, but I pray that you'll keep them from the evil. And I don't just pray for them; I look down through the corridor of time, and I see every blood-bought child of God who will believe on me through the ministry and the word of the apostles. And I pray, Father, that you will keep

them.” And the Father always hears the Son. “I thank thee, Father, thou always hearest me; you always hear me” (John 11:41). “Wherefore He’s able to save unto the uttermost, because He ever lives to make intercession” (Hebrews 7:25). That’s the unfinished work of Jesus. He ever lives, making intercession night and day for us, as this sweet perfume ascending up into the nostrils of God.

2. The Incense Speaks of God’s Intercession Through Us

But not only does this golden altar speak of Jesus’ ministry of intercession for us; it also speaks of Jesus’ ministry of intercession through us—because not only is the tabernacle a description of Deity; the tabernacle is also a blueprint of the believer. And so the tabernacle also pictures, not only Jesus interceding for us, but Jesus interceding through us in our prayer life.

Let me point that out to you. Look, for example, in Revelation chapter 5 and verse 8. John the Apostle saw a scene in heaven that amazed him. And this is what he saw, in Revelation chapter 5, verse 8: “And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden bowls...”—or, “vials”—“full of”—the King James says, “odours,” but the word means, “incense;” and some Bibles have it “incense,” and this is exactly what it means—“having golden bowls full of incense, which are”—what?—“the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8). The incense: the prayers of the saints.

Now I want you to notice something that will get a little sweeter. Turn to Revelation chapter 8, and begin in verse 1: “*And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came...*”—now this other angel is separate. This is a special angel—“*Another [messenger] came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer;*”—the word *censer* means, “something to burn incense in; a golden incense burner”—“*and there was given unto him much incense,*”—oh, not a little, but a whole lot—“*that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne*” (Revelation 8:1–3).

Hallelujah! Oh, this angel is Jesus. This messenger—this other messenger—is Jesus Christ. And He’s coming with hands full of incense. And He takes that sweet incense of His worth, that sweet incense of His fragrance, and He mixes it with our prayers, and offers it before the throne. Isn’t that wonderful? You see, the incense is the prayers of the saints. That’s what chapter 5 tells us. But then chapter 8 tells us that this heavenly messenger, with much incense, just mixes that in with our prayers. And that’s what this tabernacle speaks of, and this altar of incense. It’s just a figure; it’s an illustration; it’s a pattern; it’s a type; it’s a prophecy that one day every blood-bought child of God will be able to offer his prayer to God, not with the brass of his emotions,

not with the wood of his human goodness, but with the sweet incense of the worth of Jesus, both hands full of incense, saying, “Father, in Jesus’ name I pray.” That’s what this incense is: it’s the name of Jesus, the person of Jesus, the work of Jesus.

And so, how do we pray? Oh, friend, the incense represents the prayer. But notice that this incense was burned with fire from the brazen altar. The brazen altar represents the blood sacrifice. Oh, but when you pray in the power of the blood and in the name of Jesus, your prayer is going through—your prayer is going through—altars: coals taken from the brazen altar and burned upon the golden altar.

You see, there were two altars. The brazen altar spoke of Christ and His humiliation. That’s at the gate; that’s Christ, our sacrifice. But the golden altar speaks of Christ and His exaltation. The brazen altar is for sinners. The golden altar is for saints. The brazen altar is for sacrifice. The golden altar is for supplication. But you can’t come to the golden altar until you come past the brazen altar. Brass speaks of judgment. Gold speaks of glory. And, oh, dear friend, when your sins are put under the blood, then you’re ready to pray; then you can come to the Father in the name of Jesus, as a child of Jesus.

B. The Pattern of the Altar

And so we have talked, first of all, about the purpose of the altar. It’s an altar of incense. Now, let’s go back to Exodus chapter 30, and I want you to think about the pattern of the altar. Let’s look at it and see what it tells us about prayer and about the sweet hour of prayer.

1. The Dimensions of the Altar

All right, first of all, I’m reading Exodus chapter 30, and let’s look at the dimensions of the altar—verse 2: *“A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof”* (Exodus 30:2). And let’s just stop right there. And let me say that this was the smallest piece of furniture. And this tells me we’re not heard for our much speaking. But it was also the tallest piece of furniture, and that tells me that we’re never nearer to heaven than when we’re on our knees. It’s the tallest piece of furniture in all of the tabernacle: the dimensions of it.

2. The Materials of the Altar

But I want you to notice also the materials of it. It was made of wood and of gold. Notice chapter 30, verse 1: *“Of [acacia] wood shalt thou make it”* (Exodus 30:1). And then, verse 3: *“And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold”* (Exodus 30:3). And so it’s made of wood and gold. And, already, you know that the wood speaks of the humanity of Jesus, and the gold speaks of the deity of Jesus. And this is beautiful everywhere we see it, but it is especially true when we think of prayer. It is especially true when we

think of intercession, for Jesus Christ is our mediator. And He is our special mediator, because of the wood and because of the gold—the wood of His humanity and the gold of His deity. That’s the reason the Bible says, in 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5, *“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Timothy 2:5). The wood and the gold of Jesus make Him our intercessor, make Him our supplication, make Him our mediator. You see, on the one hand, He puts down the wood of His humanity; and, on the other hand, He puts down the gold of His deity. He is both. He is the God-man. *“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”*

You remember what Job prayed, in the Book of Job, when he had all of his erstwhile comforters who were criticizing him and carping and giving advice? Job knew—Job knew—that he had problems. He knew that he had confusion. He knew that He needed guidance. And Job’s heart just cried out, and he said, “Oh, would to God that there were a daysman,”—that’s the word Job used: “a daysman”—“that he might lay his hand upon us both” (Job 9:33). Job said, “Look, I’m not God, that I can reason with Deity; and God is not man, that He’ll come down to my level.” And Job said, “I’ll never be able to talk with Him, because He’s God and I’m man. And He’ll never be able to understand me and commune with me, because He’s God and I’m man.”

It’s almost as though there’s a dispute between a king and a beggar, and you’re looking for somebody to be a mediator in this argument. And the king says, “I’ll get another king to act as an arbitrator,” and the beggar says, “No siree. You two kings get together. I never would...” And he says, “I’ll tell you what. I’ll get another beggar.” And the king says, “Ah, no. You two beggars will take everything I have.” And so, but, what if, somehow—what if, somehow, there is one who represents the qualities of beggar and king in one person? What if there is someone who can take the qualities of both: a daysman? This is what Job wanted: “somebody who could lay his hand upon us both.”

You know who Job was crying out for, don’t you? Jesus! Jesus: God and man in one person! This is what the altar of incense speaks of: wood and gold. Oh, this is the reason we’re able to get through to God! This is the reason we’re able to intercede: because of the deity and the humanity of our Savior.

3. The Horns of the Altar

And then, notice, if you will, the horns of this altar. Notice, as we continue to read, verse 2: *“And two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same”* (Exodus 30:2). And then the Bible teaches that there are four horns—there are four horns—on the four corners of this golden altar. Now, kids, we’re not talking about trumpets or automobile horns. They’re talking about animal horns, just like billy goats have, or like a cow would have. And on each corner of this altar there was just a horn, and it was covered with gold. But it was a horn, and it pictured an animal horn.

And what does that speak of? A horn, in the Bible, speaks of power. Now, in Luke 1, verse 69, you can see it speaks of the Lord, who *“hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David”* (Luke 1:69): a horn of salvation, a horn of deliverance, a horn of power. The horns speak of the saving power of our Lord. And there are four horns—one in each of the four corners—that tell us that prayer reaches to the four quarters of the earth—four is the earth number—and that prayers and supplications should be made for all men, and that Jesus intercedes for all, and that we should intercede for all.

4. The Golden Rings of the Altar

And then, verse 4: *“And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal”* (Exodus 30:4). That is, the altar is to be carried. Everywhere they went they were to carry this golden altar.

Now, what’s the lesson there? The lesson is, dear friend, that prayer is for all times and for all places. You don’t have to be in a certain place to pray. Jesus is always present to hear our cry. Intercession is not limited to time or to place. And so, when you go to school tomorrow, you’ve got to carry this golden altar with you. And when you go to work tomorrow, you’d better carry this golden altar with you. And when you go on a vacation, you’d better take a vacation with God, and not from God, because this altar is to be portable.

5. The Crown Upon the Altar

Now, let me say also that you’ll notice that there is to be a crown upon this altar—verse 4: *“And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it”* (Exodus 30:4). It has a crown. And a golden crown speaks of the sovereignty of our Lord. You see, the brazen altar had no crown of gold, but this altar has a crown of gold, for the brazen altar speaks of Christ in His humiliation; the golden altar speaks of Christ in His exaltation. And so He’s crowned King of kings, as He’s interceding for us. And, therefore, He’s not interceding with uncertainty. He’s not just simply pleading. He is commanding with authority, because He is the King and the Lord.

C. The Position of the Altar

Well, I wish I had more time to talk about the pattern of the altar, but we must rush on. We’ve talked about the purpose of it, and we’ve talked about the pattern of it; now the next thing I want you to notice is the position of this altar. Notice where it sits, in Exodus chapter 30, verse 6: *“And thou shalt put it before the vail that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee.”* And then, notice verse 7: *“And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, shall he burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the*

lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the LORD throughout your generations” (Exodus 30:6–8).

1. The Altar Was in Front of the Mercy Seat

Now, where was this golden altar? It was right before the veil. And the veil was right before the Mercy Seat. And the Mercy Seat represents the throne of God, where the Shekinah glory of God dwelt. That is, the way to come into the throne room is past the golden altar, you see. The way to approach God is through prayer and through intercession. That’s what He’s talking about. God says, in this verse, it’s there where God dwells. And God says, in Exodus 25, verse 22, *“There I will meet with thee”* (Exodus 25:22). Where? Right beyond the golden altar. And the reason that God’s not real to some folks is they just try to bypass the golden altar. And you can’t do it—you can’t do it. If you want to come into the throne room, if you want to dwell where the Shekinah glory is, you must come past the golden altar.

Have you done that? Have you done that? Do you come with your hands full of the worth of Jesus, sweet incense? Is there lifting from your life, continually and perpetually, a prayer of praise to God? For we are to *“pray without ceasing”* (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

2. The Altar Was Linked with the Lampstand

But I want you to notice something now. Not only was this golden altar right in front of the Mercy Seat, but it is linked with the lampstand. Now, notice—God says, in verses 7 and 8, that when Aaron, the high priest, comes in to trim the lamps, then he’s to put incense upon the altar (Exodus 30:7–8). And the trimming of the lamps, and the burning of the incense, and the refreshing of the incense, go side by side; they are linked together.

Now, what does that tell us? It tells us, friend, that our intercession and our testimony must always be inseparably linked together. You can’t let your light shine unless your incense burns. Now that’s what He’s saying.

You see, there are some folks who just want to burn incense, and there are other folks who just want to trim lamps; but the two are linked together. And I don’t believe that this was just put in there by chance. I believe, as God told Moses, “You do everything just like I told you.” The time when you trim the lamps is the time when you freshen the incense and put the incense upon the altar. Why?

You see, there are two dangers among our people in this church. One is the danger that some of you will go out to be witnesses to try and let your light shine, but you haven’t prayed. And you try to talk to men about God before you talk to God about men. And you wonder why you fail. You trim the lamp, but you don’t burn the incense. And there are others of you who burn the incense. You intercede, and you pray; and you say, “God, save my husband. God, save my daughter. God, save my neighbor. God, save my Sunday School pupils.” And you pray and pray and pray, but you never trim the

lamp; you never let your light shine; you never speak for Jesus.

When a man goes without praying, that man is a fool. When a man prays without going, that man is a fraud; he's a hypocrite. But when a man prays and then goes, he's a soul winner. One is not a substitute for the other. And prayer will never be a substitute for a verbal witness for Jesus, letting your light shine. And I know what some of you say: "Well, I just want people to... I just... I'm just going to intercede, just pray for them." The Bible says, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). The Bible says we're to be witnesses; we're to speak. "Let the redeemed of the LORD say so" (Psalm 107:2). But God forbid that we should ever speak until we first pray.

I've been in services, in revival meetings, where sometimes during an invitation a person will go and speak to another person thoughtlessly, carelessly. And rather than bringing that person to Jesus, perhaps you'll drive a wedge, an embarrassment, and run them away, because they did it in the strength of the flesh. They tried to let their light shine, but they haven't burned any incense. And I've seen other people who have prayed and been filled with the Spirit and led of the Spirit and know just what to say and how to say it. And what power there is when people witness in this way, anointed of the Holy Spirit of God!

D. The People of the Altar

All right now, the position of the golden altar: it's a link with the lampstand; it is right before the throne. Now one last thing, and I'll be finished. I want you to notice the people of the golden altar, as we continue to read. All right, the Bible begins, in verse 9: "Ye shall offer no strange incense..."—this is Exodus 30:9—"Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon. And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD" (Exodus 30:9–10).

And then the rest of the chapter: as you go on to read, it's so plain that God does not want anybody who is not qualified to fool with this altar. Just go on to verse 32, and notice: "Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured,"—that is, the holy oil—"neither shall ye make any other like it,"—that is, the sweet perfume that's going to be burned and the holy oil that's going to be used for anointing—"after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy unto you. Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people" (Exodus 30:32–33). And then the Lord tells them how to make this incense, beginning in verse 34. And then He says, in verse 37, "And as for the perfume which thou shalt make, ye shall not make it to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be unto thee holy for the LORD.

Whosoever shall make like unto it, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people” (Exodus 30:37–38).

Now God says there’s a sacred anointing oil that represents the Holy Spirit; and there is a sacred incense: it represents prayer. And God says it’s to be made with a special formula. And no one—no one, no one—should ever mix this and use it for himself, or use it without proper authority. “If you do,” God says, “you’ll be cut off.” And you would—and could be—put to death.

Let me show you something interesting here in 2 Chronicles chapter 26 for a moment. Turn to that. I think we’ll have time for this. And I want you to see how strongly God feels about this—in 2 Chronicles chapter 26 and verse 16: *“But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, who were valiant men: and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar” (2 Chronicles 26:16–19).*

Now, what happened? Listen. God says, “This altar of incense is very sacred; the incense is very sacred.” God said, “Don’t make any of this incense to use for anything except for this altar of incense.” And then God says, “Only the priests—Aaron and his sons—are to burn incense. And if anybody else tries it, he’ll be smitten.” Now, what is God telling us? What is He talking about? He’s telling us, ladies and gentlemen, that these things are only for God’s priests—only for God’s priests. They don’t belong to other people.

Now the truth of the matter is that Christians are priests. And you may not think of yourself as a priest, but you are. You are a priest. And the Bible says, in Revelation, that Jesus has made us to be a kingdom of priests (Revelation 1:6). We talked about this last week. But the way that He made us to be a king and a priest, the Bible says, is with His blood. And anybody who attempts to serve the Lord, and to pray, and to worship, or do anything, except coming through the blood and becoming an anointed priest with the holy oil of the Holy Spirit upon him, is sure for the judgment of God. Don’t come around here with that idea of the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of men. It’s not so! Don’t get the idea that anybody who can just stand up and say, “Our Father, who art in heaven; hallowed be thy name...” It is not so, for God is not the Father of everyone. Don’t get the idea that just anybody can come to God and pray, and

get their prayers answered. They cannot! We must come God's appointed way.

And I want you to check up in your life. Have you come past the brazen altar? I mean, have your sins been put under the blood of Jesus? Have you been washed in the blood? Have you come past the laver? Do you believe the Word? That's what the laver represents. Have you been sanctified by the Word? Have you come past the table of showbread? Have you fed upon Jesus? Is He the One that nourishes you? Have you come past the golden candlestick? Are you walking in the light? Then you can approach the golden altar and come into the throne room. But don't you just amble forth. Don't you just go gaily tripping forward and saying, "Well, forget the blood. Forget the bread. Forget the Word. Forget this and that. Father..." And God says, "It appertaineth not unto you to offer incense upon this altar. Who do you think you are, boldly coming into my sanctuary without blood?" The only thing you'll get for your impertinence is the judgment of God.

Conclusion

Let me tell you something, friend. God is a holy God. And you come by blood, or you don't come at all. You come as a priest, or you don't come at all. Don't think that God is honor-bound to answer the prayers of anybody who just simply whistles and says, "God, come running. You're a cosmic bellhop. Here are some things I want: get them for me." God says, "You'll get judgment: that's what you'll get. But if you come past the bloody altar, if you feed upon my Son, the Lord Jesus, if you'll wash in the laver of my Word, if you'll walk in the light of my testimony, then you can offer incense upon my altar. You'll be one of my priests."

Study of the Tabernacle #8

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 17, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 26:31–34

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Pattern of the Veil
 - A. The Four Colors of the Veil
 1. Blue: The Son-ship of Jesus
 2. Purple: The Kingship of Jesus
 3. Scarlet: The Blood of Jesus
 4. Fine Twined Linen (White): The Purity of Jesus
 - B. The Veil Was Suspended on Four Pillars
 - C. The Four Cherubim on the Veil
- II. The Position of the Veil
- III. The Parting of the Veil
- IV. Conclusion: Three Appearances of the Lord
 - A. His Continuing Appearance
 - B. His Completed Appearance
 - C. His Crowning Appearance

Introduction

Exodus chapter 26, and I want to begin reading in verse 31: *“And thou shalt make a veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of [skillful] work: with cherubims shall it be made: and thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of [acacia] wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the veil under the [clasps], that thou mayest bring in thither within the veil the ark of the testimony: and the veil shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy. And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place”* (Exodus 26:31–34).

When I was a child, I used to enjoy comic books and funny books and newspapers, and so forth—little drawings that would be drawn on the paper. And on this drawing—this cartoon—it would say, “See if you can find five pirates in this picture”—or “five animals”—and they would be somewhere in the leaves, or something like that. You just had to keep turning it and turning it, and suddenly a pirate’s face would come, or a kangaroo would be seen, or something. But you just had to keep turning the picture and

looking at it, and suddenly you saw it, and you wondered why you didn't see it before. Now the Old Testament is very much like that. And as we look at the Old Testament, and look and look and look, and continue to look, suddenly Jesus just jumps out.

And Jesus is all through the Old Testament. We told you before that the Old Testament is about Jesus. That was the Bible that the early church had: was the Old Testament. And when those apostles stood up to preach Christ, they always took their text from the Old Testament. Now I love to take a text from the Old Testament, or the New. It doesn't make any difference to me, because anywhere in the Bible, you're going to find Jesus, if you interpret the Bible correctly. Standing somewhere in the shadows you'll find Jesus. He is the hero of the Book, as we've told you many times.

Now the Old Testament tabernacle was a picture of Jesus. It was a house in which the Jews worshiped. It was thirty cubits long, ten cubits wide. It was divided into two rooms. The outer room was ten by twenty, and it was called the Holy Place. The inner room was ten by ten by ten, and it was called the inner sanctum, or the Holy of Holies, or the Most Holy Place. Now between these two rooms there was a veil, or a curtain, and that's what we're going to be talking about tonight: Jesus, the veil of the tabernacle; or Jesus, the door to the inner sanctum—Jesus, the veil of the tabernacle; or Jesus, the door to the inner sanctum.

Now, thus far in our study, we have given you a general overview of the tabernacle: just in broad, sweeping terms, what the tabernacle was like. And then we started coming back and describing the furniture in the tabernacle: seven pieces of furniture, one piece at a time. But now we're going to stop for just a moment with the last piece of furniture that we have discussed, which was that golden altar of incense, which speaks of Christ, our supplication; and before we come to the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat, I want to discuss the veil that divides between the golden altar and the Ark of the Covenant. And this veil is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I say that clearly, plainly, without stutter, and without equivocation. I don't feel like I'm forcing the Scripture or pushing some meaning there that is not there. For proof of that, would you turn to Hebrews chapter 10 and look in verse 19. And it's amazing how much light the Bible will throw on those commentaries. Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 19: *"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest..."*—now, what is that? The Holy of Holies. Remember, the holiest—that room that was ten by ten by ten—*"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter in..."*—well, I'll tell you what: no one in the Old Testament days was bold enough to enter in, because, had he entered in, *bam*—just like that—he's dead. No one would dare to have gone in, except the high priest, who, once a year, with trembling and blood, would lift up the corner of that veil and go in. But the average Israelite didn't saunter forth to go in. But now, the Bible says, something has happened. Watch it. We have boldness to stride right into the holiest—

“by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil...”—now the veil is what we’re studying tonight—*“through the veil, that is to say, his flesh”* (Hebrews 10:19–20).

Now, what does this veil picture? We don’t have to guess about it; we don’t have to think about it. It pictures the body of Jesus; it pictures the incarnation of the Son of God: His flesh. That’s what this veil is a picture of. That’s what the Bible says clearly: that it is a picture—that is to say, His flesh, in a figure.

So there are three things I want you to notice about the veil with me tonight: first of all, the pattern of it; and then, the position of it; and then, of course, the parting of the veil.

I. The Pattern of the Veil

Look with me, please, now, as we go back to Exodus chapter 26. Okay, Exodus chapter 26—and let’s look in verse 31: *“And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of [skillful] work: with cherubims shall it be made”* (Exodus 26:31).

A. The Four Colors of the Veil

Now the first thing I want you to notice is the colors of the veil. The veil was made of specific colors, and each color speaks of Christ: blue, purple, scarlet, and white. For He is not the pale Galilean; He is the colorful Christ. And I want to tell you what these colors mean.

1. Blue: The Son-ship of Jesus

Blue speaks of heaven, and it tells us that Christ is the Son of God from heaven. He is God’s divine Son. He came down from heaven. And blue, to those people, even as it means to us today, is the heavenly color. When we look up on a bright day, the heavens are blue. And so blue speaks of Jesus, the Son of God, who came down from heaven. He is God’s divine Son. God said, *“This is my beloved Son...hear ye him”* (Matthew 7:15). And to refuse Jesus is to refuse God; to receive Jesus is to receive God. *“And he that hath not the Son hath not the Father”* (1 John 2:23). All right? And so the blue speaks of the Son-ship of Jesus.

2. Purple: The Kingship of Jesus

But what about the purple? That speaks of the sovereignty of Jesus, because purple is the royal color; it’s the king’s color. And purple speaks of the kingship of Christ, because not only is He the Son of God, but being the Son of God, He is the rightful heir of all things. He is Lord of lords; He is King of kings.

You know, one of my favorite passages is 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 14 and 15. That speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the—and you don’t turn to it—but it speaks

as Him of the only potentate as King of kings and Lord of lords; and it says, “In His day, he will show who is the only, who is the wise and only potentate”—“in His day” (1 Timothy 6:14–15). You see, this is not His day now; this is the devil’s day. The devil is called *the god of this age* (2 Corinthians 4:4). People wonder, “Why, if Jesus is Lord and if Jesus is King, why is the world in the mess that it’s in?” Well, because the devil’s running it: that’s why! Don’t blame the Lord because of the mess things are in right now.

You know, Jesus, when He was led off to be crucified, the women were weeping, you know, and He said to them—He said, “Don’t weep for me. Weep for yourselves” (Luke 23:38). He said, “*This is your hour*” (Luke 22:53). “My hour is not yet come” (John 2:4). Aren’t you glad that His hour is coming? Aren’t you glad that He is going to have a day when He’s going to show who is the King of kings? He’s going to show who is the Lord of lords.

You know, He gets the little end of the deal right now. We thank God for 1,500 people or so who are here tonight in prayer meeting. But, you know, in a rock concert stadium, they’ll have about four or five, ten thousand, kids there who’ll pay money to go and hear the name of Christ blasphemed. It looks like He’s getting the little end of the deal. But it won’t always be that way. He said, “*This is your hour*” (Luke 22:53). “My hour is coming” (John 2:4). And, friend, it is. He is the King of kings, and He taught us to pray for God’s Kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10). And, one day, it will be.

3. Scarlet: The Blood of Jesus

All right now, there is a third color, and that third color is scarlet. And that speaks, of course, obviously, of blood, for the Bible says, not only is He the Son of God, not only is He the sovereign Son of God; He is the suffering sovereign Son of God. He poured out His rich, red, royal, scarlet blood for the redemption of the world. And so, over and over and over again, in the symbolism, we see the scarlet, which speaks of the blood, for the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 22, “*Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin]*” (Hebrews 9:22).

4. Fine Twined Linen (White): The Purity of Jesus

And then, notice, as we continue to read in verse 31: “*Thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen*” (Exodus 26:31). Now it was all upon the linen, but God mentions the linen. And the linen itself, I believe, was white. And I believe there was another... Well, you don’t call white a color, really. I suppose it’s the absence of all colors. Really, it really absorbs all colors, but we... anyway, white. All right now, white was there. Linen was white. And what does that speak of? That speaks of the sinless Son of God—the sinless Son of God—because, not only was He the Son of God, the sovereign Son of God, the suffering Son of God; He was the sinless, sovereign, suffering Son of God. See? And so the white speaks of purity. In the Bible,

white is a symbol—white linen is a symbol—of purity.

Look, for example, in Revelation chapter 19, if you would, and verse 8, and you'll see that the symbolism is consistent all the way through the Bible. In Revelation chapter 19 and verse 8: *“And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for fine linen is the righteousness of saints”* (Revelation 19:8)—or some would have, “the righteous acts of the saints.” So white linen speaks of purity, holiness, righteousness. And so you see here God has given us, just in the very colors of this veil, which speaks of the body of Christ, the flesh of Christ, a lesson about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And it's interesting: while there are four colors, there are four Gospels. And did you know each of the Gospels has a color? For example, to me, John, that speaks of the deity of Christ. And the fact that He is the Son of God—that's mentioned over and over again—is the blue Gospel. Matthew, which presents Jesus Christ as the King of the Jews, is the purple Gospel, the royal gospel. Mark, which speaks of Jesus as the suffering servant, is the scarlet Gospel. And Luke, which speaks of the sinless Son of God, who was virgin-born, is the white Gospel. You see, all of this just seems, in my own heart—and I don't know whether it does in yours or not—just so marvelously and beautifully to dovetail together, just as the four Evangelists told the four stories, each of them telling of the life of Jesus, but each one presenting the life of Jesus from just a little different perspective.

All right now, if Jesus Christ is the Son of God, if Jesus Christ is the sovereign Son of God, if Jesus Christ is the suffering Son of God, if Jesus Christ is the sinless, suffering, sovereign Son of God, you'd better be careful what you do with Him, amen? Now, friend, listen. Don't just tip your hat to Jesus. You'd better do something with Jesus. You'd better make up your mind what you think about Him. Crown Him or crucify Him. Accept Him; reject Him. Don't try and stay neutral. You see, you've got Jesus on your hands. He is one of three: Lord, liar, or lunatic. Make up your mind: deceiver, deceived, or Deity. Make up your mind. If He's the Lord, you'd better serve Him. If He's a liar, you'd better forget about Him. If He's a lunatic, you'd better pity Him. But if you make up your mind He is the Lord, if you make up your mind He is Deity, you'd better fall on your knees and your face before Him, because, I'll tell you, one day you're going to have to give an account of the knowledge that God has given you concerning His Son. *“This is my beloved Son,”*—He said—*“...hear ye him”* (Matthew 17:5).

B. The Veil Was Suspended on Four Pillars

And so I want you to notice also, as we think of the pattern of the veil, that, not only was it four colors, but it was suspended on four pillars. Notice in verse 32: *“And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of [acacia] wood”*—the wood speaking of His humanity—

“overlaid with gold” (Exodus 26:32)—the gold speaking of His deity. And, again, these four pillars speak to me of the four Gospels that present the Lord Jesus Christ and upon which the story and biography of Jesus hang.

And an interesting thing about these four pillars is this: that there is no crown described for these pillars as for other pillars in the tabernacle, which seem to indicate, as the Bible says, He was cut off out of the land of the living. Each of the Gospels tells how Jesus was cut off, how Jesus was crucified. And so, hanging upon four pillars; again, representing to me the four Evangelists and the four gospel stories.

C. The Four Cherubim on the Veil

But then I want you to notice also that there are cherubim that are upon this veil. Notice in verse 31—and the Bible says, *“It’s of fine twined linen of skillful work: with cherubims shall it be made”* (Exodus 26:31). Now, what are cherubim? Cherubim are angelic creatures. And what is their purpose? To guard the holiness and the sanctity of God.

The first mention of cherubim: if you’ll turn, please, to Genesis chapter 3, verse 24, and it will give you some idea of what the cherubim did. So often we think of a little baby. You know, we say, *“Oh, what a little cherub!”* I tell you, friend, I don’t think that the cherub were cute and cuddly. I think they are some of the most, perhaps, holy, awesome creatures that man could conceive of. And notice how God describes these cherubim, in Genesis chapter 3 and verse 24: *“So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way of the tree of life”* (Genesis 3:24). Here these cherubim, or cherubs, are guarding the way of the tree of life. They are with flaming swords, saying, *“You can’t come in here. Stay out. I’ll run you through with a flaming sword if you dare come in. You have no right, mortal man, to come in here. You have no right, sinful Adam. You have no right, carnal Eve, to come into this place. Stay out!”* That’s what the cherubs speak of. And so, remember that, because there’s going to be a lesson for us later on.

II. The Position of the Veil

All right, so here’s the pattern of the veil. Now I want you to notice the position of the veil. Look in verse 33: *“And thou shalt hang up the vail under the [clasps], that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide...”*—underscore that; that’s important—*“the vail shall divide unto you between the holy place and the most holy”* (Exodus 26:33). The veil was there to divide; it was a divider between sinful man and holy God. And that’s the reason the cherubim are there: to say to sinful man, *“You can’t come in here where a holy God is.”*

You see, the veil of the temple was not to permit access to the Holy of Holies; it was to prevent access to the Holy of Holies. The veil did not say, “Come in.” The veil said, emphatically, “Stay out! You don’t deserve to come in here. You’re not good enough to come in here. You’re not worthy enough to come in here. If you come in here, you die by coming in. Stay out!” That’s what the veil says. It is a division. For an unauthorized person to step in would have meant sudden death. Now that teaches us a wonderful lesson, because this veil pictured what? Jesus. It pictured the sovereign, sinless Son of God. But He was not as He was pictured here in the Old Testament tabernacle. An invitation to come in, but an invitation to stay out.

Now, let me say something. There are a lot of people today who don’t understand the bloody gospel of Jesus. They think that they are saved by emulating and following Jesus, and patterning their life after Jesus. But the life of Jesus does not say, “Come in.” The life of Jesus says, “Stay out.” Man, if you take Jesus Christ for your example rather than your Savior, I pity you, because the example is there to say, “You can’t match it. You can’t meet it. You can’t measure it.” And the example of Jesus says, “Stay out.” All these people say, “Well, I believe that I just learned some lessons about the life of Jesus. And Jesus is my example. And the Sermon on the Mount is my religion. And I believe if a man lived as Jesus lived, he’ll make it.” Poppycock! You can’t live as Jesus lived. If you were to try to live as Jesus lived, you’d be a little tin Jesus: a miserable failure.

Oh, let me tell you something, friend. The life of Jesus doesn’t say, “Come in.” The life of Jesus says, “Stay out.” The life of Jesus said, “This is what you ought to be—and you’re not it.” The life of Jesus is a perfect standard that becomes a barrier to the holiness of God. Learn this: *You are not saved by learning lessons from the life of Jesus; you’re saved by receiving life from the death of Jesus.* Let me say it again: You’re not saved by learning lessons from the life of Jesus; you receive life from the death of Jesus. And when God placed this veil there, God was teaching a lesson that God has a perfect, awesome standard, and man shall not come in of himself. He cannot. The veil there was a barrier.

And suppose they had come before the veil and said, “Oh, what a beautiful veil!” Do you think God would have said, “Come thou in”? Of course not! Suppose they had brought flowers and fruits and placed it before the veil. Do you think God would have said, “Come thou into the Holy of Holies”? Of course not! There was only one way past that veil, and, friend, it was with blood. Only one way: the blood-sprinkled way. *“Without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]”* (Hebrews 9:22). An innocent animal was slain, for God was teaching *“the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23), and that the penalty of sin must be paid before man can come through that veil.

III. The Parting of the Veil

And so, lesson number one: The pattern of the veil speaks of Christ and His perfection. The placement of the veil, the position of the veil, the purpose of the veil is to say, “Man is not worthy to enter.” And the perfect, sinless Son of God, by His example, and by His standard, has condemned us by His perfect life. But, thank God, there’s a third part, because not only is Jesus the One who keeps us out; He’s also the One who lets us in. It all depends on what we do with Him, because the third thing I want you to see is the parting of the veil.

Now we don’t find this here in Exodus. All we find in Exodus is just a hint of what I’m about to give you, and that is that the high priest would take blood, and, with blood in the basin, then he would lift up the corner of the veil and go into the Holy of Holies. But look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 27 for a moment. Now we’re on holy ground. I want you to pay attention. I want boys and girls to listen. The Bible speaks of Jesus, who died vicariously. That means, “as a substitute, in our place”—Jesus, who, picturing the Old Testament sacrificial animals, and picturing that brazen altar, died upon the cross. And the Bible says, beginning in verse 50, “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the Spirit. And, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two”—or, as some have it, “rent in twain”—“from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks were split” (Matthew 27:50–51).

What is this a picture of? When Jesus Christ died upon the cross, when His body was torn by those searing nails, and when His body was mutilated there in the agonies of Calvary, that pictured God opening up a way into the Holy of Holies. It is only through Jesus that we come into the Holy of Holies. And that’s the reason the Bible says there’s a way made through the veil that is His flesh, because in the flesh He condemned sin in the flesh and carried that sin to the cross. And there upon the cross He died. And the veil is a picture of Christ. If the veil is a picture of Christ—and it is, as Hebrews 9 and 10 tells us—then the tearing of the veil is a picture of the death of Christ.

Now, notice, while this was not the same veil that was in the tabernacle, this veil was in the temple. It figures precisely the same thing, because the temple was, in a sense, just a larger tabernacle—a permanent tabernacle. “And, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in twain” (Matthew 27:51).

Notice, first of all, “from the top to the bottom.” Now if man had done it, how would he have done it? From the bottom to the top. In the first place, man couldn’t have done it. Josephus tells us that this veil in the temple was so thick that it was as thick as a man’s hand; or, others say, four inches thick. And it’s good tradition to believe this is true. As a matter of fact, one writer said that it would have been impossible to put a team of oxen on either end and to have torn this veil. It was extremely thick, extremely heavy, and it was torn supernaturally from the top to the bottom. That is, it was the

supernatural work of God.

And this work of God was to show that now there is a way open into the Holy of Holies. And that's what the Bible is all about, friend: telling us that, bless God, we don't have to come to some Old Testament priest. We don't have to come to some New Testament priest. We don't have to go get some bullock, or some goat, or some lamb. Oh, glory to God, we now can boldly enter into the Holy of Holies through the blood of Jesus, because He died and His blood was shed! No longer does the high priest go once a year with the blood of bulls and of goats, but Jesus has opened the door for us.

Look again in Hebrews 9, verse 23, if you will, for a moment: some of the richest teaching in all of the Bible. My, what a blessing! In Hebrews chapter 9, for a moment, beginning in verse 23—now, remember, Hebrews 10:20 tells us that the veil is His flesh—but look in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 23: *“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these;”*—that is, the tabernacle was a pattern of things in the heavens, and the patterns had to be purified with these animal sacrifices—*“but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.”* You see, the better sacrifices were those that Jesus made. *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures”—types—“of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”* (Hebrews 9:23–24).

Just as that high priest took that basin of blood and lifted up the corner of the veil and went into the Holy of Holies, Jesus Christ ascended. You remember He told Mary, “Touch me not, for I have not ascended to my Father” (John 20:17). Jesus ascended with His own precious blood, and went into the Holy of Holies in glory, and sprinkled His own blood there. And now, notice: *“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of others;”*—that is, Jesus doesn't keep doing this once a year, as the high priest did—*“for then must he have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation”* (Hebrews 9:24–28).

IV. Conclusion: Three Appearances of the Lord

I want to close our little study tonight, and I just want to show you something that blessed my heart as I read this passage that speaks of Christ going into the Holy of Holies and then letting His body remove the barrier: three appearances of the Lord

Jesus Christ.

A. His Continuing Appearance

Notice verse 24: *“For Christ is not entered...”*—this is Hebrews chapter 9, verse 24—*“For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us”* (Hebrews 9:24). The first appearance that’s mentioned here is His continuing appearance. What’s He doing? He’s pleading for me. What’s He doing? He’s praying for you. What’s He doing? He’s offering His blood, once for all, spilt. That’s the continuing work of Jesus. The Bible says He ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). Isn’t it great to know that I have a Savior—a dear, loving Savior—who’s pleading in glory for me, for you? You see, the devil is the prosecuting attorney. Aren’t you glad that you have a defense attorney? Aren’t you glad that, *“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”* (1 John 2:1)?

B. His Completed Appearance

And so, that’s His continuing appearance, in verse 24. But notice verse 26—His completed appearance: *“For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself”* (Hebrews 9:26). Not twice. That’s the reason, friend, I could never be a Romanist. I could never go to some Roman mass and let some priest tell me that he is sacrificing Jesus again. Brother, I want to tell you, once my blessed Savior died; once for all, brother: believe it. He was nailed to the cross. And *“by one offering he hath perfected for ever...”* (Hebrews 10:14), the Bible says. A continuing appearance because of a completed appearance.

Notice how each time He mentions the word *appearance*. Notice it—notice, in verse 24, the Bible says, *“now to appear in the presence...”* (Hebrews 9:24). Notice, in verse 26, *“hath he appeared...”* (Hebrews 9:26).

C. His Crowning Appearance

But, oh, not only is there a continuing appearance, and a completed appearance; bless God, there’s going to be a crowning appearance. Look in verse 28: *“So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation”* (Hebrews 9:28).

Three appearances of our dear Lord: one is past; one is present; one is coming, perhaps tonight.

Study of the Tabernacle #9

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 21, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 25:10–16

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Ark of the Covenant
 - A. The Construction of the Ark
 1. The Wood
 2. The Wood Was Overlaid with Pure Gold
 3. The Golden Crown
 4. There Are Four Rings in Four Corners
 5. The Staves
 - B. The Contents of the Ark
 1. We Are Secure in His Resources
 2. We Are Secure in His Resurrection
 3. We Are Secure in His Righteousness

Conclusion

Introduction

A study in the tabernacle. And it's been quite a while since we've been able to do this, because the Lord's been sending earthquakes and things like that; and so we're just going to pick up now kind of where we left off. And you will remember that we have been going through the various articles of furniture—we'll call them *furniture*—in the tabernacle.

And as you were to come in through the eastern gate of the tabernacle, the first piece of furniture you would come to would be a brazen altar. And we call that Christ, our sacrifice, because it was on that brazen altar that a bloody sacrifice was made that typified and pointed toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

Right past that brazen altar was a laver, or a great big brazen washbasin. And it was filled with water, which is symbolic of the Word of God that cleanses us. And so, that speaks of Christ, our sanctification.

And then, right past that, as we would come on into that inner court, on the one side would be a table covered with loaves of bread called *showbread*. And the priest would feed upon that bread, just as we feed upon Jesus, the bread of life. And that speaks of

Christ, our sustenance—because we feed upon Him.

On the other side was a gorgeous golden candelabra—and, actually, a lampstand—because candles consume themselves when they burn, but the lampstands are fed with oil. I tell you, it makes a lot of difference, friend, whether or not you have your wick immersed in the Holy Spirit, or whether you're just trying to burn yourself out serving the Lord. And so these lampstands really represent the Holy Spirit—translated, “candlesticks,” in the King James Version of the Bible. But that golden candelabra—that menorah—speaks of Christ, our sight, because it was the only illumination inside that building. There were no windows, no skylights, no fluorescent tubes. There it was: Christ, our sight—because we walk in the light, and we have fellowship one with another. And the light, of course, comes from Jesus, mediated through His Word and energized by the Holy Spirit, the oil.

And then, you would go on a little bit further, and you would come, this time, to a golden altar—and not where a bloody sacrifice was made, but where sweet-smelling perfume—incense—was burned. And that perfume would just go up continually, or continuously, and it would be ascending up to heaven. And it filled the house—just perfumed the house—with fragrance. Now incense, the Bible tells us, is a type, or a symbol, of prayer. And just as that sweet-smelling smoke went up continually out of this place of worship, it speaks of Christ, our One who intercedes for us, the One who prays for us: Christ, our supplication. You know, He ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). And it is through Him that we pray. We pray in the Spirit, through the Son, to the Father. So, Christ, our supplication.

I. The Ark of the Covenant

And now we come on past that to the piece of furniture that we're talking about tonight, which is the Ark of the Covenant. And the Ark of the Covenant—and, lest I've not told you where to turn, look in Exodus 25, and we'll start in verse 10—the Ark of the Covenant speaks of Christ, our security. And after we speak of Christ, our security, we'll speak of one more piece of furniture—and that will be the Mercy Seat, or the throne, which speaks of Christ, our Sovereign. And so we're right here talking about Christ, our security; and then, finally, Christ, our Sovereign.

And so beginning in verse 10: *“And they shall make an ark of shittim wood:”—or, “acacia wood,” a better translation—“two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. And thou shalt cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in the four corners thereof; and two rings shall be in the one side of it, and two rings in the other side of it. And thou shalt make staves of [acacia] wood, and*

overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put the staves into the rings by the sides of the ark, that the ark may be borne with them. The staves shall be in the rings of the ark: they shall not be taken from it. And thou shalt put the ark the testimony which I shall give thee” (Exodus 25:10–16).

Now we’re talking about the piece of furniture, which was a chest, or a box, sitting inside the Holy of Holies that was called *the Ark*, or *the Ark of the Covenant*.

Now sometimes people get confused about the various arks in the Bible. One time I had Major Ian Thomas, who wrote the lovely book, *The Saving Life of Christ*, in my home for dinner. We were having fellowship. Somewhat in jest, after dinner, I said, “Dr. Thomas, you’re a Bible scholar, and I want to ask you a question, because it bothers me. Now I’ve always believed the Bible to be inspired, but the Bible says those Israelites carried that ark through the wilderness on their journey.” I said, “How could they carry such a big boat all the way through the wilderness like that?” Dr. Thomas looked at me, and just leaned back and smiled a little, and he said, “My boy, you need to study your *ark-aeology*.” And he was quite right. Of course, I knew the difference. But an ark is not a boat.

Now many of the children, if you were to ask them what an ark is, they would say it is a boat or a ship. Noah’s ark was a ship. But an ark is not necessarily a boat. This boat happened to be an ark. And ark, if you will look up the definition, is a chest for safekeeping. It is a repository in which someone would place something for safekeeping, for security. And since Noah was in that boat, it became an ark of safety. And you remember, Moses was put in a little ark made of bulrushes, which meant it was a place of safety. It was a chest for well-keeping. And so just like a lady might have a hope chest, you could very well call it a *hope ark*. That doesn’t sound very... Is there a Hope, Arkansas? I guess that’s what I’m thinking about. But you could call it a *hope ark*. It would be a place for safekeeping.

And so a boat is not an ark, but the ark was the boat. And an ark is something that you keep something safe in. And so this ark that had certain contents in it, you’re going to see, speaks of security. And you’re going to see, as we continue to study, that it is a marvelous picture of Christ, our security.

You know, it’s wonderful to be saved, amen? But it’s even more wonderful to know you’re saved, amen? But it’s even thrice wonderful to be saved, to know you’re saved, and to know you can’t lose it. Isn’t that great? How great a salvation we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, because He is our ark of safety! And so we’re thinking about Christ, our safety; Christ, our security; Christ, the One, not only, who saved, but who keeps.

Having said that, let’s notice two things: first of all...more than two, really; but two major headings: first of all, the construction of the ark; secondly, the contents of the ark.

A. The Construction of the Ark

I'll spend only a few minutes talking about the construction of the ark, because we see these symbols all the way through the various pieces of furniture. They speak of Christ.

1. The Wood

For example, the wood, in verse 10: *"And they shall make an ark of [acacia] wood"* (Exodus 25:10). The wood speaks of the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. A righteous man is spoken of as a tree, in Psalm 1:3. The Bible speaks of Jesus, in Isaiah 53, as *"a root out of a dry ground"* (Isaiah 53:2). And so the wood speaks of His humanity; that is, of His earthliness.

2. The Wood Was Overlaid with Pure Gold

But then we notice that not only was the ark made of wood, but, in verse 11, we notice that that wood was overlaid with pure gold: *"And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, within and without shalt thou overlay it"* (Exodus 25:11). Gold, in the Bible, is symbolic of deity, royalty. And so here we see both the deity of Christ and the humanity of Christ pictured and typified in this lovely Ark of the Covenant.

3. The Golden Crown

And then we see, in verse 11, that it had a golden crown, or, as some have it, *"a rim of gold round about"* (Exodus 25:11). And that crown speaks of His sovereignty, that the Lord Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords.

4. There Are Four Rings in Four Corners

And then we notice, in verse 12, that there are four rings in four corners. Now four is the earth number. Remember, numbers have significance in the Bible. One is the number of unity. *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD"* (Deuteronomy 6:4). And then, two is the number of witness. *"In the mouth of two or more witnesses shall a thing be established"* (Matthew 18:16). Three is the number of divinity. *"There are three that bear record in heaven"* (1 John 5:7). And four is the number of the earth. The Bible speaks of the four angels in the four corners of the earth, the four winds of the earth, and so forth. Four is the earth number.

And there are four corners to this ark, which tells me of the universality of our Savior: a corner pointing east, and a corner pointing west; a corner pointing north, and a corner pointing south. And that is that Jesus Christ is for all people: *"Red, yellow, black, white; they are precious in His sight."* And I'm glad that our salvation and our religion is not a parochial religion. I'm glad for its universality.

5. The Staves

And then, what about the staves? And we'll just comment just a moment on those, in verses 13 and 14: *"And thou shalt make staves of [acacia] wood, and overlay them with*

gold” (Exodus 25:13). These staves were long rods that were slid through certain rings in each corner. And they would just simply pick up the ark and carry it. They would not touch the ark, per se, but they would carry it with the staves to move it wherever they went. That is, it accompanied them; it went with them. And to me, these staves speak, not only of the universality of Christ, but the availability of Christ, that He’s always with me. I have *“a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”* (Proverbs 18:24).

B. The Contents of the Ark

Now I don’t want to say too much more about that, though there are a lot of things that we could say by way of devotional thinking and by way of application. But I want to hurry on past the construction of the ark to the contents of the ark, because, there, I think, we’ll learn some truths that are not quite as obvious.

Look, if you will, in verse 16: *“And thou shalt put into the ark...”*—and remember that the ark is a place of safekeeping—*“thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee”* (Exodus 25:16).

And then, if you want a further elucidation of what was in that ark, if you will turn to Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 4—Hebrews 9:4—and there we’re going to see clearly the three items that God delineated for the contents of the ark. The Bible speaks of the holiest of all, or the Holy of Holies, *“which had the golden censer,”*—and that’s, you know, Christ, our supplication—*“and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold,”*—and we’ve already studied that—*“wherein was”*—number one—*“the golden pot that had manna,”*—number two—*“...Aaron’s rod that budded,”*—number three—*“and the tables of the covenant.”*

All right, so here are the three things that were inside this chest for safekeeping. There was a golden pot with manna in it; and there was Aaron’s rod that budded; and then there were the tables of the testimony, or the covenant—actually, the stone tablet on which the Ten Commandments were written. These were in the Ark of the Covenant for security. And remember, if that chest speaks of safekeeping, and it speaks of Christ, it means that there are certain things that are secure to us, kept for us, in Christ.

1. We Are Secure in His Resources

Now the first thing that I have in Christ is resources. My resources are secure in Christ, because manna spoke to them of a perpetual resource. Here they were in the desert, and the Lord was providing for them; the Lord was taking care of them. They had no farms; they had no dairies. They had no ways to produce the food that they needed for sustenance. But, daily, the Lord was their resource; daily, the manna came down from heaven.

That manna also was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And without looking up the scripture—you can study it when you get home—but let me tell you some ways that that

manna pictured the Lord Jesus Christ. It was small—and that spoke of the humility of Christ. It was round. That spoke of the perfection of Christ. It was white. That spoke of the purity of Christ. It had the taste like a coriander seed—and that spoke of the health-giving properties and the fragrance of Christ. It had the taste of oil, which symbolized the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ gives. It had the taste of honey, which speaks of the sweetness of Christ. It came down from heaven, which spoke of the heaven-sent source. The Lord Jesus is that bread that came down from heaven.

And so it was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they fed upon Jesus Christ in type and in symbol. Day after day after day, they were provided for. As a reminder that God had given them this provision, they picked up some of that manna from the ground, which pictured the resurrection of Jesus being lifted up from the ground, and also His ascension, they put it in a golden pot, and they put that manna in the golden pot in the Ark of the Covenant, and there it was preserved forever fresh. And it pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, that bread that came down from heaven, now lifted up from the earth, and now in Glory still providing for His people.

So I want you to know, friend, that our resource is in Him. And just as the Lord fed those people so long ago day by day in that wilderness, I want you to know, day by day He takes care of us in this wilderness, amen? Isn't it great? Isn't it great to know that, as they came out of Egypt under the blood, we've come out of this old world system under the blood of Jesus? And just as He provided for them so long ago, in type, He provides for us, in reality. And so I am secure in my resource, who is Jesus.

2. We Are Secure in His Resurrection

But not only am I secure in His resources; I'm also secure in His resurrection. Notice also that there was Aaron's rod that budded: that was in the Ark of the Covenant. And that pictures the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now let me tell you how Aaron's rod happened to bud, and who Aaron was.

Aaron was the high priest of Israel. And be turning, if you will, for a moment, to Numbers chapter 17, and you'll find something very interesting—find out when and why Aaron's rod budded. There were some people who rose up against Moses and against Aaron—Moses, God's commander-in-chief; Aaron, God's high priest. They rebelled against leadership, and there was a question of leadership. They were saying, "Who does this Aaron fellow think he is? What right does he have to say that he is the high priest?" and so forth. And God judged the people very, very severely because of their rebellion against His anointed priest, because that anointed priest was a picture of Jesus.

Every Old Testament priest just prefigured Jesus, the great High Priest, who ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25). That's the reason I'm not a priest today, in the classical sense; I'm a preacher. A priest is someone who goes to God for

you; a preacher is someone who tells you what Jesus has already done for you. We don't need a priest; we need a preacher to proclaim the priest that we have: Jesus, the great High Priest, who has passed into the heavens. But every Old Testament priest was a picture of Jesus Christ, the fulfillment. And Aaron was a picture of Jesus Christ.

And the people rebelled against Aaron, and their rebelling against Aaron was symbolic of people today who rebel against the Lord Jesus Christ. And the judgment that God sent in that day pictures the judgment God's going to send upon anybody in this day who refuses the Lord Jesus Christ. So there was a question about leadership and Aaron's priesthood, and there was a rebellion. And then, there was judgment.

And then, Moses went to God, and God said to Moses, "Moses, we'll prove"—"we'll prove"—"who's to be the leader, and I want you to show the people who I've chosen as leader. And here's the way we're going to do it. I want you to go to the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, and," He said, "I want you to get a rod from every one of them." Now a rod is just simply a stick, ladies, like a broomstick—just a plain old stick, a dead stick. "Get one from each of the leaders of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. And each one will have his name put on the side of that rod. And we'll have twelve of them." And then, He said, "We're going to go take them and put them in the tabernacle, and we're going to leave them in there. And then we're going to come back the next day, and," God said, "I'm going to show you, because of what's going to happen, whom I have chosen as my leader." And so they did that.

You might be interested in reading in Numbers chapter 17, verse 2, for example—God said, "*Speak unto the children of Israel, and take of every one of them a rod according to the house of their fathers,*"—that is, according to a tribe—"of all their princes according to the house of their fathers twelve rods: write thou every man's name upon his rod. And thou shalt write Aaron's name upon the rod of Levi: for one rod shall be for the head of the house of their fathers" (Numbers 17:2–3). All right? And they put these rods in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony; that is, before the Ark of the Covenant. And notice, in verse 8, what happened: "*And it came to pass, that on the [next day] Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds*" (Numbers 17:8).

Now you've never seen a dead stick that did that. It would be just as big a miracle, lady, if you put your broom in the broom closet tonight and came back in the morning, and, not only did it have buds; it had leaves and flowers and fruit on it—I mean, growing. And, of course, all the other rods were just dead sticks. And here was a rod that had blossomed and bloomed. And, you know, it's interesting: in the spring, first comes the bud, and then comes the flower, and then comes the fruit. But this had the bud, the flower, and the fruit all at the same time. And it just happened just like that. And

what's that a picture of? Well, you know what that's a picture of? It's a picture of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You see, that rod that was in the Ark of the Covenant pictures Christ, our resurrection—Christ, our life—because, you see, not only is Jesus Christ my resource; He is my source. He is my life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see this same picture... Look in Isaiah chapter 53 for a moment. This will bless you, so turn to it: Isaiah 53. And I don't know whether you were here a while back. I preached a sermon called, "The Gospel According to Isaiah," and just preached from the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. But I want you to see, for example, in Isaiah chapter 53, verse 2: *"For he shall grow up before him like a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him"* (Isaiah 53:2). Jesus is like a root out of a dry ground. That is, He's just like a stick—He's like a branch—that grows out the dry ground. But when it grew out of the dry ground, it had life in it. It wouldn't have grown if it hadn't had life. And Jesus came to this earth full of life because He was born of a virgin—perfect in every respect. And so here you see the rod with life in it—Isaiah 53, verse 2.

But notice, in Isaiah 53, verse 8: *"He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living"* (Isaiah 53:8). Just like you would take a pair of shears and you would cut off a branch that had come up out of the ground—a root, a stem, a rod—and you just cut it off, Jesus Christ was cut off—just like Aaron's rod. That's exactly what happened. One day, out in the wilderness out there, there was a root that came up out of a dry ground. There was something in that wilderness that grew up, and Aaron saw that. One day, he said, "Everybody ought to have a rod to lean on, something to hit rocks with, something to kill snakes with, something to lean on, and look at, and hold in his hand, too." So he cut it off. And the minute he cut it off, it was cut off from the source of life. That's exactly what happened to the Lord Jesus Christ: He was a rod; He was cut off.

Oh, but I want you to notice—look in Isaiah 53, verse 10: *"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days"* (Isaiah 53:10). Now, what is this? He's dead; and yet, His days are prolonged. He's dead; and yet, He's going to see His descendants. Why is that? Because God has given to this dead rod life. That's what it's all a picture of: it's a picture of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Isaiah talked about it. It was typified and pictured there in the Book of Numbers that this rod—Aaron's rod that budded—speaks of Christ. And the buds speak of His life; the blossoms speak of His beauty; the almonds speak of His fruitfulness, and the fruit of the Spirit. All of this is in the Lord Jesus Christ. So not only is Christ my resource, but Christ is my resurrection. And so, you see, my supply is secure.

I've got someone who's going to take care of me, and I want you to know my future

is secure, because Jesus said, “[He] that liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:26). And so it’s good for here, and it’s good for hereafter. And I don’t see why you don’t have it, if you don’t have it. You ought to receive the Lord, shouldn’t you? You ought to get saved, if you’re not saved. Why should other people go to heaven, and you go to hell? Why should all of this be for me, and not for you? God loves you as much as He loves me. He loves everybody. And whosoever will may come (Revelation 22:17); and, whosoever will may be saved.

3. We Are Secure in His Righteousness

All right now, the last thing I want you to see is, not only His resources, His resurrection, but also His righteousness, is typified in this ark, because the third thing that was in the ark was the law—the law, the tables of stone, the Ten Commandments. And Jesus Christ kept the law perfectly. He was the only One who kept it. And, therefore, it is put in the Ark of the Covenant. That pictures Him, because that law symbolizes the righteousness that God demands.

Look in Romans chapter 10, verse 4, and it will be, perhaps, more clear there—Romans chapter 10 and verse 4: “*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*” (Romans 10:4). You see, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Christ is my righteousness—not the Ten Commandments. He’s the only One who kept the Ten Commandments. Not me—I’m not saved by keeping the law. I’m saved because He kept it; and then, He died for me. And, therefore, “Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for me, that I might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

But now here you’re going to see something very unusual also. You’re going to find out that in this Ark of the Covenant this tablet of stone was broken, because... Remember that Moses broke that tablet of stone? And so they put the broken law in the ark. But on top of that ark was a lid, and that lid was closed—a golden lid. And that lid on top of the ark was called the Mercy Seat. And right on that Mercy Seat the high priest would go get some of that blood that was shed out there at that altar, which represented the cross, and he would bring that blood, and he’d sprinkle it right on top of that Mercy Seat. And what was right under that Mercy Seat? The broken law. Aren’t you glad that your sins are under the blood? You see, that’s what it’s all a picture of. *Here’s* the blood. *Here’s* the broken law. Jesus fulfilled it all. But “Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). And so, therefore, it’s pictured as being broken; and yet it’s also pictured as being under His blood; it’s also pictured as being atoned for.

Now you can thank God, dear friend, for the Mercy Seat. And we’re going to talk about that the next time we study, when we talk about Christ, our Sovereign, because that Mercy Seat also becomes a throne from which God rules. He rules from a bloody throne: the Mercy Seat. And we’re going to talk about that: it’s Christ, our Sovereign.

But let me just show you this one little nugget from the Word, and then we'll be finished.

Turn to 1 Samuel chapter 6 and verse 19. There was a time when the Ark of the Covenant was stolen. The Philistines took it. They thought they had a treasure, but they had a trouble. Boy, this thing was just a plague on them, and they just had trouble everywhere they went. And they said, "Man, let's get rid of this." They were like a guy that bought a new boomerang and killed himself trying to throw the old one away. They just had trouble with it. They said, "We want to get this off our hands." And so they built a new ark, and got some milk cows, and hooked them up to it, and said, "Take it back." And so they got as far as Bethshemesh with the ark. And when they did, those farmers out there in Bethshemesh, they came out and they looked at the ark. And they knew the prohibitions; they realized that they were not supposed to touch this ark, or fool with this ark, or look in this ark, because it represents sacredness and security. But their carnal curiosity took over; and they took the lid off the ark, and they looked in. And when they did, God smote them.

Look in 1 Samuel chapter 6 and verse 19: "*And he smote the men of Bethshemesh...*"—this is 1 Samuel 6:19—"*And he smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even he smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter.*"

Now, you know what this typifies? It typifies to me the condition we'd all be in when the blood is removed from the broken law. You see, they took away the Mercy Seat. They took away, as it were, the blood. And there is just the broken law. And when there is the broken law exposed, without being covered by the blood, friend, there's judgment. We can thank God for the Mercy Seat. We can thank God for the blood that makes atonement for our souls.

Conclusion

And I'm so glad I'm secure in Christ, and I'm glad that in Christ is the manna that is my resource. There's the rod: my resurrection; and there's the law: my righteousness. And that's all in Christ in the Ark of the Covenant. It's great to be saved.

Study of the Tabernacle #10

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 28, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 25:17–22

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Mercy Seat
- II. God Has Lived in Various Houses
 - A. Adam
 - B. The Tabernacle
 - C. Jesus
 - D. The Believer
- III. Five Truths That Are True Because Christ Is Our Mercy Seat
 - A. The Lesson Concerning Salvation
 - B. The Lesson Concerning Spirituality
 - C. The Lesson Concerning Security
 - D. The Lesson Concerning Soul Winning
 - E. The Lesson Concerning Service

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, we're studying—still we're studying—the tabernacle, and we're studying the seven pieces of furniture in the tabernacle. And we come to the last piece, the climactic piece: the Mercy Seat. And the Mercy Seat was a slab of pure beaten gold that was two and a half cubits by one and a half cubits in dimension, and it was a lid for the Ark of the Covenant. Now sometimes people think that the lid would be part of that same furniture. But it wasn't; it was different. It was not a part of the ark; it was a separate piece of furniture, though it was the lid for the ark.

Turn to Exodus chapter 25 and verse 17: *“And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above*

upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of things which I give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 25:17–22).

Now this Mercy Seat represents to me Christ, our Sovereign. And we have given you a little alliterated outline of the seven pieces of the furniture. You remember that the first piece of furniture was that brazen altar, which spoke of Christ, our sacrifice.

And then, the second piece of furniture, as you would enter into the tabernacle from the east, would be the laver, that washbasin made of brass, which symbolized the Word of God, and Christ, our sanctification.

And then, you would come, on the one side, to a table, and on that table would be some loaves of bread that were to be eaten by the priest. And that was called showbread. And that pictured Christ, our sustenance. Then, on the other side would be a candlestick to give light, because there was no illumination by windows. And all of the light of the tabernacle was from the golden lampstand. And that speaks of Christ, our sight.

And then, as you would proceed further into the Holy of Holies there, you would come to the altar of incense, that would represent for us Christ, our supplication, because the incense is a type, a symbol, of intercession and prayer.

And then, you came to the ark, the Ark of the Covenant, which was a chest. Remember, we said that an ark is a place for safekeeping. And not all boats are arks, but Noah’s boat was an ark, because it was a place of safekeeping. And it was a chest, a place of reservoir—and it speaks of Christ, our security.

I. The Mercy Seat

And the lid became a throne, and it was from that throne that the Lord ruled. It was from that throne that the Lord communed. It was there at that throne that the Lord would abide. That throne, or that seat, was called a *Mercy Seat*; and it becomes a throne where the Shekinah glory of God dwelt. And so I speak of it as Christ, our Sovereign; for there we find Him ruling from a golden throne sprinkled with blood.

Now I want to say that this Mercy Seat is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give you some New Testament verses just to point that out, so you’ll see that we’re not forcing the meaning.

Would you turn, for example, to Romans chapter 3. And let’s look in verse 24 for a moment—Romans chapter 3, verse 24: *“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...”*—now, remember that Christ Jesus is the subject now—*“through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom”*—that is, Christ Jesus—*“God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood”* (Romans 3:24–25).

Now the word *propitiation* is a Greek word, and it means—it's translated—"Mercy Seat." That's literally what it means—"Mercy Seat." "God hath set Jesus Christ forth to be a *Mercy Seat*." *Hilasterion* is the Greek word, and it simply means, "Mercy Seat." So Jesus Christ is a Mercy Seat. Whenever you see the word *propitiation* in the Bible, you can just say, "Mercy Seat." It means exactly the same thing. That is the meaning of the Greek word: it is "Mercy Seat."

And look, if you will, in 1 John chapter 4 and verse 10—1 John chapter 4 and verse 10: "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the [mercy seat] for our sins*"—"the *propitiation for our sins*." "*Here in is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation*"—that is, "the Mercy Seat"—"for our sins" (1 John 4:10). And so I want to say that this Mercy Seat, beyond the shadow of any doubt, speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now this Mercy Seat was over the ark, and in the ark were the tablets of stone that had been broken, symbolizing the broken law. And the gold of it symbolized the royal deity of our Lord. But then, there was blood sprinkled on the Mercy Seat, and God would cover it, in His Shekinah glory, right over the blood-sprinkled seat. And right beneath the blood-sprinkled Mercy Seat would be the broken tablets of the law. But, you see, God would not see the broken law; all He would see would be the blood of atonement, you see. That's the reason when He said, "When I see the blood, I'll pass over you" (Exodus 12:13).

A Sunday School teacher was teaching on the omnipotence of God, and she asked her class, "Is there anything God cannot do?" And a little girl raised her hand and said, "Yes, teacher, there's one thing God cannot do." And the teacher said, "There is? What is that?" And she said, "God cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ." And that's right; that's true.

You see, *here's* the broken law; *here's* the Mercy Seat. But sprinkled on that throne is blood. And the high priest, once a year, on the Day of Atonement—the Jewish people call it *Yom Kippur*—on the Day of Yom Kippur, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would go out to that brazen altar and take the blood of that burnt offering, and he would go into the Holy of Holies—only once a year—and there he would sprinkle the blood on the Mercy Seat.

Now that pictured what Jesus would do one day. You remember when Jesus had been raised from the grave, and He was there, and Mary came into the garden? And when she saw Jesus, she wanted to fall down and worship Jesus, and kiss His feet—you remember? You remember what Jesus said to her, in John 20? He said, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father"—"Don't you touch me. I haven't ascended to my Father yet" (John 20:17).

Now, what does all that mean? Because later on, in the Book of Luke—in Luke 24,

verse 39—He said to His disciples, *“Handle me”* (Luke 24:39)—“touch me; feel me.” “Better get back.” *“Handle me”*—touch me; feel me.” Because there was a difference. What was the difference? One time, He says to Mary, “Don’t you touch me. I’ve not yet ascended to my Father and your Father.” Then another time: *“Handle me”*—“touch me; feel me.” What’s the difference?

Well, you see, when that high priest prepared himself, and washed himself, and made atonement, and went in with that blood, he was not to be touched—not to be defiled by anybody—because he was set apart as sacred, as holy, as separate from sinners. He was going into the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sin with blood in a basin. Do you know what Jesus did when He ascended to heaven? You see, Jesus was raised from the grave; then He ascended to heaven; then He came back and appeared to the disciples, and asked them to touch Him and handle Him. But in that interval He went to heaven, and He sprinkled His blood there upon the Mercy Seat in the Glory. That’s what He did.

Notice in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 12, and you’ll see that that’s exactly what Jesus did. And that’s the reason that Mary could not touch Him, because He had not yet done that. He had not yet taken His special blood and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat there in the Glory. But look in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 12. The Bible says, *“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us”* (Hebrews 9:12). That’s what Jesus did: not with the blood of bulls and of goats, but with His own blood, He entered into the Holy Place, and sprinkled the blood upon the Mercy Seat there in heaven. And it’s there right now, and there’s power in that blood. And I just thank God for that blood that’s sprinkled upon that Mercy Seat. And when Jesus did that, the throne of judgment in heaven became, for those of us who are saved, our throne of grace.

Now, let me show you another sweet verse. Turn, if you will, to Hebrews chapter 4—Hebrews chapter 4—and look in verse 14. And all of this fits together like a beautiful mosaic. And it will bless your heart when you understand these truths. But if you don’t understand these truths, many times you’ll read some of the teachings in Hebrews, in the New Testament, and fail to get the blessing. But in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 14: *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace”* (Hebrews 4:14–16).

Now, remember this: that, in the tabernacle, that throne was not a throne of grace; it was a throne of judgment. If any one of those Jews had lifted up the flap of that veil, and had gone into that Holy of Holies, and looked there upon that Ark of the Covenant, just

like that, they would have been slain. No one would have dared to have the audacity to go into the Holy of Holies, where the Shekinah glory of God dwelt, unless he was the high priest and coming with blood. But now Jesus has made the way for us. Jesus has gone in for us. Jesus has sprinkled His blood. That's all done. The blood is in Glory now.

And so notice the conclusion: *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16). And that judgment seat now becomes a Mercy Seat, and the throne of judgment becomes a throne of grace. *“And let us therefore come boldly through the blood.”* Isn't it wonderful to know that we can come to God: we don't need a priest anymore? That's the reason I'm a preacher and not a priest. You don't need a priest. You need a preacher. We are our own priests. Jesus is our High Priest, and we come to Him through the blood of Jesus. And He's no further from me than my knees are from the floor. And I don't need any priest. I need Jesus. *“There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Timothy 2:5). And I can come boldly to the throne of grace. Glory to God! It's a wonderful salvation.

Now, let's see if we can make some applications; and then we'll just conclude the message tonight. Let's make some applications.

II. God Has Lived in Various Houses

Do you remember a while back when I spoke on the subject, “Where on Earth Does God Live”? Do you remember that? “Where on Earth Does God Live?” And we said the tabernacle was but a pattern of the human body. You see, the tabernacle had three rooms: the outer court, the inner court, and the innermost court—or the Holy of Holies. Man is a house of three rooms. The tabernacle is just a picture of man, as well as a picture of Christ, the perfect man.

The outer court of the tabernacle pictures the body, because the body is the place of sacrifice. We're to present our bodies a living sacrifice. They made the sacrifice of these animals in the outer court.

The inner court, where the priests met and communed and fellowshiped and worshiped, corresponds to the soul—the innermost, the inner man—because it's in our souls that we have fellowship with one another. And we fellowship soulishly with another person, and we know each other on this level, through our souls. And so the outer court represented the body, and the inner court represented the soul.

But that innermost court—that cube building, that Holy of Holies—represented the spirit of man. There's a difference in man's soul and man's spirit. The soul of man gives man self-consciousness and social consciousness, but the spirit of man gives man God-consciousness, for *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit*

and in truth” (John 4:24). And so the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle represents the human spirit. That’s where God dwelt. Do you know where God dwells in me? God dwells in my spirit. He says, “I will dwell with him that is of a humble and a contrite spirit” (Isaiah 57:15). And so God has been moving in and out of houses.

A. Adam

The first house that God lived in was a house of three rooms, named Adam. But when Adam sinned, God moved out—for God won’t live in a dirty house. And God moved out. And Adam died. He didn’t die physically, or psychologically; he died spiritually. And to be spiritually dead is to be minus God in the spirit. God moved out.

B. The Tabernacle

The next house that God lived in was the tabernacle we just read about. And God said, “I’ll dwell right there between the cherubim right over the Mercy Seat.” But even that house became defiled, because the tabernacle became the temple. And Jesus said, “It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the people, but you’ve made it a den of thieves” (Matthew 21:13). And Jesus moved out. God moved out. The Holy Spirit moved out. God saturated that place with His absence. They didn’t know it. They went on to worship. They trudged to church every Sabbath day. They went in to worship: we’ll call it *church*. They trudged to temple every Sabbath day; and they went in, but God was nowhere around. He said, “*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*” (Matthew 23:38). You see, “my Father’s house”—that’s what it was; that’s what it was meant to be. But now He says, “your house.” Rather than enjoying salvation, they were just enduring religion. And so that was God’s pattern house.

C. Jesus

But then, there was God’s perfect house. His name was Jesus. See, God’s primary house was Adam. God’s pattern house was the temple. God’s perfect house was Jesus. The Bible says, “*The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). But the Greek word is, “*The Word was made flesh, and [tabernacled] among us.*” Jesus was a tabernacle. Or, in another place, in John the second chapter, the nineteenth verse, I believe it is, Jesus said, “*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*” (John 2:19). Jesus was a temple; Jesus was a tabernacle; Jesus was a house of God, a house of three rooms. He was healthy in His body, He was happy in His soul, and He was holy in His Spirit. And here He was the perfect man, and the fullness of God dwelt in Jesus’ bodily.

But then, God moved out of that house too, because that house became a dirty house, and God won’t live in a dirty house. The Bible says, “Him who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us” (2 Corinthians 5:21). And, “*All we like sheep have gone*

astray...and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). My sin, your sin, our sin, and the sin of the world, was put upon Jesus. And when that was true, God the Father separated Himself from God the Son. You don't understand that. I don't understand it. But I believe it. That's the reason that Jesus hung on the cross and cried, *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). You see, God moved out, because God won't live in a dirty house. And Jesus died on Calvary, all alone.

D. The Believer

But now I want you to notice God's permanent house. Now, listen. God dwells in me permanently. He'll never move out of me; He'll never move out of you. Jesus Christ is now my Mercy Seat. The blood, one offering, is sprinkled forever on the Mercy Seat in heaven. Jesus is that Mercy Seat. And that throne of grace is a throne that is really not only in heaven, but a throne in my heart, because my body is a temple of the holy God. And just as the Ark of the Covenant was in that tabernacle, and just as the Ark of the Covenant was in that temple, Jesus Christ is in me, and He will never ever leave me—He'll never leave me.

You remember when Solomon's temple was dedicated? They brought the ark into Solomon's Temple; and then they pulled the staves out of the ark. All through the wilderness that ark had been carried by those staves, those long poles. But you can read in 1 Kings that they pulled those staves out, and that meant that the ark had come into the temple, not to be moved anymore. It had found a permanent dwelling place. And the glory of God hadn't filled the temple yet. But then, when the priest backed out, the Bible says the glory of God filled that temple. Now, what does that picture? When the ark came in, that pictured Christ coming into us. And when the staves were pulled out, that pictures Christ always in us. And when the priest backed out, that pictures Christ only in us—Christ; Christ always; Christ only. And when it became Christ, Christ always, and Christ only, then the Bible says, "The glory of the Lord filled the house" (1 Kings 8:11). You read it in 1 Kings 8: "The glory of the Lord filled the house."

Do you want the glory of God to fill your body? Do you? Your body's the temple of the Holy Ghost, which you have of God. Do you want the glory of God to fill it? All right, just say, "Christ, Christ always, and Christ only." You see, when Jesus Christ moves into you, He moves in, never to move out again. That's the reason I believe in the eternal security of the believer. Jesus said, "I will send the Holy Spirit, and He will abide with you forever. He will settle down to dwell in your hearts forever" (John 14:16). That's what Jesus said in John 14. My heart is not a hotel with checkout time 12 noon on Sunday. Jesus Christ lives in me forever.

You know, we need to learn some lessons. There are some wonderful lessons about

that. The Mercy Seat, the Ark of the Covenant, the presence of God, the Shekinah glory, is in my heart. My heart is His throne, and His throne is my dwelling place. I am in Him, and He is in me. And He'll never leave. He'll never leave you. This is glorious! This is shouting ground!

III. Five Truths That Are True Because Christ Is Our Mercy Seat

And let me just give you about five or six lessons that—just real quick—five or six truths that are true because Christ is our Mercy Seat, because Christ is our Sovereign, because Christ, the Ark of the Covenant, is in His holy temple, which is our bodies. Let me give you about five or six lessons.

A. The Lesson Concerning Salvation

Lesson number one is the lesson concerning salvation. We need to teach people what salvation is. We've been doing such a shallow job teaching boys and girls what salvation is. We've been doing such a shallow job teaching it from our pulpits—what salvation is. Salvation is not getting your sins forgiven: that just gets you ready for salvation. Salvation is not going to heaven when you die: that's the result of salvation. Salvation *is not getting* man *out of earth into* heaven; *it is getting* God *out of heaven into man*. Understand this. You see, just as the Shekinah glory of God dwelt above that Mercy Seat, the glory of God dwells in me. Just as that ark was in the temple, Jesus is in me.

Do you understand what salvation is? It's getting God back into man. What happened to Adam that caused Adam to die? God moved out of Adam. What happens when a man gets saved? God moves back into him. There's the lesson concerning salvation, therefore. Understand what salvation is. It's getting God back into man.

B. The Lesson Concerning Spirituality

All right, the second lesson I want you to learn is the lesson concerning spirituality. What is spirituality? Look. Spirituality is having God in you at all times, at all places. Please don't act spiritual. God doesn't want you act spiritual. If there's anything that makes me sick at my stomach and nauseous, it's for people to act spiritual. A person who acts spiritual is a hypocrite. God doesn't want you to act spiritual. You are spiritual, so you don't need to act. Jesus had a lot to say about the play actors: "the hypocrites," He called them.

Have you ever noticed people come to church and suddenly get spiritual when they get inside the church building, you know? And we say to our kids, "Now, kids, we're going to God's house. This is God's house, so you behave a certain way in God's house." This isn't God's house. *This* is God's house—*this* is God's house. You see, look. We ought to have reverence because of the purpose for which we've met; and we

ought to take care of these buildings, because they belong to God. And I'm not saying kids ought to cut a shine in church. You are to behave. But this is God's house—this is God's house right here. And, you see, we don't just come to church, to the church meeting, and suddenly we get real pious, and we start to sing, "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silent."

And people have the idea, "Oh, people ought not to come to church and talk. And they ought to not to do certain things in certain parts of the building, because this is God's house." And some of the people who would raise the most thoughts about doing certain things in God's house would go out and light up a cigarette. But they wouldn't do it in here; they'd do it out there. Well, friend, if you're going to defile anything, defile *this*. Don't defile *this*, amen? This is God's house. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which ye have of God. You're not your own; you're bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). This is God's house.

And so, what is spirituality? Spirituality is not suddenly getting a pious tone when you come to church. I don't like folks who suddenly get religious, and they come to pray, and they—well, I like them, but I don't like the way they do—they come to church, and they say, "Lord, we come into thy presence." I say, "Where have you been?" Look. God's *out there*, and God's *in here*. Every day is a holy day. Every place is a sacred place. And God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost of God. And so, when a person is saved, he doesn't suddenly start acting religious under certain circumstances. He is spiritual twenty-four hours a day. And in all natural things he's to be spiritual; and in all spiritual things he's to be natural. And he's naturally supernatural and supernaturally natural. Does that make sense? You are to be the same every day—and that is, holy.

People say, "Do you keep the Sabbath?" I sure do, but not Saturday. I keep it Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday again. Every day is a Sabbath day. Every day is a rest in Jesus. Every day is a holy place. Every place is a place of service. And we're to be spiritual all the time. And the way that you talk: you don't get sudden quivers in your voice when you talk spiritually. When you let the Lord fill you with His Spirit, He's going to give you a pleasing personality. You're not going to be some religious psycho jumping around with buggy eyes. You're going to be natural, but you're going to be supernaturally natural and naturally supernatural. And everywhere you go—whether you're fishing, frying an egg, or preaching a sermon—you're going to be the same.

You know the way I test my friends? Brother, when I go off at a convention, I get in a motel room with somebody like Peter Lord, Jack Taylor, and these other fellows. They talk the same way they talk when they're standing right here in this pulpit. They don't

turn it on and turn it off. They don't have one kind of behavior one place and another kind of behavior another place. It's the same way all the time. That's the way it ought to be.

C. The Lesson Concerning Security

All right, there's a lesson concerning salvation. There's a lesson concerning spirituality. There's a lesson concerning security. Look. If Christ rules from a throne, that throne is the Mercy Seat. And that Mercy Seat is upon the ark. And that ark represents Him. And my body represents the temple. And that ark is in that temple, never to be taken out again. If He abides with me forever, then I'm secure.

Some people don't believe in eternal security. They think they're going to get in heaven and then they're going to be secure. They don't think they're secure down here. I've said it before; I'll say it again: *If you're not secure down here, you won't be secure up there. Security is not in a place; it's in a person.* The angels fell from heaven. Brother, if you're not secure down here, you're not secure up there. What makes you think that, just because you slam the door behind you in heaven, you're going to be safe? Why, the angels fell from heaven.

I want to tell you something, friend. I had rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. I had rather be a saved sinner than Adam in the Garden of Eden before he'd ever sinned. Adam was only innocent. I am positively righteous. Adam could sin and lose his fellowship with God. I can sin, but I can't lose my relationship with God. There is nothing that can separate me from God. And if I sin, God will whip the daylights out of me, if I don't confess it. But I'm still His child, and "whom the Lord loves, He scourges, and chastens every son whom He receives" (Hebrews 12:6). But I am His child forever and ever, because the Mercy Seat is there; the blood is upon it; the Ark of the Covenant is in the temple; the staves have been removed; and He's not moving out again. I am His temple. And there's the lesson concerning security.

D. The Lesson Concerning Soul Winning

There's the lesson concerning soul winning. Dear friend, listen. What is soul winning? If man is a house of three rooms—body, soul, and spirit—and if the spirit of man is that which needs to be regenerated, the devil will move heaven and earth to get churches to feed man's body and to educate man's mind in lieu of converting man's spirit. And that's going on. We'll have some people who'll come to us with bleeding hearts and tell us the world is starving. And you take the assets of your soul-winning ministry and put it into feeding hungry mouths.

Now I believe that people need to be fed. But let me tell you something, friend. If you feed people without giving them the gospel, you prolong their life; you prolong their productivity; you prolong their regeneration, or their generating other children; and death

is total in every generation, until Jesus comes. Everybody who's living is going to die, until Jesus comes. But, dear friend, giving people food without giving them the gospel is the devil's plan. Educating *people without giving them the* gospel *simply makes them* clever devils. Our job is to get the gospel out. And we need to be very careful, because we can be made to look hardhearted, or we can be made to look like we don't care about the needs of man. But I want to tell you the devil knows that it doesn't matter what you do to *this* and what you do to *this*, if *this* is not changed. He doesn't want the spirit of man to be born again.

When Adam died, *he died* immediately *in the* spirit, progressively *in his* soul, ultimately *in his* body. *When* man *gets* saved, *he is* justified *immediately in his spirit*, sanctified *progressively in his soul*, glorified *ultimately in his body*. But the devil would try to get you to leapfrog over the Spirit and start with the soul or the body. There's a lesson concerning soul winning, therefore.

E. The Lesson Concerning Service

And then, of course, there's the lesson concerning service. I was reading the other day Hudson Taylor. You've read *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*. If you haven't, you ought to read it. But Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission, said, when he first got saved, he started out wanting God to do things for him. And then, after he grew a little, he wanted to do things for God. And then, when he grew some more, he decided God wanted to do something through him. Now, have you learned that lesson?

Look. Service is not, you do something for God; it is God doing something in you and through you. God lives in me. Do you know when God preaches through me? When I get myself out of the way and just let Him speak through me. You say, "Well now, now, Adrian, you think God is speaking through you, when sometimes you say something humorous? Don't you think that's Adrian?" Not necessarily. I believe—look—I believe that God made us, every one of us, unique individuals, and He wants us to be the same everywhere, loving Him, acting just as we would act—not our worst self, but our self—our best self. And God has a sense of humor. God has a sense of intrigue. God has a sense of order. God has a sense of pathos. God has all of this.

You see, what is preaching? What is preaching? Preaching *is* truth *through* personality. That's what it is. And God's plan is for a lot of people, who are His Body, to get together and focus their minds together on one thought at the same time. And then God chooses somebody. And God takes that personality—not necessarily through their wit, their charm. I'm saying personality, you know, whether it's good or bad. I'm not talking about being scintillating. But God takes a person who is himself, filled with the Holy Spirit, and then God uses that man's thoughts; God uses that man's mind; God uses that man or that woman's gestures, whatever it is. God uses that to communicate

truth. But it's not what we're doing for God, even though it may seem very human; it's what God is doing through us. And if we could learn just to say, "Lord, you take my mind, take my hands, take my feet, take whatever I have, take my reading, take my logic, take my whatever it is, Lord, and you use it," and God will use it.

Conclusion

You see, the Ark of the Covenant dwelt in the temple. That represents Jesus. And He dwells in us. He rules from a throne called the Mercy Seat. The Shekinah glory of God hovers over it. The sprinkled blood is interposed between Himself and the broken law. It's such a glorious thing to know that God lives in us, that He rules from a throne of grace called a Mercy Seat.

Camping with God: The Tabernacle

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 25:1–9

Outline

Introduction

- A. The Outer Court
 - B. The Inner Court
 - C. The Holy of Holies
 - I. A Description of Deity
 - II. A Blueprint of the Believer
 - III. A Shadow of Salvation
- Conclusion

Introduction

Would you open your Bibles please to the Old Testament to the book of Exodus Chapter 25. We're going to be speaking on the subject tonight, "Camping with God." And I really want to speak to you about the tabernacle. This is going to be a Bible study tonight and so I want you just to get your Bibles out. Let's look in them and we're gonna see if we can't learn something in Bible study that'll bless our heart. All right, I want to read to you Exodus chapter 25 and the first 9 verses, "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 'Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering.'" And, by the way, that's the way the Lord wants any offering, willingly from the heart. And then He tells them what to bring and in verse 8, He says, "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. According to all that I shew thee, after the pattern of the tabernacle, and the pattern of all the instruments thereof, even so shall ye make it."

Now the Lord said to Israel, "I want you to build for me a tabernacle. This is going to be a sanctuary, that is, it's going to be a place, a holy place. It'll be a place where I dwell with you and this is where you're going to worship me in the wilderness. And it's very, very important," God said, "that you make it exactly like I tell you to make it. Don't you go improvising, don't go cutting any corners, and don't go redrawing my plans." God said, "I know exactly how I want you to make this tabernacle. It is very, very important."

We can check that same thing if you just keep your hand there in Exodus 25 and turn to Hebrews chapter 8 and you'll find why the tabernacle had to be made exactly as

it was made. Now remember the tabernacle was a tent like structure that Israel worshiped in, in the wilderness. Now let's turn to Hebrews chapter 8 and verses 1 and 2 and you'll find exactly why God wanted the tabernacle made to such an exacting pattern. For he says here in Hebrews 8: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum,"—in other words, this sums it up—"We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens"—now who is our High Priest? Jesus. Now the writer of Hebrews said, "I'm gonna sum it up for you now. You want me to tell you what I've been telling you all this time. We've got a wonderful high priest at the right hand of God." And then the Bible goes on to say, "He is a minister of the sanctuary, of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man."

Now man pitched a tabernacle in the wilderness but that tabernacle in the wilderness was only a pattern or a picture of the true tabernacle that is in heaven that the Lord, himself, built. Verse 5 goes on to amplify that. He speaks of the priest, "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, see, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."

Now does that make sense to you? Well, let's think about it a little bit. God says, "Moses, you be very careful. You make everything exactly as I tell you to make it because the things I tell you to make in the tabernacle are not things that I thought up capriciously or arbitrarily but these are things, every one of them, that has a rich, wonderful, spiritual lesson." And so think of this tent, or this tabernacle, that God told Moses to make. Let me just describe it to you a little bit. I want you to, as they used to say when I was in school, put on your thinking cap now and let your imagination run away and see if you can imagine this tent or this tabernacle in the wilderness.

A. The Outer Court

What would it look like if you were to have seen it? Well first of all, there would've been an outer court with a fence around it. And this outer court would have been exactly seventy-five feet by a hundred and fifty feet. About how big is that? Well, think of a small city lot that's about the size of it. Seventy-five feet across the front and a hundred and fifty feet down either side. Now around it is a fence and the fence is just about this high, about seven and a half feet. Now you don't have any seven and a half feet men so it's higher than a man's head to show that you had to keep out unless you came in through the door or through the gate. The gate was on the east side of the tabernacle and the gate was a wide gate to show you were really welcome to come in the gate if you wanted to, for it was thirty feet wide. But the fence said, "Don't come over the fence," but the gate says, "Come right on in the gate, come right on in the door, we want you in but don't climb over the fence to get in."

And in this outer court which was seventy-five by a hundred and fifty feet, there were two pieces of furniture, and there are seven pieces of furniture in this tabernacle altogether, but there were two pieces in the outer court. First of all, there was an altar and on this altar the sacrificial animal was slain and the altar was right by the door.

And then if you come right past the door, the next thing you see is a laver, which means it is a great vessel filled with water. To *lave* in Latin means to wash and so it's a laver or a place where you wash. It's a great vessel filled with water. So you come in the door, there's the altar. You come a little further and here is this brazen sea or laver that's filled with water.

B. The Inner Court

Now next, not only was there the outer court, but there was an inner court. Now this inner court was different. It had a ceiling on it. The outer court didn't have a ceiling but the inner court had a ceiling and it's fifteen feet wide and it's fifteen feet high and it is forty-five feet long. So just imagine that, think about it now being just fifteen feet high, fifteen feet wide, but forty-five feet long. Now, this inner court is divided into two sections also. There's the front section which is fifteen wide, fifteen high, and thirty feet long and this is called the inner court. And in that inner court are three pieces of furniture. On the north side there is a table and on that table there is some bread called the showbread. And on the south side there is a beautiful candlestick. It has one central shaft and six others coming out. It's a menorah or candlestick lamp and that was the only light that the tabernacle had on the inside.

And then as you come in the door, therefore, you come to the altar, and then you come to the laver, and then you come on further, you come into the inner court. And on this side is the table of showbread and on this side is the lamp, the golden candlestick. And then you come a little further in the inner court and there's another altar called the altar of incense and on this altar of incense sweet smelling perfume is burning all the time and it's going up, up, and up, which is a symbol of prayer being offered to the Lord.

C. The Holy of Holies

And then as you go further you come to the final place which is fifteen by fifteen by fifteen and that is called the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies, that's the holy place. And in this holy place which is a perfect cube, fifteen this way and fifteen this way and fifteen this way, are two more pieces of furniture. There is the Ark of the Covenant and there is the mercy seat that the sacrificial blood was sprinkled upon.

And so there's seven pieces of furniture there in the tabernacle. There's the altar, the laver, there's the table of showbread, there's the golden candlestick, there's the altar of incense, and there's the Ark of the Covenant, and there's the mercy seat; seven pieces of furniture. And you know, to the Jews that numbers had a special meaning.

Numbers were more than arithmetic to the Jews. *Gematria* means that there is a spiritual meaning to numbers. For example, one is the meaning of unity, three is the number of deity, four is the earth number, six is man's number, seven is the perfect number, ten is the complete number, twelve is God's governmental number, and so forth. Numbers had a meaning to the Jew. Seven being the perfect number, there is seven pieces of furniture in this tabernacle.

Now, I want you to think, I want you to listen, because all of this is going to tell us something very, very wonderful. Now there are a lot of things that you can see in the tabernacle but I want you to see with me tonight as we go camping with God, because that's what it was it was a tent where they could camp with God along the way, I want you to see first of all in the tabernacle, a description of deity. And then the second thing I want you to see is a blueprint of the believer, of the Christian, because not only does the tabernacle describe deity, or the Lord Jesus Christ, but it also describes us. And then the third thing that I want you to see, there's a wonderful pathway of salvation, a shadow of salvation. What the Lord does when He saves us and how the Lord saves us, it's all seen right there in the tabernacle.

I. A Description of Deity

And think about the first things there that I want you to see. I want you to see a description of deity for the tabernacle was a picture of Jesus. You've heard me say before, *if you read the Bible and you don't find Jesus re-read it you've missed the message*. Jesus is the hero of the Bible. Amen. It's all about Him, all about Jesus, and the tabernacle is all about Jesus. And this is the reason that God said to Moses, "Now Moses, you make it exactly like I told you," because every nook and cranny in that tabernacle, every thread, every bit of it, it is to tell us something about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me point that out to you in the New Testament. Look in John chapter 1, in verse 14, and this will help the Gospel of John to come alive to you. In John 1, verse 14, the Bible says, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Now listen, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him"—that is in Jesus—"was life; and the life was the light of men." And then the Bible goes on to speak of our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Now look at the word "dwelt" for just a moment. The word literally means "tabernacle," literally that's what it is. It's the same word that's translated tabernacle and you can read it and it's just as plain and it's translated just as well, "And the Word was made flesh,"—who's the Word? Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God. Why does the Bible call Him the Word? Well, a word is an

expression of a thought, an idea, conception; Jesus is the expression of the thought, the idea, the conception of God. Jesus is God's Word. He's God's revelation to us, therefore, He's called the Word—"And the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us." And so Jesus called himself a tabernacle.

On another occasion Jesus called himself a temple which was just a permanent tabernacle. Jesus said, "You destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up." Now the temple that He was talking about was the temple of His body and so every detail of the temple and the tabernacle speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were speaking primarily about the tabernacle right now. And I want you to notice something, if you had seen this tabernacle from the outside, do you think it would've been beautiful? I mean if you'd just looked at the tabernacle, you'd been walking there through the desert, the Sinai, and you look out there and there's Israel's tabernacle. It's surrounded by a seven and a half foot dull white fence and on the inside there you see something, it's really kind of hideous looking, the proportions are not very pleasing. It's fifteen by fifteen by forty-five and it's covered with brownish gray badger skins. It really is not attractive. As a matter of fact, I believe it was a very unappealing building. If you'd look at it you'd say, "There's nothing there. That's certainly one of the most hideous buildings I've ever seen."

But had you gone inside, had you gone in through the door, and in through the tent, you would have literally gasp because on the inside was a most exquisite and cunning and beautiful needlework and lovely, beautiful colors of white and blue and scarlet and purple and cherubim on the ceiling, and the golden candlestick, and the beautiful furniture, and all of this, and you would say, "My how beautiful. I never dreamed it was so beautiful."

Now let me tell you about the Lord Jesus Christ, friend, He's not beautiful if you look at Him from the outside. You have to see Him from the inside. You'll never understand Jesus till you come in the door. Amen. A lot of people look at Jesus and they say, "I just don't understand why those Christians get so excited about Jesus." Well friend, if you come on the inside and if you see Jesus from the inside and not from the outside, you'll understand just how beautiful He is. You know, the Bible describes Him on the outside in Isaiah 53, verse 2, and the Bible says, "When we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him." But the Bible speaks of the person who receives Jesus Christ spiritually and has his eyes open, and the Bible says, "Thine eyes shall see the King in his beauty."

Now what's the difference? It all depends on whether you're on the inside or on the outside. When you see Him as a natural man, an unsaved man, you can't understand why Jesus excites us but I tell you, bless God, Jesus excites me because I've seen Him from the inside and He gets sweeter every day. Oh how wonderful it is to come in

through the door and see the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll never understand the beauties of Jesus, you'll never understand the glories of Jesus, you'll never understand the riches of Jesus, till you come on in through that door. And by the way, there's only one door and the door itself speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. For Jesus said in John 10, verse 9, "I'm in the door." And the very door of that Tabernacle speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now notice the fence says, "Stay out," and the door says, "Come in." Now what does that mean? The fence says there's only one way to heaven. You can't get there any other way except the door. That's the reason God put a fence around the tabernacle but then He put a great wide door and He said, "Come in." By the way, let's look at that door for just a moment. Look in Exodus 38, verse 18, because if you're going to really see the Lord Jesus Christ, you've got to come in through the door and He is the door also, and so let's see how the Bible describes the door. I want you to notice particularly the colors of the door. Look in Exodus chapter 38 and verse 18, "And the hanging for the gate of the court was needlework, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen."

Now why did God make the door of these colors, was that just by accident, of course not. Not only did numbers have a meaning but colors had a meaning. And part of the color of this door was purple and what's purple the color off? Sovereignty, and the purple door, the purple threads, speak of the kingship of our Lord, his sovereignty. Scarlett the color of blood speaks of sacrifice. White speaks of sinlessness and blue speaks of son-ship because He's the Son of God from heaven. We look up at the blue sky, the heavens above, and we know that He came down from heaven. And so you see in these four colors four characteristics of the Lord Jesus Christ: Purple, sovereignty; scarlet, sacrifice; white, sinlessness; and blue, son-ship.

Incidentally, I believe that's why we have four gospels. Did you know all four of the gospels speak of these four different colors? Did you know, for example, Matthew is the purple gospel? Why? Because, Matthew tells us about Jesus the King of the Jews. Mark is the scarlet gospel because Mark tells us about Jesus the suffering servant who shed his blood on the cross and that's the emphasis in Mark. Luke is the white gospel for Luke speaks of the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and that emphasizes his sinlessness. And John is the blue gospel for John speaks of the pre-incarnate Christ who came down from glory, the Son of God, "In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," and so forth.

So, you know, we have a Technicolor gospel. We don't have to preach in black-and-white, isn't that wonderful? Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, each one of us tell us an aspect about the Lord Jesus Christ but we see it in embryo form, we see it long ago just in the marvelous, beautiful colors that God put there in the very door. And so, God says as you come in this door you're coming in the door of Jesus who is sovereign, Jesus

who died for your sins, Jesus who is sinless, Jesus who is the Son of God. And so, if you want to see how beautiful the tabernacle is, the tabernacle is a picture of Jesus but you're not going to see it, you're not going to understand it, till you see Him from the inside. For the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 14, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them." They're spiritually understood, they're spiritually discerned when you come in through the door.

II. A Blueprint of the Believer

Now, not only is the tabernacle a picture of Jesus but it's also a blueprint of the believer. Not only does it picture Jesus Christ but since we're in Christ and Christ is in us, the tabernacle is a marvelous picture of us, of our own salvation. Look, for example, if you will, in John chapter 14, verse 17. Now the Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit and it describes Him here as, "Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you"—it literally means—"He tabernacles with you and shall be in you." And so the Holy Spirit dwells in you as a tabernacle. You are a tabernacle. Not only was the Lord Jesus Christ tabernacling here but you and I are tabernacles. And so the Bible says now be careful Moses how you build that tabernacle because I want to teach my people something about that tabernacle. In the first place they need to learn something about themselves.

Did you know that the tabernacle is a description of mankind? You see, I've told you this before but some of you may not know it, that there are three parts to human nature. Man is spirit, soul, and body, isn't he? The Bible says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 23, "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," so there are three parts to you. There's your body and with your body you have earth consciousness, you know the world beneath you, you have physical life. There's your soul and with your soul you have psychological life. The Greek word for soul is psyche. Your soul is your memory, your intellect, your sense of humor, your personalities, your tastes, your likes, your dislikes, the whole thing that makes you, you. Your mind, you're being is your soul. All right and so with your soul you have social consciousness and self-consciousness and you know the world around you.

Now what about your spirit? Your spirit is that part of man that keeps you from just simply being a clever animal. Animals don't have a spirit but man has a spirit and what is the function of your spirit? Well with your body you have physical life, with your soul you have psychological life, and with your spirit you have spiritual life. You know God through the spirit. The spirit is the sender and the receiver, the communicator, by which you know God. And so the Bible says when you worship God you must worship Him in

spirit and in truth. The Bible says that God's Spirit agrees with our spirit that we're children of God. So there are three parts: body, soul, and spirit—physical world, social world, spiritual world. When my body's right I'm healthy. When my soul is right I'm happy. When my spirit is right I'm holy. When I'm completely tuned up, I ought to be healthy, happy, and holy; I ought to be a whole man.

Now, the tabernacle pictures that. Did you know that, that the tabernacle is a picture of mankind? For example, the outer court represents the body. The inner court represents the soul and the Holy of Holies represents the spirit. That's what it's all about, you see? Now the outer court is the place of sacrifice. The sacrifice was made in the outer court, wasn't it? Sure it was, and this is the place of sacrifice for me, for you. You say, "You mean there's still some sacrifices to be made?" There certainly is. Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, that ye present your bodies"—your outer court—"a living sacrifice." Your body, this is the place of sacrifice. Oh but once a person came into that outer court, the place of sacrifice, then he came into the inner court which was the place of fellowship and communion and that speaks of the soul that we have, self-consciousness and social consciousness. That speaks of the fellowship that we have with other believers as we worship and that's for you to have fellowship with your soul.

Now, I know you with my soul but I know Him with my spirit. And so, the inner court represents the soul and it helps me to understand that not only does God want me to have my body as a place of sacrifice to be used for Him but He wants my soul to be a place of fellowship where I come and love you and you love me. And it's great for Christians to get together and to worship with one another and love one another in the Lord Jesus Christ. But then, dear friend, there are places where that high priest went by himself, into that Holy of Holies by himself, alone with Jesus, and oh, that represents the spirit. Oh when you get off, nobody but you and Jesus. And what man knoweth the things of the spirit of man but the spirit of man that's in him and who knows the things of the spirit of God but the spirit of God himself, but how wonderful that God's blessed spirit and our blessed spirit come together in sweet communion.

And I don't know about you but Jesus and me have something going. And I can't explain it to you and you may say that sounds sticky and that sounds sentimental, but I tell you something, I thank God for God's dear, warm Holy Spirit that comes into my very bosom, which is the inner sanctum and the Holy of Holies, where God's spirit bears witness with my spirit that I'm a child of God and that's worship where you know the Lord. Thank God for the pattern that He's given us and He has shown us that in our body there's an outer court and then there's an inner court and, oh, there is the Holy of Holies. Do you know the Lord, this deep, personal, individual, personal communion?

III. A Shadow of Salvation

But, not only was the tabernacle a description of deity, and not only was it a blueprint of believers, but I want to say thirdly and lastly, it was also a shadow of salvation. It was a shadow of things to come and as you look at the tabernacle you can see how God saves us and what He does to save us. I want you to follow the pieces of furniture. Now we said there's seven and if you take those seven pieces of furniture and line them out, to your amazement you'll find that they form a cross. Part of them coming this way right through the center of the tabernacle, and then some coming right across this way to form a cross, because this is the path of the cross.

Just imagine yourself coming into that tabernacle. The first thing you will come to would be the great brazen altar there where the sacrifice, the blood sacrifice, was made. And, friend, that's the first step in the pathway to glory, isn't it? Oh, without shedding of blood is no remission of sin. There is no way that God can save you, there's no way that your sins can be forgiven, except your sins are washed away and that blood that we sang about tonight. And so that altar, where those smoking Jewish sacrifices were sacrificed, that's where our sins are forgiven. There is first of all the altar and that altar that speaks of the cross and blood redemption tells me of Christ my sacrifice. But then, as I go from the altar, what do I come to next? After I'm saved, after the blood of Jesus Christ has cleansed me, and after I've come by the altar, the very next piece of furniture I come to is what, tell me? The laver. Thank you I knew you knew that. The laver. We just talked about it. He comes to the laver.

Now if the cross speaks of salvation, if the altar speaks of salvation and sacrifice, then the laver speaks of sanctification because you see, after we are saved we need to be sanctified, we need to be cleansed. Now positionally all of our sins are put under the blood when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ but day by day we need to be saved from the power of sin and we need daily cleansing. And so the laver speaks of the cleansing and the removing of the daily guilt of sin, daily sins. You see, in that laver was water and water in the laver was a symbol of the Word of God.

You want me to find the New Testament interpretation of that? Look, if you will, in Ephesians chapter 5, verses 26 and 27, be good to look at it, be good to mark, it's a great verse. Ephesians chapter 5 and the Bible speaks first of all to husbands and it says, "Husbands love your wives even as Christ also loved the church." A lot of ladies say Ephesians chapter 5 is hard. It tells me to be in subjection to my husband. Well let me tell you something, dear lady, that's not the hardest thing. The hardest thing is what he says in verse 25 where a husband's to love his wife as Christ loved the church. There's where he put a hurting on somebody. You're to love your wife as Christ loved the church and He died for the church. By the way, it ought not to be too hard to be in subjection to a husband who loves his wife that way. Amen?

Now listen, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it”—now watch it in verse 26—“That he might sanctify”—now he’s talking not about salvation but sanctification—“That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” Now salvation comes by the blood, sanctification comes by the word. We’re washed in the blood to be saved; we’re washed in the Word to be sanctified. That laver filled with water represents the Word of God and the promises of the Word of God that we cling to that says that if we confess our sin He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. And so, dear friend, when you come to the altar don’t stop at the altar, I want you to come to the laver and come to the laver daily and wash.

By the way, do you know what that laver was made out of? The ladies gave all their looking glasses that were made out of highly polished brass, or bronze, and they melted it down and made that laver. That gives us a wonderful picture. You know we get a good look at ourselves when we look in the Bible. You see, that’s a mirror, I look there and I say, “Wow what a dirty face.” And that’s what God gives us his Word for, so we can look into the Word and we can see ourselves. But then, also the Word not only reveals us, but the Word cleanses us as we claim the promises of the Word of God. That’s the reason that daily not only must we come and thank God for the shed blood, but we must stop at the laver.

Now let me say that when a priest in Old Testament times was consecrated a priest, one of the things they did was to give him a bath. They bathed him from the crown of his head to the soul of his feet, which pictures the cleansing from sin. But this priest, who is bathed and consecrated to be a priest, never went through that again, but daily when he would come in he was to wash at the laver. Now what does that mean? Means friend, once you’ve been saved, you get that bath all over, you don’t have to keep doing that but you need to wash daily. Did you know that in the tabernacle there was no floor, did you know that? And there was no place to sit down. That means when we’re saved we are not saved to sit we’re saved to serve. There wasn’t a chair in the tabernacle and there wasn’t a floor in the tabernacle.

And when they walked around the tabernacle, they got their feet dusty. They got their feet dirty and they came to the laver and they washed. They didn’t get saved all over again, they’d already been under the blood, but they needed to get sanctified, they needed to get cleansed, the daily confession of sin, as the Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray, “Give us this daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,” daily, daily bread, daily forgiveness, daily washing at the laver, daily sanctification. Do you come to the laver every morning, do you? I mean do you go there and wash in the Word of God and in the promises of the Word of God? Don’t forget, dear friend, that the pathway to glory starts with the altar but it comes from the altar, which is Christ our sacrifice, to the laver, which

is Christ our sanctification. But you don't stop there, then you come in and you turn and on one side is a table of showbread and on that table of showbread is this marvelous baked bread and you come in and you eat of it.

Now what does that tell us about? That tells us about Christ our sustenance because not only does He save us, and not only does He cleanse us, but, bless God, He sustains us, doesn't He? You have to eat bread to live and Jesus said, "I'm the bread of life," and so there's Christ our sustenance. We come in, we're under the blood, we're washed by the Word, and then we turn and we feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more. Oh, you talk about feeding, dear friend, when you open the Bible the Word of God and the promises of God's Word and feed on the Lord Jesus Christ. If you don't eat you're going to get anemic, you're going to get weak, you're going to get skinny.

You know, the Bible says that the prosperous soul should be made fat, that's one kind of fatness I believe in. We've got too many skinny saints. Some of you are so skinny you'd have to jump around the shower to get wet spiritually. You need to feed on the Word of God and let Jesus be your sustenance—to feed on Christ, Christ our sacrifice, Christ our sanctification, Christ our sustenance. And then you turn to the other side and there's a beautiful candlestick and it's glowing seven, again perfection. One speaking of Christ, six speaking of man, man and Christ together making seven.

Now what is that a picture of? Christ our salvation, Christ our sanctification, Christ our sustenance, Christ our sight. He is the light of the world and He's the one that gives us sight and without Christ we stumble in darkness but with Christ we walk in the light. And this is what it's telling us, that day after day we need Christ in order to see. My how God will bless us if we'll only just let Him lead us. The other morning I woke up and my first thought was Lord, you take control of me this day. Lord, you fill me this day. I want to give this day to you. You speak to me and Lord. And my prayer out loud and verbally was, "Lord help me to arrange my time to know how to use my time." My wife was down there at that thing at Titusville and I was a babysitter and I had to take the kids to music lessons. Just enough time to take them and get back home and turn around and go back and get them. I said now this is crazy. If I sit here I can't do anything and if I leave by the time I get home over the 520 bridge and get back, they'll just be time to go home and turn around and come back.

And I said, "Lord, you show me where you want me to go." And I just turned and went in there and stopped by King Street Baptist Church. I just said, "Well, I'll just go in King Street Baptist Church and say howdy to the preacher." Praying about it, never been in there to do that before and I said, "Well I'll just turn in." Went in and hadn't been sitting down two or three minutes and in come two men, traveling men, men away from God, men away from home, and, oh, it wasn't more than ten minutes before I had the

sweet joy of leading those two men to the Lord Jesus Christ as they got on their knees and prayed with tears and asked Jesus to save them. I don't think that's an accident that the Holy Spirit says, "Turn in here Adrian," and then God says to those men, "You turn in here." You see, Christ is our sight, Christ is the one who guides us, Christ is the one who leads us if we walk in the light as He's in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, cleanses us from all sin. Thank God for the candlestick that speaks of Christ our light and Christ our sight.

But then, next was the altar of incense. You come in, there's Christ our sacrifice, there's Christ our sanctification, there's Christ our sustenance, there's Christ our sight, and then next is the altar of incense. And what does that represent? Prayer that's going up and that's Christ our supplication. For Jesus is always praying for us. Oh daily, He's at the right hand of God. He ever liveth to make intercession for them. Thank God that I can come to God through Christ and I can pray through Christ, and thank God Christ is praying through me. That's the reason God said Moses you make this tabernacle just like I told you to make it. Don't you vary it because it's a pattern of something very wonderful, it's a pattern of something very glorious, that Christ is the one who prays for us and He's the one we pray through. Hallelujah, it's wonderful to have a spirit to pray in, a Son to pray through, and a Father to pray to. It's great to be able to have this sweet Jesus tabernacle in us and us to tabernacle in Him.

But then we're not finished, we come into the Holy of Holies. Oh, into that fifteen this way and fifteen this way and fifteen that way, that place where the Shekinah glory of God dwelt by itself. And friend, when you come in there you have to say it's Christ our satisfaction, Christ our all in all, as we come and say Lord, you're sweeter than the Lily, fairer than 10,000. Lord I can't explain it and I can't put it in words. All I can say is taste and see that the Lord is good. The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us.

Conclusion

Let us pray. Father we thank you so much for the sweet truths that you put for us in the Word of God. Thank you Lord for the numbers, for the colors, for the dimensions, for all of the little details, some of them, Lord, we don't even understand but we know that somehow in some way they're a picture of Jesus and what He does for us. But Lord we've seen enough to say bless the Lord all my soul. Thank you Lord for what you've done. Now Lord, if there are those here tonight, we know there are, who are not saved, those that have only seen the tabernacle from the outside, the dull badger skins, but have never seen the glory of the inside, help them, dear God, to come in through that wide, wide gate that gate of many colors. Help them to come in tonight and trust in Jesus, for we pray in His name, amen.

Feed the Flame

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 3, 2002

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 35:21, 29

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Reason Was God-Prompted
- II. The Resource Was God-Provided
- III. The Requirement Was God-Planned
 - A. A Willing Offering
 - B. A Widespread Offering
 - C. A Wise Offering
 - D. A Worthy Offering
- IV. The Result Was God-Prospered

Conclusion

Introduction

The title of the message today is this: “Feed the Flame.” I want you to take your Bibles and turn to Exodus chapter 35—Exodus chapter 35. And let me say to our guests, if this is your first time at Bellevue Baptist Church, don’t think that every time you come we are talking about a special offering. We are not ashamed to talk about a special offering, but this is an annual thing for us, and this is a family thing for us. So, really, you are looking into a family meeting. People get all kinds of strange ideas about money—that is, those who want to give it, and those who want to receive it.

I heard of a rich man who asked a pastor, “If I gave everything that I own to this church, would it get me to heaven?” The pastor said, “It’s worth a try.” Well, no, it won’t get him to heaven, but I will tell you one thing it would do: it would bring heaven to his heart, and heaven to your heart. And God is a God who gives, and He wants to teach us to give.

Now, look, if you will here, in Exodus chapter 35 and verse 21: “*And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD’s offering to the work of the tabernacle of the congregation, and for all his service, and for the holy garments*” (Exodus 35:21). And then, fast-forward to verse 29: “*The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the LORD had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses*” (Exodus 35:29).

Now this was an offering for the tabernacle. This, in a sense, is our tabernacle, our

meeting place. In the Old Testament, they took a love offering to furbish and refurbish God's wonderful building. And then, if you will, just take your Bible and fast-forward over to Exodus chapter 40 and verse 38. It's all done now. They have been obedient to the Lord. And the Bible says, in verse 38, *"For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day,"—"the cloud of the LORD" means, "the Shekinah glory"; the Shekinah glory was on it. Now, listen to this—"and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys"* (Exodus 40:38).

The glory cloud and the fire of the Lord—fire was on it. Why? Because they had fed the flame. Now the world is made up of takers and givers. Someone was wise and said that the takers live better, but the givers sleep better. Now I know that God is interested in your money, and I know that you are interested in your money. God is interested in how you make it, how you spend it, how you save it, how you share it, and how you invest it. And your attitude toward your money is going to make money to you a blessing or a curse.

Put in your margin Proverbs 15, verse 6: *"In the house of the righteous is much treasure: but in the revenues of the wicked is trouble"* (Psalm 15:6). So do you want your money to be for you treasure or trouble? I want to talk to you about a God-directed love offering. Now, again, I want to say that I am talking to our people. If you are a guest here, you are just eavesdropping on a family meeting, okay?

I. The Reason Was God-Prompted

Here is the first thing I want you to see about this offering that took place so long ago: It was a God-prompted offering—it was a God-prompted offering. Exodus chapter 35 and verse 4: *"And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying..."* (Exodus 35:4). The reason, friend, was God-prompted. Now, get this in your heart: this is what the Lord said.

Now what we do around here may seem to you to be automatic, axiomatic, casual; but, friend, we soak everything we do in prayer. This man over here is my associate pastor. And, Mark, I think you will have to agree that, every time we meet to talk about this church, the first thing we do is to bow our head and ask for the leadership of God. When our committees meet, we say, "O God, lead us." We are not asking God to bless what we are doing, but we are wanting to get in on what God is doing. And the program here at Bellevue is hammered out on the anvil of prayer. You see, the reason is God-prompted.

Do you know why we need to put new carpet down? Because we have worn out the old carpet. Say *hallelujah*. I mean, think about it. We have worn it out with people coming to hear the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The reason we need an offering is because of the blessings of God: that's why we need the offering.

Friend, God has blessed us, and the former blessings set the stage for the future blessings. Now we are not to be satisfied with the past, and we are not to limit ourselves by the future. Do you think this is all that God wants for us here? No. God has deeper, sweeter, richer, fuller blessings. God has more people that He wants saved.

I heard of a fisherman who was fishing, and if a fish was over eighteen inches long, he just threw it back. And somebody asked him, “Why do you do that?” He said, “Well, I only have an eighteen-inch frying pan.” Well, I think he ought to get a bigger frying pan. I don’t think we need to limit God for what God wants to do.

So here is the first thing I want you to see about this offering: The reason—the reason—was God-prompted. This offering is a *God thing*. If I didn’t believe that, I would not have the temerity, the courage, to stand up here and ask you to give. I don’t want you to give one red cent that is not of God.

II. The Resource Was God-Provided

Now, here is the second thing I want you to notice. Not only was the reason God-prompted, but the resource was God-provided—the resource was God-provided. Exodus chapter 35—begin now in verse 5—God says, “*Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats’ hair, and rams’ skins dyed red, and badgers’ skins, and shittim wood, and oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense, and onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breastplate*” (Exodus 35:5–9). These people are wilderness wanderers. They are out in the wilderness, and God says, “Take an offering like this: gold and silver and precious stones.” Where are they going to get that kind of an offering to make unto the Lord? Well, God had already provided it.

Put in your margin Exodus chapter 11, verses 2 and 3. God said, when they were leaving Egypt—listen to what He said—“*Speak now into the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver and jewels of gold. And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians. Moreover the man Moses was very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants, and in the sight of the people*” (Exodus 11:2–3). And then Exodus chapter 12, verses 35 and 36: “*And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they*”—the Israelites—“*spoiled the Egyptians*” (Exodus 12:35–36).

Now they are going out, and Moses said, “Look, go to your neighbors and ask for gold and silver and jewels.” Moses had such authority and such influence that the

people just loaded on these Israelites before they left Egypt all of this wealth. And now they are going through the desert, and they've got all this gold and all of this silver. Why did God do that? Because God had a plan. What was the plan? God was going to build a tabernacle. Now God, in foresight, saw the need. And God provided for the need even before the need arrived. We call that the *providence* of God. Now, friend, listen to me very carefully. God *will never* ask anything *of any of us that He has not* already given *us*. “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things” (Romans 11:36).

You know, it is an amazing thing to watch people ask God for what they already have; to ask God, “O God, won't you give us money to build this building?” No, no, no, no!

A pastor came to his church, and they were trying to build a building. And the pastor said, “I've got good news and bad news. I'll give you the good news first. All that we need to build this building has already been provided.” Boy, were they thrilled. “That's the good news,” he said. “Now the bad news is this: It's in your pockets.”

God has already given it to us: everything that God wants us to give. We can't give something we don't have. The Apostle Paul said, “What do we have that we have not received?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). Now God gives us resources, and God expects us to use those resources.

I believe this with all of my heart. God's work is never—no never, no never, never ever—never stopped for lack of resources—never: only for lack of faith and obedience. That was a good place for an *amen*. Or, if you don't want to give an *amen*, an *oh, me*. Do you think that God is up there in heaven just wringing His hands and saying, “Oh, I wish I could do this; oh, I need these things; I need this; I need that; but I just don't have it; I can't do it”? No, friend, God's work *is never* stopped *for a lack of* resources: *only for* faith *and* obedience *in God's people*. It's in our pockets, and all of us have enough to meet this Love Offering and beyond.

III. The Requirement Was God-Planned

Now, here is the third thing. Are you listening? Are you tracking with me now? Listen. The reason was God-prompted. The resource was God-provided. Thirdly, the requirement was God-planned. You see, God orchestrated this first love offering and put it in the Bible, so you and I could have a pattern to go by. And the requirement was God-planned.

A. A Willing Offering

Notice, if you will, it was a willing offering. Look in verse 5: “Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of”—underscore this now—“a willing heart,”—now, look up here and let me tell you something. If you get all bent out of joint when I

talk about giving to the Lord, God doesn't want your money—God doesn't want your money. Look. If you don't want to give, help yourself. You don't have to give. What is not given joyfully, liberally, willingly—are you listening?—God neither needs nor wants, okay? If you find anybody around here twisting your arm, trying to force you to give something, you come tell me, and I'll tell Jesus on them. It's of a willing heart—*“let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass”* (Exodus 35:5).

Look in verses 21 and 22: *“And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD's offering”* (Exodus 35:21). People with a willing spirit: they brought the Lord's offering. In this offering to build this tabernacle, nothing was confiscated; nobody was badgered; nobody's arm had to be twisted. The gift was marked by pleasure, and not by pressure. Let me give you a New Testament verse that corresponds to that—2 Corinthians 9, verse 7: *“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Now I've been preaching long enough to know there are some folks—next Sunday is Love Offering Sunday—they will just saturate this place with their absence. They won't come. They say, “They are going to have an offering. I just think I'll stay away.” Well, okay—okay. I can't do anything about that. But you are going to miss a blessing.

One of the greatest times we ever have at Bellevue Baptist Church, I can tell you, beyond the shadow of any doubt—no exaggeration—is the annual Love Offering. It is a service that is marked by supernatural joy. How many of you have been here, and would agree with that? Lift your hand. Yeah, it is, friend, a time that is marked. “God loves a cheerful giver.” The word *cheerful* there, in the Greek, as you have often heard, is *hilaros*. It is the word we get *hilarity* from. People who give till it hurts just keep on hurting. Don't give till it hurts; give till it feels good. Give unto the Lord. It is to be a willing offering.

Now, don't give of necessity. You don't give to a need. You say, “Well, the air conditioner has got to be fixed. And now we got to have more carpet. Oh, me!” No, not of necessity; from a willing heart. Now it is to be a willing offering.

B. A Widespread Offering

Here is the next thing I want you to see. Not only is it to be a willing offering, but it is to be a widespread offering. Look, if you will, in verse 4: *“And Moses spake unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded”* (Exodus 35:4)—*“the LORD commanded.”* Now, look in chapter 35, verse 29: *“The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing”* (Exodus 35:29). It was widespread: not just a few.

You know, one of the tragedies in twenty-first-century Christendom is that about twenty percent of the people do all of the work and all of the giving, and eighty percent are just kind of coasting. But everybody can give something. If you didn't have any gold, you could give silver. If you didn't have any silver, you could give brass. If you didn't have any brass, you could give some wood. If you didn't have any wood, you could give some linen. If you didn't have any linen, you could give some spices. If you didn't have any spices, maybe you could get a sheep, and skin it, and give some sheepskin. God wants everybody to have a part.

And when we come to the Love Offering next Sunday, I want you to bring your children, and I want your children to bring an offering to the Lord—your little guys. Now it may take us more money to send out material to train these little guys than we'll get back. That's not the purpose. The purpose is to let them have the joy and the privilege of remembering, "When I was a child, I had a part, a privilege, in Bellevue's Love Offering." And don't you think that there are a few fat cats who are going to be able to give, and you can't give anything. Friend, if you can give a dollar in the name of Jesus, give a dollar in the name of Jesus.

I heard about two men sitting on a front porch. One was a little guy, and the other was a great big brute of a man. And the little guy said to the big guy, "If I were as strong as you, I would go out in the woods and find the biggest bear out there, and wrestle him to the ground." The big man said to the little man, "There are a lot of little bears out in the woods too, you know." Now if you can't wrestle a big bear, wrestle a little bear.

What I am trying to say is this—listen to me: It was a widespread offering.

I read something that really moved my heart. Back in World War II—some of you are old enough to remember World War II—the Nazis were bombing England, and a lot of the bombs malfunctioned. They would fall, but they would never explode. One day, they were taking one of those Nazi bombs apart to find out why it malfunctioned, and they found a note in the bomb. It was written by a Frenchman. The Nazis had taken the French and had put them into the munitions factory and made them work making bombs. And the French were building malfunctions into the bombs every time they got a chance. And here is what the note said: "We are doing the best we can with what we've got, where we are, every chance we get." I like that: "We are doing the best we can with what we've got, where we are, every chance we get."

It was a widespread offering. Do what you can do. Don't wait on somebody who you think can do more than you. Just go out there and find a little bear, and wrestle him.

C. A Wise Offering

Now, here is number three. Look, it was also a wise offering. You know, when we give, we have three categories of people when we give. There are the *feelers*, the

figurers, and the *faithers*. The *feelers* say, “Well, I just feel I ought to give so-and-so.” Friend, if you give by emotion—if I get you worked up emotionally, and you give by emotion—later on, you’ll feel mad at yourself. You will say, “I was just emotional.” Now there are other people who don’t give: they are not *feelers*; they are the *figurers*. They will get out the pen and pencil, and they will figure how much they ought to give. And they will add up their bills; they will add up their resources, and all of that. But there is a higher level than feeling and figuring—and it is *faithing*. You know what *faithing* is? It is giving a wise offering; it is finding out what God has laid on your heart.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 10: “*And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded*” (Exodus 35:10)—“*that the LORD hath commanded.*” Well, what does a wise person do? A wise person does what God has commanded.

Now, let’s have a little course in logic right now. And if I say something that doesn’t make sense, that is not wise, you stand up and challenge me, okay? Boy, it is dangerous to say that, because... All right, first thing: God knows the need. Can anybody challenge that? No! God knows the need. Number two: God knows what part of that need He wants to meet through me and my family. Can anybody challenge that? No! God is able to reveal to me what He wants me give, if I will ask Him and listen to Him. Can anybody challenge that? No! What God reveals to me that He wants me to give, if I will depend upon Him, I am able to do it. Can anybody challenge that? Would God ask me to do something I cannot do? Of course not! Then, if I do what God leads me to do, I must depend upon Him to do it. Okay? When God reveals to me what He wants me to do, and I depend upon Him and do it, God gets the glory. Anybody argue with that? And I get the joy. Does that make sense to you? Nod your head. If you can’t say *amen*, say *uh huh*. Just turn to your neighbor, and say, “You know, he is making sense.”

Listen—listen. It’s a wise offering. I am not asking you to go off half-cocked. This willing offering, this widespread offering, is to be a wise offering. You find out from God what God wants you to do. That’s all I want you to do. I say I don’t want to put any pressure on you. I don’t mind God putting pressure on you. Let God speak to you. God will reveal to you.

D. A Worthy Offering

Now, next, therefore, it becomes a worthy offering. Look in verse 5: “*Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass*” (Exodus 35:5). It’s an offering of the Lord, friend. You are not giving to Adrian; you are not giving to Bellevue. Look, if you will, in verse 21: “*And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one*

whom his spirit made willing, and they brought the LORD's offering"—the last part, verse 22—"*...unto the LORD*" (Exodus 35:21–22). Exodus 35, verse 29: "*The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the LORD*" (Exodus 35:29)—"*unto the LORD.*" That's where the joy comes.

Friend, we are not giving to a code. We are not giving to a creed. We are not giving to a cause. We are not giving to a church. Look up here, and let me tell you something. We give to Jesus. That may not move you. But that moves me. Friend, it is the Lord's offering. They weren't giving to build a tabernacle; they were giving to Almighty God. When you bring your money, when you bring your resources, you are saying, "Lord Jesus, this is for you."

He, we said, provides. He is the source of our offering. He is also the object of our offering. "*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things*" (Romans 11:36). Oh, the joy that we get when we understand it is a worthy offering, because it is up to the Lord!

Now I love that hymn that we sing, Jamie:

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died;
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

—ISAAC WATTS

Would you agree to that? You see, Lania sang, "Lord, make me like you." Well, He gave Himself, and I want to give back to Him whatever He lays on my heart.

IV. The Result Was God-Prospered

Now, here is the fourth thing I want you to see. Finally, I want you to see, not only was the reason God-planned, the requirement God-planned, but the result was God-prospered—when they gave as God wanted them to give. Notice again in chapter 36, in verses 5 through 7: "*And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough...*"—underscore that. You don't find that often—"*The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make. And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was*

sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much” (Exodus 36:5–7).

I want to see that one time. “Hey, folks, no more giving! If you start to give, the ushers are going to show you out of this place.” Not really. But, friend, what they said is, “Look, we have got enough; now we have got more than enough.” And do you know why? Because there was a willing offering. There was a widespread offering. There was a wise offering. Because there was a worthy offering. The people were giving unto the Lord, and the tabernacle was built. I hope this is resonating with you. I hope you are seeing what makes a great church. The result was God-prospered.

Conclusion

Now, folks, we are getting ready to celebrate 100 years as a church—100 blessed years. This coming year is our centennial year, and we are calling it “365 Days Ablaze.” We are going to feed the flame. Fire cleanses. Fire illumines. Fire purifies. Fire energizes. Fire consumes. The holy fire of God was upon the offering that these people gave.

Again, I remind you that the glory cloud was on the tabernacle, and the fire of God was burning. Don’t you want to be a part of a church on fire for Jesus Christ? I am telling you, a holy church is an awesome weapon in the hand of a mighty God. Don’t get afraid that you are going to out-give God. *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together...shall men give into your bosom”* (Luke 6:38). I want us to bring a worthy offering unto the Lord.

The seat that you are sitting on; the light that is shining down upon you; this place that we worship in, where thousands and thousands and thousands are coming to faith in Christ; these television cameras: all of it, to a large measure, has been built by the annual Love Offering. And that Love Offering began, friend, in the Great Depression. They did not give—our forbearers did not give—out of their abundance; they gave out of their deep poverty. And we today have entered into those blessings.

Now, folks, look at me. I don’t take credit for it. But I am glad to be a part of it. Bellevue is a blessed church—it is a blessed church. To God be the glory!

An aged old man was planting a fruit tree, and somebody said to him, *“Pshaw, don’t plant that fruit tree. You will be dead before it ever bears any fruit.”* He said, *“No, I’m going to plant the tree today,”* he said, *“because I am eating fruit from trees that somebody else planted a long time ago; and I want somebody to enjoy the legacy of my life, and eat the fruit of this tree that I am planting today.”* A wise person said the two best times to plant a fruit tree are twenty-five years ago and today.

And I’m so grateful—I’m so grateful—that there are people—now, listen—for 100 blessed years, there are people who have given and given and given and given, and we enjoy it. And I want you to plant some fruit. And when you are dead and gone, I’m going

to remind you that all you hold in your cold, dead hand is what you have given away.

Now, you think with me, and I am just about to wrap this up. Those people who gave years and years and years ago that we are reading about in the Bible, do you know what they are doing right now? They are rejoicing that they gave it. In heaven now, they say, “I’m so glad I did”—“I’m so glad I did.” Those people who didn’t, they missed the blessing. I will tell you, in heaven there is still rejoicing, and on earth we are still rejoicing, because of what our forefathers have done before us. This is Bellevue’s annual Love Offering.

Now I’m aware that some of you are saying, “Pastor, I’m not a member of this church. And that was a nice little lesson on giving, but it doesn’t really apply to me, because I am not going to be here next Sunday, and my offering belongs in my church.” And so maybe I have helped your church and helped your pastor. But let me tell you something. It will apply to you. Look at me. If you are not a child of God, God does not want one red cent that you have; He wants you—He wants you. The Bible says of those people who were so generous so long ago, “They first gave of them own selves unto the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:5). Give yourself to Jesus. *If I had a thousand lives, I would* give Jesus Christ *every one of them*—I would. Being a Christian is not some penalty you pay in order to get to heaven. I am so glad that I am saved. It is all this, and heaven too.

The Table of The Tabernacle

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 25:23–30

Outline

- Introduction
- I. Pray Over It
- II. Ponder It
- III. Practice It
- IV. Proclaim It
- Conclusion

Introduction

Now, let's open our Bibles to Exodus chapter 25. For those of you who are visiting with us tonight, we've been studying for several months the tabernacle in the wilderness. Now the tabernacle was a tent like house of worship that the Hebrews used when they were between Egypt and Canaan. It was a place of worship and the place of meeting for the congregation. And the reason we're studying this Old Testament house of worship is this: that in the tabernacle there are some wonderful lessons about Jesus, because the tabernacle and all of its parts speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. And since we love the Lord Jesus, we love the tabernacle.

Now we're reading Exodus 25, starting in verse 23: *"Thou shalt also make a table of shittim wood: two cubits shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof."* Now the Lord said, "Make a table three feet long, one and a half feet wide, and two and a quarter feet high": that's the translation of the cubits. *"And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about."* Now *"a crown of gold round about"* means a coping or an edging round about it to keep that which was on the table from falling off. *"And thou shalt make unto it a border of an hand breadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about."* This edge around was just about as wide as your hand. *"And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them. And thou shalt make the dishes*

thereof, and spoons thereof, and covers thereof, and bowls thereof, to cover withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before me alway” (Exodus 25:23–30).

Now here in the tabernacle is the third piece of furniture. Remember we said there are seven pieces of furniture altogether in the tabernacle; only seven, no more, because seven is the number of perfection. And if you stand looking west starting with the brazen altar, and look west right on through the tabernacle, these seven pieces of furniture make the outline of the cross, because this is the way of the cross; this is the way of glory: seven pieces of furniture arranged just right. This is the third piece of furniture that we’ve studied. We’ve already studied about the altar. We’ve already studied about the laver. And now we’re studying about the table of showbread.

Now at the altar we have sacrifice. At the laver we have sanctification. At the table we have satisfaction or sustenance. Each one of these tells us something about the Lord. The altar tells us that Christ is our sacrifice, that Jesus died and shed His blood just as animals were killed on that brazen altar. The laver, which was a place of washing, tells, not only does the Lord Jesus pardon our sin by the sacrifice of Himself, but He also removes the guilt of our sin. And the laver of washing talks about sanctification. Remember we said, “Be of sin the double cure; save from wrath, and make me pure.” The altar saves from wrath. The laver makes me pure. And so this is just another part of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But now, after we’ve been saved, after we’ve been sanctified and cleansed, still we want more. We need to feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And the table of showbread speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life.

Jesus Himself knew that He fulfilled this Old Testament type. Look in John the sixth chapter and verse 35. Do you have it? John 6:35: *“Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”* Jesus said He was the bread of life. Again, He repeats this in verse 48: *“I am that bread of life”* (John 6:48). Again, look in verse 51: *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world”* (John 6:51).

This table of showbread was a table that had twelve loaves on it, and these twelve loaves of bread, one loaf for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, represent and picture Jesus Christ the Bread of Life, our satisfaction, our sustenance. Not only are we saved by Him at one point of time, but we are to feed upon Him daily. And in the Old Testament, the Old Testament priests met and fellowshiped and fed at this table daily. Now we’re New Testament priests. Did you know you’re a priest? You didn’t know that? Well, the Bible says you’re a priest. Look in 1 Peter 2, verse 9. We’re a difference kind of priest than they had in the Old Testament, but we are priests. First Peter 2, verse 9: *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people”*

(1 Peter 2:9).

Now we, God's children, just like the Jews were a chosen nation, we're a chosen nation. Just as the Jews were a nation of priests, we're a nation of priests. And so, we're the New Testament priests. And just as the Old Testament priests fed on that bread in the tabernacle, we, the New Testament priests, feed upon Jesus, the Bread of Life. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." Jesus is our New Testament tabernacle. The Word, Jesus, was made flesh and tabernacled among us" (John 1:14). And so the parallel here is beautiful and it is wonderful. Jesus Christ is the bread of life. Are you feeding on Jesus? Are you meeting others day by day at that table and feeding upon Him?

Now, how do you feed upon Jesus the Lord, the Bread of Life? You feed upon Jesus the Living Word by feeding upon the written Word. Let me say that again, because I want to make it plain. All we know about Jesus is in this book; and if you were to feed upon Jesus, you must feed upon Him through the Bible. The Bible teaches that His word is like meat, His word is like milk, His word is like honey, His word is like bread; over and over and over again we're told to feed upon this Book. Say, did you miss a meal today? Some of you don't need to lose weight spiritually. I'll guarantee you you're about to vanish away right now. Now we can do away with some of these other meals. But don't miss this meal. Don't miss feeding upon the Word of God.

Now I want to be tonight very practical. Rather than going into a lot of detail about the table of showbread, and so forth, I want to give you some help as to how to feed at this table. How are we going to study the Word of God? How are we going to feed upon this living Christ, the Living Word, by feeding upon the written Word? Would you leave the Book of Exodus for a moment and go to Psalm 119. Psalm 119 is a very short psalm. Maybe I'll use it as a text sometime. There are only 176 verses. Be like the old pilgrim preacher who said, "And to be brief, finally, eighteenthly..." There are only 176 verses, but this entire psalm talks about the Word of God. And it tells us how to feed on the Word of God. And I want you to see the parallel between the written Word, which is the Bible, and the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ. The Bible is eternal, unchanging, enduring forever. The same is true of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice these attributes of the Bible in Psalm 119, verse 89, for example: "*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven*" (Psalm 119:89). Notice again in verse 152: "*Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them forever*" (Psalm 119:152). Notice again, in verse 160: "*Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever*" (Psalm 119:160). The Lord Jesus Christ is from everlasting to everlasting, and His Word is from everlasting to everlasting.

Men have scoffed at this book. Men have laughed at it. Men have burned it. Men have fought wars against it. There was a time in Scottish history when to own a Bible

was a crime worthy of death. They've done all sorts of things. But the Word of God, the written Word, just like the Living Word, abides forever. So I want you to see the parallel. Jesus is eternal; the Word of God is eternal. Jesus is truthful; the written Word is truthful. Notice here in Psalm 119, verse 142: *"Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth"* (Psalm 119:42). Jesus said of Himself, "I am the truth" (John 14:6). Notice in verse 151: *"Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth"* (Psalm 119:151).

Young people—and I'm glad to see this congregation half-filled with teenagers tonight—the Word of God is true. It doesn't make any difference what anybody says: the Word of God is true. You can bank on it. You can believe it. Jesus Christ and the written Word are both truthful. Notice verse 160: *"Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever"* (Psalm 119:160). Not only like the Lord Jesus Christ is the written Word eternal; not only is it truthful; but it's also, therefore, very, very precious. Notice verse 72, if you would, for just a moment: *"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver"* (Psalm 119:72).

Say, if you had to choose between the Bible and being a millionaire, which would you choose? Would you rather have the Bible or a million dollars, if you had to choose between the two? I'd be afraid to put some Baptists to that test. But this is what the writer of this psalm said: *"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."*

I had the fun experience of going to Washington DC and going through the Bureau of Engraving—I think many of you have been there—and watch them where they print the money. That's quite an experience. If you've never been there, you ought to go. They have the people in cages—you walk around on these platforms and watch them as they print this money, and wheel great big truckloads of money all over. And at first I watched the money like everyone else, and then I found out that I was missing the whole show. And I stopped watching the money and started watching the people watch the money. Have you ever been a people watcher? It's a lot of fun. But I just stopped and sat off to the side, and watched the people as they watched the money. And the conversation was really amazing and revealing. People literally drooled as they watched that money as it was being wheeled around there. Their eyes got big, and they'd keep poking each other and making side remarks about how they'd just like to have some of that, or that's just exactly what they need. Oh, if we could only get people to realize how precious the Word of God is, compared to thousands of silver and gold. If my church members would only become as excited about learning this Bible and realizing how precious it is, I believe we could transform this island for Christ. Yea, indeed, we could transform the world for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The written Word and the Living Word cannot be separated. All that's true about

Jesus is true about His Word. All that is true about the Word is true about Jesus. This is the reason that Jesus is called the Word of God. Now if in the Old Testament they fed upon that bread made out of wheat; in the New Testament we're to feed upon the Word which is bread to our souls: it represents the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let's think about some good table manners then, as we come to the Lord's table. Psalm 119 will still help us.

I. Pray Over It

What's the first thing we ought to do when we sit down over a meal? We ought to pray over it, shouldn't we? We come to this table of showbread; we come to the Bible; we're getting ready to feed on it—the very first thing we ought to do is the same thing the Lord Jesus did before He would break bread: He would pray. Now, if you want to understand the Bible, if you want to feed upon Jesus Christ the Bread of Life, always approach the Bible in a spirit of prayer. This is cardinal; this is fundamental to understanding the Scripture.

Still in Psalm 119, look in verse 18—notice what the Psalmist did. Notice what he said. Do you have it? Psalm 119:18—he prayed—and here was the prayer: *“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.”* If you will pray over the Bible before you read it, your eyes will be opened. Now here was a man, I'm certain, who had twenty-twenty vision, good vision; but before he studied the Bible, he said, *“Open thou mine eyes.”* Did you know that two people can read the Bible, one perhaps with a higher IQ than normal; and yet one will have anointed eyes, and the other will not? The one will receive the truth, and the other will not. The Bible says, *“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). They are spiritually understood. Your eyes will be opened if you pray.

Do you find that sometimes you don't have a hunger for the Word of God? That your appetite is not very good? Well, in your prayer, do not only ask the Lord to open your eyes, but ask the Lord to increase your appetite. Look in verse 36 of this same chapter: *“Incline my heart unto thy testimonies”* (Psalm 119:36). This ought to be your prayer: “Lord, help me to love thy Word. Give me a hunger to read it. Not only, open my eyes, but incline my heart. Lord, give me a hunger for thy Word.” Now if you will pray over it, your eyes will be opened, you'll have a hunger for the Bible, and your understanding will be quickened.

Notice verse 73 of this same psalm: *“Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments”* (Psalm 119:73). You cannot understand the Bible unless God gives you understanding. Jesus said to Simon Peter, *“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 16:17). And so your eyes will be

opened; you'll have a hunger to read; your understanding will be quickened. Notice verse 99—kids, you'll like this one: *"I have more understanding than all my teachers"* (Psalm 119:99)—and you will.

Did you know one of our intermediates who'll go off to high school or junior high school, who knows the Lord Jesus Christ and the Word of God, I don't care how smart his teacher is, if he doesn't know Jesus, the intermediate has more understanding, right? It's better to know Jesus the Rock of Ages than to know geology and ages of the rocks, right? And to know Jesus, the Bright Morning Star, than to know astronomy and all of the studies of the stars. Oh, how wonderful, how wonderful to know the Lord Jesus Christ! So God says that you can have more understanding than all of your teachers. Look in verse 100: *"I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts"* (Psalm 119:100)—more than all of the wise, sage philosophers that have ever lived. You can understand more than all of them if you get in this book.

Now, what am I saying? I'm saying, my dear friend, good table manners: when you come to the table of the Lord, the very first thing you do is to pray over your meal. Pray over it. If you pray over it, your eyes will be opened. If you pray over it, your appetite will be increased. If you'll pray over it, God Almighty will give you understanding. And you'll be so amazed at the things you learn. Notice verse 161: *"Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word"* (Psalm 119:161). You know, sometimes I've just looked at the Bible and marveled. I told someone today I've been preaching this book for sixteen years, and I've been studying it for sixteen years, because, ever since I went into the ministry, I determined to do one thing: to know the Bible. But I believe the Bible to be more the Word of God today than I ever did. No flaws are showing up. The thing that is showing up in this book is the marvel of it. No human being could have written a book like this. And I stand in awe of the Word of God. What a book! Only God—only God—could have written it.

II. Ponder It

And so this is what will happen if you use good table manners when you come to the table of showbread. First of all, you will pray. Secondly, eat slowly. Eat slowly; don't gobble. There's plenty there. And I would have you not only to ask God's blessing, to pray over it; but, secondly, to ponder it—just to go slowly in the Word of God. Let me show you some verses here now. Look in verse 15: *"I will meditate in thy precepts"* (Psalm 119:15). Do you know what the word *meditate* means? It means just simply, "to stop and to think; to turn this thing over and over and over in your mind." Look in verse 97: *"O how I love thy law! It is my meditation all the day"* (Psalm 119:97). Look in verse 148: *"Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in the word"* (Psalm 119:148). The word *prevent* means, "anticipate." A man says, "I can hardly wait for the

night to come, so I can watch television”—no. He says, “Mine eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate in thy Word.”

We have too many so-called “instant devotions.” We need to slow down. Someone had a prayer one time called, “Slow me down, Lord. Slow me down.” You know, we are very busy people. Our forefathers, if they missed the stagecoach, they’d say, “Oh well, there will be another one along in a couple of months.” We get upset if we miss one section in a revolving door. You know, we are really going fast these days. But if you’re too busy, just to take time with the Word of God; don’t just read it hurriedly. Sometimes I’ll read a passage of Scripture hurriedly, and I think I’ve digested it. Then I’ll hear somebody get up and preach on it, and I’ll say, “Adrian, where were you? Didn’t you read the same passage of Scripture?” It was there all the time, but I didn’t give God a chance to speak.

Remember Anis talking about calling God up on the telephone? “Hello, Lord, I want so and so and so. Goodbye, God.” Well, this is the same way, I’m afraid, that we do as we study the Word of God. Now, use your head. Use your heart. Meditate on this Word. Somebody said, “I have no greater pleasure than to be somewhere in a nook with the book.” Learn to get off by yourself with the Word of God and just simply pray over it day by day by day. Eat slowly.

III. Practice It

Now, not only would I say pray over it, and ponder it; but the next thing, if you would have good table manners, I would say you must practice it; not only pray over it, and ponder it, but practice it. This is, I think, one of the keys to understanding the Word of God. Mark Twain said it was not that part of the Bible that he didn’t understand that gave him so much trouble; it was the part he did understand. Now if you would just simply live up to the part you do understand, God is then honor-bound to give you more light. But why should God give you more light, until you’re living up to the light that you have? We’re to practice the Word.

Notice in Psalm 119, the first 4 verses: “*Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.*” See, not only do they read it, but they walk in it. “*Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently*” (Psalm 119:1–4). Now, when we eat food, when we feed on food, what’s the purpose? Simply to get fat? No. The food that we feed upon is to give us energy to walk, or to do our work, or whatever it is our Lord has called us to do. And so it is when we feed upon the Word of God.

Not only should we feed upon it, but we ought to practice it. You know, Ezekiel said this of God’s people—and I wonder if it’s not true of many in this congregation tonight.

Listen to Ezekiel 33:31: *“They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.”* Preacher—there are some preachers here tonight; Brother Henry, I know that you’ve had a sneaking suspicion this has been true of many churches that you pastored. You look out there, and the folks look so holy, they look so pious, they even say, “Amen.” And if you were to look, you’d say, “That’s a houseful of God’s people.” But notice what God says—Ezekiel 33:31: *“They sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them.”*

Jesus said, in Luke 6:46, *“Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?”* James 1:22 says, *“Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.”* So it’s not enough to feed on the bread; but as we feed upon this bread, we must understand that this sustenance is to give us strength to walk the walk that the Lord would have us walk.

IV. Proclaim It

And so, what are good manners at God’s table concerning His Word? We must pray over it. We must ponder it. We must practice it. And there’s one other thing I want to share with you—and that is we ought to share it. We ought to pass the biscuits. Now we ought not to just feed ourselves; we ought to feed one another. Now we ought to proclaim it, therefore, if we’re going to keep all our peas in a pod. We ought to proclaim it. Notice verse 13: *“With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth”* (Psalm 119:13). You see: *“with my lips.”* Notice verse 46: *“I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed”* (Psalm 119:46). Anis Shorosh spoke to the King of Jordan, Hussein; he spoke to him about Jesus. He’s expecting to have an opportunity to speak to the President and Prime Minister of India. I don’t have to tell you what he’s going to talk about. He’s going to talk about Jesus.

Now if he can do that before kings and princes, certainly we can do that in a service station, before our boss, out at the Cape, or wherever it might be. We need to share the Word of God. Listen to this verse again—verse 46: *“I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed”* (Psalm 119:46). We’ve got good news. And good news ought to be told. Look in verse 172: *“My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness”* (Psalm 119:172). Oh, we need to take the Word of God, the Bread of Life, and share it with hungry souls. So these are the table manners that we need as we come to the Lord’s Table.

Conclusion

Now we’ve studied three pieces of furniture: the altar, which speaks of the sacrifice; the laver, which speaks of sanctification; the table, which speaks of satisfaction. Next of all, Lord willing, we’re going to study the candlestick in the tabernacle and see what that tells us about our Lord.

Overlook of the Tabernacle

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 25:40

Outline

Introduction

- I. A Description of Deity
- II. A Blueprint of the Believer
- III. A Shadow of Salvation

Conclusion

Introduction

Now tonight we're beginning a study on the tabernacle and I want us tonight just to take a panoramic view of the tabernacle, just more or less to get an overview, just to get a wide scope of the entire thing and then later on Wednesday night after Wednesday night we'll come back and we'll fill in some details. Now, God told the Hebrew people, who are in the wilderness, that they were to build a tent house called a tabernacle—the Latin word for tent is *tabernacular*—they were to build a tabernacle, a tent, and this tent was to be the center of their worship. It was to them in a very real way what this church house is to us only it was more to them.

Now, notice that God gave them very minute and very, very specific details as to the way this tabernacle should be built. Notice, for example, in Exodus chapter 25, verse 40, and by the way God has very much to say about the building of the tabernacle. You'll find out that when God mentioned a thing quite a bit in the Scripture that it's very, very important. Much, much more is said about the building of the tabernacle than is said about the creation of the world. Now think about it, more space, much more space is given to a description of the building of the tabernacle than is even given to the creation of the world.

Now in Exodus 25 verse 40, in the twenty-fifth chapter God has been giving a description of how the tabernacle shall be built. And then God says to Moses, "And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount." God is saying, "I have given you the blueprint, I have given you the plan, I have given you the specifications, and I do not want you to deviate one jot nor one tittle. Moses you make sure that you do it according to the pattern." Now this thing is so important that it was mentioned in the New Testament. Notice Hebrews 8, verse 5, and by the way you will find us going back and forth between Exodus and Hebrews in this study so you might as

well mark those two books in your Bible quite well. Hebrews 8, verse 5, now the Bible speaks of the earthly priest that served in the earthly tabernacle and then speaking of those priests he starts in chapter 8, verse 5, saying, “Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, ‘See,’ saith he, ‘that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.’”

Again this thing is mentioned in the New Testament that every detail is so very important, and why? Verse 5 tells us that the tabernacle was a shadow of heavenly things. This building was more than a building. This building was one of the grandest and most wonderful object lessons that God has ever given to His people. And I want to tell you briefly what those object lessons are in this introductory study tonight and then we’ll come back and pick up the details a little later on. But let me give you a general description of the tabernacle, just a general description, without trying to fill in any of the details.

Now the tabernacle was a tent house and it consisted of an outer court, an inner court, and the place called the innermost court or we could call it the outer court, the holy place, and the Holy of Holies. Now the outer court was just simply a fenced in yard. In order to picture it in your mind, think of the average building lot on Merritt Island, just about that size. Perhaps not quite as big as some lots but seventy-five feet across the front, seventy-five feet across the back, and a hundred and fifty feet on either side. These were the dimensions of this outer court. So you can picture that in your mind. You know just about the size of the outer court.

Now around this outer court there was a fence and this fence was seven and a half feet tall, almost eight feet tall. You could not quite see over it and this fence was made of white linen. Now this was the outer court. In the outer court there was a gate. At the eastern end of the outer court there was a gate, one gate only, thirty feet wide. All right that’s the outer court. Now in the outer court there were two pieces of furniture. You’ll find out that in the tabernacle all together there are seven pieces of furniture and, you know, we already found out that seven is the perfect number. There were seven pieces of furniture.

Right inside the door as you would come into the outer court there was the brazen altar. On this altar that had four horns on it, four corners, we’ll speak of the meaning of those later on, the sacrifices were made; the burnt offering on this brazen or brass altar that was right inside the door of the outer court. And then right on past that as you come in the door, right in the center, was a great basin called a laver. A laver is a place where you wash. It’s similar to our word lavatory, where a person washes or laves, bathes his hands, the laver. This also was made of brass. And so in the outer court there was first of all the brazen altar and then there was the laver.

Now, inside this court, the outer court, was the inner court. Now this inner court, or this tabernacle proper, was fifteen feet wide, fifteen feet high, and forty-five feet long and it is sitting right on the inside of the outermost court. Fifteen feet wide, fifteen feet high, and forty-five feet long. Now this building is divided into two rooms. The first room is thirty feet long and the back room is fifteen by fifteen by fifteen, it's a perfect cube. Now the front room that's thirty by fifteen by fifteen is called the holy place, or the inner court and the back part is called the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum, or the innermost court. So, you're getting an idea now of a building within a fence.

Now in the inner court there are three pieces of furniture. The inner court, three pieces of furniture, the court that is fifteen by fifteen by thirty. On the one side, on the north side, is a table with some bread on it called showbread or shewbread, and we'll discuss this later on, that's on the north side. Right across on the south side as you come into this holy place is a candlestick, a beautiful, golden candlestick, a lamp that gives off light. And then right on back behind these two in the center is an altar of incense. All right we've mentioned five pieces of furniture.

Now you come on, there's a veil or a curtain that separates the holy place from the Holy of Holies that divides this room that's forty-five feet long into two rooms, one, thirty and one, fifteen, there's a veil there that separates the two. We'll talk about the meaning of the veil a little later. Of course, most of you know the meaning of that veil. But on the inside of this room, called the Holy of Holies, there are two pieces of furniture. There's the Ark of the Covenant and on top of the Ark of the Covenant there is the mercy seat. We'll describe these in detail later on but this is just in the broadest, the broadest possible description, the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Now, there are three things that I want you to see about the tabernacle in the wilderness and then we'll take up our study another night. There are many, many truths that are taught there but three primary truths that come out to me. Number one, the tabernacle is a description of deity. It is a pattern, a pre-figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a description of deity. Number two, it is a blueprint of the believer. And, number three, it is a shadow of salvation or a portending of salvation, a showing of what salvation will be like. These three things: It speaks of Christ, it speaks of the believer, and it speaks of salvation; a description of deity, a blueprint of the believer, and a shadow of salvation. These three things in this place called the tabernacle.

I. A Description of Deity

Now I want you to see that the Bible itself says that the tabernacle is a description in the minutest detail of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look again in the book of Hebrews, if you will, Hebrews 8, versus 1-2: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the

heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” Now man’s tabernacle was not the true tabernacle. Man’s tabernacle was a picture or shadow of the true tabernacle and the Lord Jesus Christ is the priest in the true tabernacle. Men were priests in the earthly tabernacle but these are only pictures, as we have said, of deity, a description of deity.

Now let me show you a wonderful passage of Scripture if you look with me please in John chapter 1, verse 1, the Gospel according to John, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” Now you’ll notice in the King James version that the word, “Word” is capitalized. The Greek word for “Word” is “logos.” And this says in the beginning was the logos and the logos was with God and the logos was God. Logos is the Greek term for word. And, of course, here we know that this is capitalized because Jesus is called the Word. Now why is Jesus called the Word, what is a word? A word is the expression of an idea. Jesus is the expression of the idea of God. Jesus is the expression of the idea of God hence Jesus is the Word of God, a word reveals. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Now Jesus not only was with God in the beginning but He was God. And one of the marks of a false cult is that they deny that Jesus Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. One time I was a guest at a meeting of a group of people who call themselves Jehovah Witnesses and after I asked a couple of questions the leader said, “I want to ask you a question,” and I said, “What is it?” He said, “You don’t believe that Jesus was God do you?” I said, “I certainly do.” He said, “Well quote a verse to show it.” And so, of course, I quoted John 1:1 along with others. “Oh,” he said, “Well you don’t believe that John 1:1 means that Jesus Christ was God do you?” I said, “Well that’s what I think it means, ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.’”

“Well,” he says, “Young man, you don’t understand. In the Greek”—well he didn’t know I was studying Greek and I didn’t tell him I was, but I said “Oh”—he said, “In the Greek this says ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was a God.’” And he put the indefinite article “a” in there; the Word was “a” God. Of course, it’s not in the best manuscripts. It reads exactly in the best manuscripts exactly the way it does in your King James version of the Bible. But I played dumb for a minute and I said, “Oh, I’m beginning to see. You don’t worship Jesus as Jehovah God but as a god.” He said, “That’s right.” I said, “Well then you’ve broken the first commandment that says, ‘I am the Lord thy God thou shalt have no other gods before me.’” About that time the meeting turned into pandemonium.

Now friend, listen, if Jesus is not God He’s not worthy of any worship, isn’t that right? The Bible says worship God. Jesus was wrong when He let Thomas fall on his face

before His feet and say, “My Lord and my God,” if Jesus is not God. Great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh. This is the essence of Christianity. Now let’s come on, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him”—without Jesus—“was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”

Now the Bible says that the Word, notice verse 14 now, this Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Look at the word “dwelt.” In the original, the word is, “and the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us.” Jesus tabernacled, that’s the idea, that’s exactly what the Greek says. The Word was made flesh and tabernacled. You see, the tabernacle is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, a description of deity. Every detail in the tabernacle speaks of Him and if you love Him, you’re going to love the study of the tabernacle. The more you hear about someone that you love the more you enjoy it.

Now if you were to look at the tabernacle, however, from the outside it’s not very impressive. It’s not too big. Most of us thought well shucks it would be bigger than that and it’s certainly not impressive. Has a white fence seven and a half feet tall. You can hardly see over it, but when you see over it, all you would see is this building on the inside, fifteen feet tall, and you know what you see? Just ol’ badger skins because this was the outer covering—we’ll speak of the covering of this tent—but just old dull, brownish gray, badger skins. Not impressive. Now it’s supposed to be a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ but if you stood on the outside and looked at it you’d say, “Not much to that.” Oh but if you were to go inside and look, exquisite, beautiful, glorious, overlaid in gold, with the finest linen, and cunning needlework, everything according to a delicate beautiful pattern, but in order to appreciate it, you have to see it from the inside. Isn’t that the way Jesus is?

You know, the prophet Isaiah spoke of the Lord Jesus, and Isaiah said in Isaiah 53, verse 2, and when we see Him there is not form nor comeliness, no beauty that we should desire Him. To the man that doesn’t know the Lord Jesus Christ nothing could be more tasteless than coming to church on Wednesday night and studying about the tabernacle. Really, he’d at lot rather be watching kill ‘em or kiss ‘em on television, to sit here and talk about a tent out in the desert. This doesn’t mean anything to him. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 2, verse 14, “For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.” And in order to appreciate the tabernacle you have to see it from the inside. I think that’s sweet, I think that’s beautiful, and the only way you can see it from the inside is to come into the gate, to come in through the door.

And Jesus Christ said in John 10, verse 9: “I am the door.” There’s only one door into this tabernacle and Jesus said in John 3, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” You can’t see these things, you can’t appreciate these things, you cannot love these things and know these things, until the Lord reveals them to you by His Spirit. And so the tabernacle is a description of deity. Study the tabernacle, and especially as you see it not from the outside but as you see it from the inside as we shall see it in the Scriptures and experience it in our hearts, then it will be beautiful, beautiful indeed.

II. A Blueprint of the Believer

But not only is the tabernacle a description of deity but it is also a blueprint of the believer. It is a pattern not only of Jesus but a pattern of ourselves. Now just as in the tabernacle there were three parts; the outer court, the inner court, and the innermost court, so in me and in you there are three parts. You are body, soul, and spirit. This is what Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians when he says, “And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.” And as you’ve heard me say before, there is a difference in your soul and your spirit. Some people think the soul and the spirit are the same but the Word of God emphatically says they are not. Hebrews 4:12 says, “The Word of God divides between the soul and the spirit.” The soul has a function, the spirit has a function, the body has a function. This is the reason we’re building this building out here to take care of the whole man. We believe that God is interested in the whole man.

You see, when the body is right he’s healthy. When the soul is right he’s happy. When the spirit is right he’s holy. And we believe that God wants us to be healthy, happy, and holy. We believe that God is interested in the total man. With the body he knows the world around him or beneath him, physical life. With the soul he knows the world around him, social life, psychological life. The Greek word for soul, *sycha*, the same word we get psychology from. And with the Spirit he knows the world above him, he knows God, he has spiritual life. We know God in our spirits. God’s Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we’re the children of God. This is the reason that a man who is not saved may have physical life and psychological life but he doesn’t have spiritual life. He’s spiritually dead. He doesn’t know God in his spirit. He thinks, he laughs, he jokes, he reasons, he does arithmetic, he eats, he sleeps, he works, he fights, he has physical life, he has intellectual, emotional, psychological life but he doesn’t have spiritual life.

Now man is body, soul, and spirit and each of these corresponds to a part of the tabernacle. The body is the outermost court, this is the body. Now the outermost court

was the place of sacrifice and so it is with your body. You see this is where we sacrifice for the Lord with our bodies. Romans 12, verse 1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.” You see the body is the place of sacrifice. We sacrifice with our bodies. We boss these bodies around, we make these bodies do without things that we might serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the soul is the inner court. You have to come through the outer court to get to the inner court, this is the soul, and the soul is the place of worship just like the inner court was the place of worship. This is the place where we fellowship with other believers and where we worship God. We’re having a communion of our souls here now in this place of worship. But, the innermost court of man or the Holy of Holies in man is his spirit and it is with the spirit in this inner sanctum—and let me digress to say right now, in the tabernacle, the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies, is the place where the very Shekinah glory of God dwelt. This is the place for the presence of God, the pure presence of God dwelt right there in this Holy of Holies—and in man’s spirit this is where God dwells. God says, “I will dwell with him that is of a humble and contrite spirit.” God dwells in the spirit of man. And so in me I have a body, an outer court, which is a place of sacrifice. I have an inner court which is a place of worship and fellowship; my soul and your soul bearing witness together and so forth. But on the inside, in the deepest part of me, in the Holy of Holies, I meet my Lord. There’s an inner sanctum there and so I have individual, deepest, personal communion with my Lord. And so you see that the tabernacle is also a blueprint of the believer.

III. A Shadow of Salvation

Now one last thing and then we’ll let this suffice for a study tonight. The tabernacle is a shadow of salvation. Think of the furniture in the tabernacle again. As you come into the tabernacle, coming right in the door, let’s suppose that’s the gate there. Of course, it would be the Eastern gate. If this were the tabernacle, the gate would be facing the east. We’ll say that’s the east, the door there, as you come right in the door first of all there will be the altar. Right next, we come to the laver and then we come into the Holy of Holies. On one side we’ll have the table of shewbread, on the other side we’ll have the golden candlestick, and just back of that there will be the altar of incense. And then right behind the altar of incense in the Holy of Holies will be the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat.

And I want you to notice it, down this way and across this way, the shadow of a cross. There it is, a cross. Here’s the perpendicular bar, here is the horizontal bar. On one side the showbread, on the other side the candlestick. At one end the altar, at the other end the mercy seat. This is in God’s tabernacle. In the wilderness, we see this shadow of salvation, this shadow of the Cross that tells us the pathway to glory, the

pathway to the Lord. So, you come in the door, Jesus said, "I am the door." The first thing you meet is the bloody altar. Now some people have gone through the hymnbooks and taken all the songs about the blood out. They don't like the blood. It offends their sensibilities. They are too cultured, they don't like to speak of the blood of Jesus and what they call a slaughterhouse religion and all of the rest of it, but my dear friend, the Scripture declares in Hebrews 9:22, listen to it, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Now don't think you're smarter than God. Don't try to change that.

Unless the blood of Jesus Christ is applied by faith to the doorpost of your heart the death angel will not pass over you. "When I see the blood," God says, "I will pass over you." And so notice the pathway to glory. The first step, the bloody cross, the brazen altar, the place of sacrifice and redemption. The next stop on the pathway to glory is the laver where not only are we redeemed and have our sins forgiven and propitiated at the altar but now we're also cleansed. The laver represents Jesus who cleanses from sin. You see, not only is Jesus the Lamb of God represented by the altar but Jesus is also the water of life and the washing Word represented by the laver.

All right, after we've had our sins put away by the blood, after we've washed in the laver and have become clean, then we move on to the table of showbread and we feed. One, the altar speaks of redemption, the laver speaks of cleansing, the table of showbread speaks of sustenance. Not only does God take something away from us but praise His name He also puts something in us. He feeds us with the living bread. Jesus is not only the water of life, He's the bread of life. The water of life is seen in the laver but the bread of life is seen at the table of showbread. But He does more than that for us. Not only does He forgive our sins by His blood, not only does He cleanse us by His Word, not only does He feed us upon Himself, but then right across we see the candlestick which speaks of Jesus the light of the world.

You see, He forgives my sin then He cleanses me. He removes not only the penalty of sin but at the laver He removes the guilt of sin, and then He feeds me upon Himself. He comes in to me and He's the bread of life as we preached Sunday night at the Lord's Supper. But not only does He feed me from within but He leads me from without and I don't walk in darkness. There's the beautiful candlestick again. It speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ the light of the world and the light of life. In Him was life and the life was the light of man.

But then after this, I'm now ready to come to the altar of incense. Incense in the Bible speaks of prayer and intercession. I am now ready to pray and commune as never before. Now I can pray in Jesus name. Now my sins are forgiven. Hallelujah I'm cleansed. Now I'm fed on the bread of life. Now I walk in the light as He is in the light. And now I can come to Him and my prayer ascends to God as a sweet smelling savor of incense. You see, the incense speaks of Jesus as my High Priest. The candlestick

speaks of Jesus as the Light of the World. The table of showbread speaks of Jesus the Bread of Life. The laver speaks of Jesus the Water of Life. The altar speaks of Jesus the Lamb of God. And then after I've come to the altar of incense then I come through the veil into the Holy of Holies to meet face-to-face with the Shekinah glory of God. This is the pathway to glory. Now we've said then that the tabernacle is a description of deity, blueprint of the believer, and a shadow of salvation, the shadow of a cross, the pathway to glory. We will explore these things in Wednesday nights to come.

Conclusion

Now let us bow our heads in prayer. Friend, let me say again, if you've been looking at Jesus from the outside why not look from the inside. Do you want to know about Jesus? Do you want to know about the things that we preach about? There's an invitation in the Scripture that says taste and see that the Lord is good. Isn't that something? Listen to it again. Taste and see that the Lord is good. I want to challenge your heart tonight. Don't say Jesus would not save you unless you've ask Him. Don't say there's nothing to it unless you've tried. Give your heart to Jesus by faith tonight. Open your heart, trust Him to save you and if you'll mean business and come with a childlike faith, Jesus will save you and transform you.

How many in the building tonight would say, "Brother Rogers, I believe with all of my heart even though I'm a weak Christian, not all that I ought to be or want to be, that I have given my heart to Jesus. He has forgiven my sin and saved me and I'm His now by faith." Would you give a testimony by an uplifted hand. Thank you. Now, how many could say tonight, "Brother Rogers, I could not give that testimony and be honest. I could not say that I've been saved, born-again, but brother Rogers I want to be saved and I am interested in spiritual things and I want to know truth. I want to know the Lord. I want peace with God. And I would appreciate while heads are bowed and eyes are closed that the people would pray for me."

Now I'll not embarrass you or call you out in any way at all but if you're concerned about your soul and would like to be remembered in this prayer that we're about to pray, would you right now while every head is bowed except mine would you just slip up your hand and say by slipping up your hand, "Yes pray for me. I need the Lord." God bless you and you. Thank you. You may put your hands down. Are there others? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed are there others who would say, "Pray for me. I need the Lord Jesus and I know it. I'm interested in spiritual things. Pray that I might know him."

Now are those here tonight who would say, "Brother Rogers, I am saved. If I know my heart I'm like those who lifted their hand and said they were saved but I'm not a member of this church. And I know that God's will is that I be a member of some New

Testament, Bible preaching church and I want the will of God done about my church membership. Pray with me that I might know and do the will of God about my church membership." May I see your hands. You're saved, not a member here, but you want the will of God done, you'd say, "Pray for me that I might know the will of God about my church membership."

Now our Father bless these tonight who have decisions to make and give them, dear God, the courage tonight to open their hearts and let Jesus come in. Oh dear Lord, bless and bring them under conviction in thy name and for thy sake. Amen.

The Well-Dressed Baptist Priest

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 5, 1976

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 28:31–35

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Linen Speaks of the Believer's Position
- II. The Bells Speak of the Believer's Profession
- III. The Fruit Speaks of the Believer's Possession

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, turn, will you, please, to Exodus chapter 28. We want to speak tonight on “The Well-Dressed Baptist Priest”—“The Well-Dressed Baptist Priest.”

And in Exodus chapter 28, we begin reading in verse 31: *“And thou shalt make the robe of the ephod all of blue. And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of [a coat of mail], that it be not rent. And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about: a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about. And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and his sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy place before the LORD, and when he cometh out, that he die not”* (Exodus 28:31–35).

Now if Aaron the high priest were to have the audacity to worship the Lord without being properly dressed, he would be slain on the spot. Have you come tonight properly dressed? Have you? Had Aaron come to worship and not been properly dressed, he would have been slain on the spot. I wonder if you're dressed for worship.

Now I don't care where you bought your clothes, or what color they be, or that sort of thing. Of course you understand that is not what I'm talking about. I want you to understand the spiritual application of the truth. The garments that the high priest wore had a great spiritual application. The high priest, in the Old Testament, is a picture of the Christian in the New Testament. The high priest, in the Old Testament, was a picture of Christ, but he's also a picture of the believer, because Christ is our high priest, and through Christ we're all made to be a kingdom of priests. Just as the tabernacle was a picture of Christ and also a blueprint of the believer, the high priest was a picture of Christ and also symbolized the saints.

Now the Bible tells us, in 1 Peter chapter 2 and verse 9, “*Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood*” (1 Peter 2:9). And so I don’t know whether you’ve ever seen a Baptist priest before or not, or knew that you’d seen one; but you’re looking at one. I am a Baptist priest. You are a Baptist priest, if you’re a Baptist, and if you’re saved. The Lord has made us all to be priests unto Him (Revelation 1:6).

And so, because we are His priests, we have the right to come before Him to minister, just as Aaron, the high priest in the Old Testament, would go through that outer court into the inner court and into the innermost court, into the Holy of Holies, into the very presence of God. I can do that too. As a matter of fact, I just came from the very presence of God, in the Holy of Holies, before I stepped up here. Isn’t that glorious that I could just come right out of the throne room to preach? But that’s where I’ve been: just stepped right out of the Holy of Holies; I’ve just walked right out, and out to this platform. And isn’t that wonderful that I can do that? And you can do that. Anybody can go into the Holy of Holies, if he’s properly dressed.

Now you may not think I was properly dressed to go into the Holy of Holies, to go into the inner sanctum; but, as a Baptist priest, I want you to know I was properly dressed. If I had gone without being properly dressed into the Holy of Holies, I would have died and never been able to come out here on this platform. So I had to be properly dressed in order to go into the Holy of Holies. I see a quizzical look on some of your faces, and you haven’t got the foggiest idea about what I’m talking about. But it will come together in a moment.

Look, if you will, please, in Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 19—Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 19: “*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest*”—that means, “into the Holy of Holies”—“*by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, [through] his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)*” (Hebrews 10:19–23).

And so the Bible teaches that, just as Aaron took the blood of animals and went into the Holy of Holies when he was properly dressed, the Bible teaches that Adrian Rogers, and Dale Palmer, and John Cameron, and Morris Mills, and Joyce Rogers, and everybody else, can take the blood of Jesus as their sacrifice, and come boldly through the rent veil, which is His body, right into the Holy of Holies, and commune with the Lord. But the Bible said that Aaron had to be properly dressed; and if he was not properly dressed, he died.

Now there are three things I want you to notice about Aaron’s robe. First of all, I want you to notice that it speaks of the believer’s position. The second thing I want you

to notice is that it speaks of the believer's profession. And the third thing I want you to notice is that it speaks of the believer's possession: the believer's position, his profession, and his possession.

I. The Linen Speaks of the Believer's Position

Now this robe that we read about here in the Book of Exodus was made of linen; it was a linen robe. And though it was blue and beautiful, and had bells and pomegranates all around it, it was made of linen for a very special reason. Had Aaron dared to go in with a robe that was made of wool, he would have been slain. Now the Bible says very carefully that Aaron was to dress just exactly as God told him to dress, or he would have been slain right on the spot.

Now, why was Aaron's robe made of linen? Well, if you really want to know—and I'm glad that you've asked—would you turn to Ezekiel chapter 44, for just a moment. Ezekiel chapter 44, and let's look at verse 16. And this will bless your heart. It has just blessed mine as I studied it and looked at it today. As a matter of fact, I was just thinking of this. Almost all afternoon I've had this verse in my heart. In Ezekiel chapter 44, notice what God is saying. He's speaking again about His priests who go into the sanctuary, and here God reveals why the priests wore linen. He doesn't tell us over in the Book of Exodus, that I can find; just tells us that his garments are to be of linen, and He doesn't tell us why. But, you know, the best commentary I've found on the Bible is the Bible. And you'd be surprised how much light the Bible will throw on those commentaries you have at home, if you'll just take the Bible. And the Bible is the best commentary on the Bible.

And in Ezekiel chapter 44, beginning in verse 16, read these marvelous words: *"They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge. And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments; and no wool shall come upon them, whiles they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. They shall have linen [turbans] upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat"* (Ezekiel 44:16–18). Now, just underscore it. That's the reason that the priests could not wear wool; that's the reason God said he needed to wear the cool, clean, crisp linen: because, God said, "They shall not wear anything that causes sweat." If there could be an eleventh commandment, it would be, "Thou shalt not sweat it"—"Thou shalt not sweat it." God does not want you ministering to Him in such a way as to cause sweat. The priest was dressed in a robe of linen. That is, he was to be cool and calm and collected, as he ministered unto the Lord.

You see, man, because of his sin, began to perspire. And God said, in the Garden of

Eden, as a result, as a judgment of man's sin, "By the sweat of your face, you're going to eat your bread" (Genesis 3:19). Man had work to do in the Garden of Eden, but it was not toil that produced sweat. Sweat represents man's effort; it represents man's toil; it represents man's labor. But, friend, when we come to Jesus, we cease from our own works, and we rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. Six days there was sweat, but on the seventh day there was none. Jesus Christ is our rest; Jesus Christ is our Sabbath. I've said this before; I'll say it again: I am a Baptist priest—yes sir—and I do keep the Sabbath—yes sir—but I don't keep it on Saturday; I keep it on Sunday, on Monday, on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and start again on Sunday. I keep the Sabbath seven days a week, resting in Jesus.

God doesn't want us to sweat it; He wants us to rest in Him. The Bible says, "He that hath ceased from his own works hath entered into his rest" (Hebrews 4:10). Nobody can minister before the Lord; nobody can come before the Holy of Holies; nobody can come into the inner sanctum, and dwell in the light, and bask in the Shekinah glory, until he stops trying to save himself by his sweat, until he begins to rest in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. No sweat. Sweat's the result of sin. But I tell you, dear friend, we don't come before Him with sweat; we come before Him with blood—and it's the blood of Jesus, and not our own works. Oh, how wonderful when we realize, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith*" (Ephesians 2:8)! And not only, "*for by grace are ye saved*"; "*for by grace do ye serve*" (Hebrews 12:28).

Dear friend, Jesus Christ gave Himself for me, that He might give Himself to me, that He might live through me. So many people only have half a gospel. They come to Jesus to get their sins forgiven, but they fail to realize that not only are we saved, reconciled by His death; we are saved by His life. Jesus Christ is alive, and He lives in me. He lives in you. That's what I tried to say so poorly last Wednesday night. He's alive in us, and He doesn't want us to do anything for Him. He wants to do something through us. Oh, how many people are offering to God sweat! And He doesn't want it. God says, "No sweat"—"No sweat. You serve me in the unction and the power of the Holy Spirit, and not in the carnality of your perspiration."

I'll never forget hearing Major Ian Thomas. If you don't know Major Thomas, you need to get acquainted with him; if not in person, get acquainted with his books. Buy *The Saving Life of Christ* and read it—great book. Major Thomas is a personal friend of mine, and I quote him and refer to him often. Major Thomas said, when he was a young man, he decided he'd take voice lessons. And he said he went to a rather buxom lady, who majored in voice. And he walked into the room, and he said, she was quite a lady. He said he guessed she was a lady. She was quite a person, he said, and said she was very large and very big—said she had biceps like the kneecaps of an elephant. I've never figured that out. But, anyway, he said she was just a very large person, and very

perfect, and very precise. And Major Thomas said that, when he walked in there as a young lad, she had hardly said a word to him, when she looked at him and said, “Expire!” He said, “I’m too young.” She said, “That’s not what I mean.” He said he thought it was funny, but she didn’t think it was funny.

And she said, “Expire,” and he said, “All right.” She said, “No, I mean expire,” and then she expired. And he said that was quite marvelous. And then she said, “Inspire,” and he said, “I tried to inspire.” And he said she said, “No, that’s not the way to inspire. Here’s the way to inspire.” And then he said she began to inspire. She took a breath that seemed to almost suck the pictures off the wall and move the grand piano over a little closer to her as she just filled up with air. She said, “That’s the way to inspire.” She said, “Young man, you’ll never be able to inspire until you first learn to expire.”

And, oh, what a lesson there is! You see, we must first expire before we can inspire. *“I am crucified with Christ”—that’s to expire; “nevertheless I live”—that’s to inspire; “yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”* (Galatians 2:20). You see, when I understand that all God ever wants out of Adrian Rogers is for him to expire, for him to die, to take death to myself...

The first part of my ministry I started out trying to do things for God, and it was one of the greatest discoveries of my life when I learned that He wanted me to get out of the way, that He wanted me to be crucified with Christ, so that He could take over and do something through me. You know, I know—I know beyond the shadow of a doubt—who does the good when it’s done. It’s not me. I know who gets the blame when it’s not done. It’s me—because He makes no mistakes. Therefore, any praise has to be passed on to Calvary. It has to go to the Lord Jesus Christ, because He’s the One who does it. *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”*

You know, it’s wonderful to rest in Jesus. I feel sorry for people who are trying rather than trusting. I feel sorry for people who are sweating rather than resting in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are you properly dressed tonight? If you’re wearing wool, you’re not. If you’re wearing linen, you are. If you are coming dressed in the robe of His righteousness, resting in the finished work of Calvary; if you quit trying and started trusting; if the old you is dead; and if Christ is now living through you, and you’re serving in the finished work of Calvary and resting in the finished work of Jesus, then you’re properly dressed to come and serve the Lord. You see, dear friend, if you had not learned to expire and then inspire, the only thing you can do is perspire, and that won’t do it. No sweat.

II. The Bells Speak of the Believer’s Profession

All right now, the second thing I want you to notice about the priests: not only does the linen speak of our position—that is, one of righteousness and resting—but the bells

speak of our profession.

Let's go back, if we will, to Exodus chapter 28 for a moment, where we started, and notice there in verse 34 the Bible tells us that all around the robe of the high priest, around the bottom of his robe, there was to be a border of bells and pomegranates. Notice—I'm reading Exodus chapter 28 and verse 34: *"A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about"* (Exodus 28:34). And then God says again, in verse 35, *"that he die not"* (Exodus 28:35). Amazing! God says he's got to be dressed in linen, or he'll die. Then God says he's got to have the bells—"a bell and a pomegranate, a bell and a pomegranate." And God says, if he doesn't have the bell, he's surely going to die.

If the bells did not ring, the priest must die. And, you know, when Aaron would go in there with that blood to offer it upon the Mercy Seat, and all of the people were waiting in the outer court, they were listening. And as long as they could hear those bells ringing, they'd say, "He's still alive. God's accepting the offering. It's all right." But if the bells stop ringing, they say, "Uh-oh, God killed him. He died right in there. He tried to come into the presence of God, but the bells weren't ringing; and he died."

What does that speak of? Listen. If the linen represents our rest in Christ, the bells represent our profession of Christ, because, you see, when a person trusts the finished work of Calvary, then the very next thing to prove that he means business is that he begins to confess Christ. He'll ring the bells and tell the people.

Look in Romans 10, verses 9 and 10—many of you know it by heart: *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"* (Romans 10:9–10). Now, what does that mean? It means, dear friend, that if you do not confess Christ, you're not believing with a Bible faith. The faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to heaven. *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."*

Notice what Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 10, about the same subject, beginning in verse 32—Matthew 10:32: *"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:32–33). Jesus said, "If you don't ring the bells down here, I'm not going to ring the bells up there."

Notice the same thing, in the Gospel of Mark, if you will—Mark chapter 8 and verse 38: *"Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in"*

the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). The Scripture says, in Romans 10:11, *“For... Whosoever believeth in Him shall not be ashamed.”*

Say, do you really, honestly, think that you’re saved, if you sit out there and you say, “I trust Jesus Christ to save me, but I’m not going to let these Christians know about it; I’m going to keep it a secret; I’m not going to make a public profession of my faith, because I don’t want anyone to know about it; I’m just going to keep it a secret”? Well, friend, if you believe that, when you come strutting into the presence of the Lord: death. No bells, no life: death. “Deny me,” Jesus said, “I’ll deny you. Confess me; I’ll confess you” (Matthew 10:32–33).

Now, remember, the bells had to be upon the robe. With no robe, don’t worry about the bells. I mean, it’s no good for you to make a profession, if you’re not wearing the robe. And remember, the robe is resting in Jesus. No more works: the finished work of Calvary. That’s the way the priests had to come. But, dear friend, the robes without the bells are not enough. It’s not enough for you to say that you’re resting in Christ, and that you’re trusting Christ, if you’re not confessing Christ.

Now walking down the aisle doesn’t save you. Shaking a preacher’s hand doesn’t save you. You’re saved by faith in Christ. But, *“Faith without works is dead”* (James 2:26). And a man who says that he believes in Jesus Christ and keeps it a secret—the man who says he believes in Jesus Christ but will not confess Jesus Christ—is simply deceiving himself. Jesus said, “You deny me; I’ll deny you. You confess me; I’ll confess you.” *“With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:10). *“Let the redeemed of the LORD say so”* (Psalm 107:2).

I have never known a real Christian who was ashamed to confess Jesus Christ. I’m not talking about in church; I’m talking about in the service station, in the restaurant; I’m talking about in the hospital; I’m talking about in the business office. Friend, those of us who are Christians had better start ringing the bells. We’d better start ringing the bells—or, those of us who say we’re Christians, to prove that we are. You see, confession without belief makes a man a hypocrite; but belief without confession is a coward. But belief that is confessed makes one a true Christian. It is not the confession that saves; it’s faith that saves. It is the confession that shows the faith and proves the faith. Faith gives you the fact of your salvation; confession gives you the feeling of your salvation. And if you’ve been not having the joy that you ought to have, why don’t you ring the bells a little louder?

III. The Fruit Speaks of the Believer’s Possession

Now the third thing I want you to notice: not only the believer’s position—resting in Christ; not only the believer’s profession—confessing Christ, or ringing the bells; but I

want you to notice, finally, the believer's possession: his fruit.

Go back, if you will again, to Exodus chapter 28, and notice, beginning again in verse 33: *“And beneath upon the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about”* (Exodus 28:33).

Now God says there's to be a balance. First, there's to be the bell; and then, there's to be the fruit; and then, there's to be the bell; and then, there's to be the fruit. Now there are some folks who simply ring the bells, but they don't bear the fruit. And there are some people who purport to produce the fruit, but they don't ring the bells. Now the fruit pictures what we are. You see, not only are we to ring the bells and tell the people; we're to wear the fruit and show the people. When we're resting in the Lord Jesus Christ, there are two distinct manifestations: one is testimony; the other is fruit. Testimony and fruit, testimony and fruit: if they're not there, you're not a real priest; you're not a well-dressed Baptist priest; you're not ready to worship; you're not ready to come into the Holy of Holies. You are to be ringing the bells. You are to be showing the fruit. Wear the fruit, and show the people. Ring the bells, and tell the people.

What is this fruit? Well, it's described in Galatians chapter 5, verse 22—look at it: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [self-control]: against such there is no law”* (Galatians 5:22–23). Now, notice it doesn't say, “The *fruits* of the Spirit are...” So many people think these are nine fruits. And someone says, “Well, let's see now: love—yeah, I've got that fruit; joy—I've got that fruit; peace—I don't have that fruit; longsuffering—I don't have that one; oh, gentleness—yeah, I'm good on that, that's one of my fruit; goodness—well, yeah; faith—well, yeah, I've got that. But there's some of the fruit I have, and some of the fruit I don't have.” Don't kid yourself, friend. These are not nine fruits; this is one fruit with nine flavors. Look at it. It doesn't say, “The *fruits* of the Spirit are...”; it says, *“the fruit of the Spirit is...”*—*“the fruit of the Spirit is...”* These are nine characteristics that are to be being made manifest in the life of every Spirit-filled believer: the fruit of the Spirit.

Now, never confuse the gifts of the Spirit with the fruit of the Spirit. One person may have the gift of mercy. Another person may have the gift of ministry. Another person may have the gift of miracles. Another person may have the gift of healing. Another may have the gift of prophecy. Another may have the gift of tongues, or interpretation. Or another may have the gift of whatever gift it may be. But you'll never hear in the Bible where the Bible says, “To one He gave love; to another He gave joy; to another He gave peace; and to another He gave longsuffering.” This one singular fruit is to be in the life of all Christians. Look at it—look at it. Is this true about your life? *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [self-control].”*

Conclusion

Are you ready to worship? Are you well dressed? Or, are the bells there? The fruit there? You know, some folks, they just go around with all bells. They're just telling everybody what they are and how they love the Lord. There's no fruit. Nobody believes them. There are other people: they're all fruit and no bells. They have the mistaken idea, "Well, I just want people to see my life. I know I don't witness, Brother Rogers, like I ought to. But you know what my philosophy is, Brother Rogers? I just believe if I'll go in my office and live like a Christian, people will see the fruit of my life, and they'll want Jesus."

Well, friend, listen. They're not saved by your life; they're saved by Jesus' death. Don't you know that? And it's Jesus' death that made your life possible. And if you don't tell them what makes your life possible, you're masquerading under false pretenses and getting glory for something that's not yours. You need to ring the bells and tell the people—you need to ring the bells and tell the people. Wear the fruit, and show the people. And the whole time you're doing it, you're not sweating about it. There's no sweat. Man, you don't have to act holy; you are holy! You don't have to try to be a Christian. If this ever dawns on me and you, we're going to be some kind of folks!

This thing called Christianity is something glorious: to be able to come into the Holy of Holies, a royal priesthood. Jesus Christ provides our position—that's resting; our profession—that's ringing; our possession—that's reproducing the fruit.

The Laver of the Tabernacle

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 30

Outline

Introduction

I. The Meaning of the Laver

II. The Materials of the Laver

III. The Method of the Laver's Use

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you open your Bibles tonight please to Exodus chapter 30. We're continuing our study on the tabernacle and I don't know whether it's blessed you but it's blessed me because I see in the tabernacle some wonderful truths that God has given us here. An object lesson in the Old Testament and the Lord has helped us to see that the Old Testament as well as the New Testament speaks of Him.

Now some people think that we're exaggerating when we see the Lord Jesus Christ as typified in the tabernacle and they say, "We're just simply reading into these things." But if you will remember after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus He walked with two disciples on the road to Emmaus and they did not recognize Him at first and the Lord took the Bible, the law and the prophets, the Old Testament, and the Bible says that Jesus showed them in the law and the prophets, in all the law and in all the prophets, the things concerning Himself.

Now if you read the Bible and you don't see Jesus I would suggest that you re-read it. You have missed the message. This Book from Genesis to Revelation speaks of Jesus. Jesus said search the Scriptures for they testify of me. Now, tonight we want to think about the second piece of furniture in the tabernacle. For those of you who are visiting with us for the first time, on Wednesday nights we've been studying the meetinghouse in the wilderness, the tabernacle. And this tabernacle has many rich spiritual lessons concerning the way of salvation and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now in the tabernacle, the tent-like structure which the Jews used for worship, there were seven pieces of furniture, seven basic pieces of furniture. We spoke of the first piece of furniture just inside the gate last Wednesday night and that was the altar and the altar speaks of salvation and of the blood of Jesus Christ. This altar spoke of the cross upon which our Lord would die. Now in Exodus 30, verses 17-21, we read of the

laver. The second piece of furniture is the laver, L.A.V.E.R., the laver. Exodus 30, verse 17: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, ‘Thou shalt also make a laver of brass’—today we would say a lavatory or a basin, thou shalt make a basin, a laver, a lavatory of brass—“and his foot also of brass,”—in other words the stand on which it will sit—“to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.”—all right, there is a brass basin full of water—“For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat”—notice they do not wash all over just their hands and their feet—“When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord. So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations.”

Now if the altar speaks of salvation, the laver speaks of sanctification. And tonight, for method of memory, we will use a little alliteration. Notice with me, first of all then, the meaning of the laver. Notice, secondly, the materials in the laver and thirdly, the method of the laver’s use. The three things—the meaning, the materials, and the method. Easy enough, I think, for us to pin some thoughts upon. We’ll use these three words for pegs.

I. The Meaning of the Laver

Now, first of all, the meaning. The meaning of the altar is salvation. This speaks of the blood of Jesus but the meaning of the laver speaks of sanctification. This is growing in the Lord after we’re saved. Now at the altar a person is saved. He comes to the cross and there he receives salvation, there he becomes a child of God when he receives the atonement of the cross. He trusts in the shed blood of Jesus. This is the altar. This is the shed blood. He is now in the tabernacle. The tabernacle is Jesus. He is now in Jesus. But ladies and gentlemen learn this, salvation begins at the cross but it does not end there. Now it’s one thing to be in Christ, it’s another thing to be filled with Christ. It’s another thing to be sanctified, to live the Spirit-filled life. And so at the altar we’re in Christ but at the laver we have sanctification. This is the meaning of the laver sanctification or cleansing from the defilement of sin after we’ve been saved.

II. The Materials of the Laver

So much for the meaning, let’s go to the materials and the materials will help us to understand the meaning even better. Two materials in the laver, solid brass and pure water. What does the brass stand for? The brass is symbolic of judgment. We’ve told you that before. Always in the Bible brass is a symbol of God’s judgment upon sin. Now what does the water stand for? The water is symbolic of the Word of God.

Let me give you a few scriptures that will make that even more clear. Let’s look, for

example, in Ephesians 5, verse 26, the Bible speaks of the Church, and the Bible says the Christ gave Himself for the church. Now notice verse 26: “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” Sanctification is what the laver speaks of and it speaks of sanctification, or cleansing, with the washing of water by the Word. In other words, water that washes in the Old Testament was symbolic of the Word of God. The pure water is a symbol of the Word of God.

Look again, please, in John 15, verse 3, and see the same thing. John 15, verse 3, Jesus said, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” We are washed by the Word. The water in the laver is symbolic of the Word. Look in John 17, verse 17, Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” Do you see the sanctification, cleansing, washing, comes through the Word and the water is symbolic of the Word. The washing of water, the Word, the Word of God is symbolized in the Bible by water.

Now, where did they get the brass? This is very interesting and I think it speaks to our hearts. We know that water came through the rock and that rock was Christ but where did the brass come from? Look in Exodus 38, verse 8. You were in Exodus 30 go over to Exodus 38, verse 8, and you’ll find where they had all this brass or where they got this brass out of the wilderness. Exodus 38, verse 8: “And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of it of brass, of the looking glasses of the women assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.” Do you know where they got the material to make this great brazen laver? They took the ladies’ looking glasses and melted them. Now they didn’t have looking glasses in that day ladies of glass as we use the term glass but they had highly polished brass looking glasses and this is what they looked at. You see ladies have always had looking glasses. There’s one way or another to do it but they’ll have a looking glass. Mr. Spurgeon said, “I’ve known many a lady too poor to own a pair of shoes but I’ve never known one too poor to own a mirror.”

And so I think, however, that that could be said not just about the ladies but I think that could be said about all vain human beings. They like to behold themselves and their image and their reflection. If you stand some time on the street it’ll be very interesting to you. If you have fifteen minutes to spend, find a public mirror and if you’re waiting on your wife, which is sometimes the case, just stand there and watch people as they pass the mirror and see how many people can pass without pausing. Very, very few can pass without pausing and looking in the mirror there’s just something about it. And so this laver was built at a real sacrifice. These ladies took their brass looking glasses and they were melted and they became a part of the laver and this makes the laver all the more a symbol of the Word of God because God’s Word is described as a mirror, as a looking glass, into which we look and see our reflection.

You see, the Bible has a twofold purpose. It shows us ourselves and then it shows

us our Savior and the Savior will never mean as much to you until you have seen yourself. When you see your sin, your defilement, yourself then you want to see your Savior, your salvation, your deliverance. Now look, please, in James for just a moment to bear out the fact that the Bible is like a mirror. James 1, verse 22, and here God's Word tells us that some people are using the mirror but they're not using the water. Now he says in James 1, verse 22: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass."—you see, again he's talking about the Word. Now suppose a man just hears the Bible and he doesn't obey it. Well, he's like a man looking in a mirror, looking at his natural face in a glass—"For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

Now there are many, many church members who do exactly this thing. They look into the Bible, they hear the message on Sunday mornings, and God's Word exposes them for what they are, and they say, "My, my, my, tut, tut, tut, why what a terrible shape I'm in," as they look into the mirror of God's Word. But then rather than changing their lives they go right on their way. And God says is just like a man getting up in the morning looking in the mirror and saying, "I need to shave," or like a little boy looking in the mirror and saying, "I have a dirty face," but then not washing. You see, God says be doers of the Word and not hearers only.

One of the stories that's lodged in my mind is a parable of a great actor who came out on the stage to perform to a packed house and the manager of the theater told him just before he came out, he said, "Listen, listen, a small fire's broken out in the wings of this auditorium and the people's lives are in danger and if anybody else comes out its liable to cause pandemonium. You go out on the stage and ask the people to leave orderly." And so the actor came out on the stage and he said, "Ladies and gentlemen," after the great applause he got them quiet, he said, "Ladies and gentlemen I have an announcement to make. I want you to listen carefully and I don't want anyone to be excited but a small fire has broken out in the wings of this theater and for your safety it will be necessary for you to get up and walk, not run but walk, to the nearest exit." Well when he said this, they applauded. "Bravo," they said. They thought he was acting and so he said, "No ladies and gentlemen this is not a part of the act. It's imperative that you leave right now." And they applauded even more and then he got down on his knees with tears streaming down his cheeks and he begged them to leave and, of course, they just roared their applause.

Now it's only a parable, not a true story, but is so well illustrates what so many people do when they come to church and the man of God preaches and they say, "Amen. Boy that's a good sermon," or, "I really believe that," or, "Isn't that a precious promise." And they look into the mirror of the Word and rather doing what God wants

them to do they just simply admire the Word. Now, God does not want our applause, God wants our obedience. You see, we are to be doers of the Word not hearers only. This is not some sort of a performance. God says be doers of the Word and not hearers only. We are to look in the mirror of God's Word, see what we are, and then bring our lives into accord with what God's Word tells us we are. And so in the Word I see myself and in the Word I see the Savior. In the Word, God's Word, the brass looking glasses speak of judgment. I see myself under the condemnation of God. I see what I am. I judge myself. The brass looking glasses speak of judgment of self and then the water speaks of the pure Word of God, the pure promises of God, God's answer.

You see, this is shown so beautifully in 1 John 1, versus 8 and 9: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."—any man who says he has no sin hasn't been looking in the mirror—"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." In the Word right here I see two things, I see myself and I see the Savior. This is the reason the cleansing comes from the Word. I see the dirt. I see the deliverance. Verse 8 shows the dirt; verse 9 the deliverance. Verse 8 the self; verse 9 the Savior. This is it. This is what he's talking about. This is the brass and the water. Verse 8 the brass of judgment; verse 9 the water of washing. And so the meaning of the laver is sanctification, the materials, brass that speak of judgment, pure water that speaks of the Word, the washing of water by the Word.

III. The Method of the Laver's Use

Now one other thing, the method of washing. I want you to understand this that the priest when he was ordained and initiated to be a priest had a bathing. They washed him all over before he could be a priest. They bathed him from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet. Now this represented salvation. When you first get saved the Lord cleanses you from all sin. You're saved, forgiven. The Bible describes this in Titus 3, verse 5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration,"—there's the washing of regeneration—"and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

When we're saved there's the washing of regeneration but after we're saved there's the washing of sanctification and the two are different. The laver does not speak of the washing of regeneration but it speaks of the washing of sanctification. Once you are washed, once you're saved, you don't have to keep getting saved. Praise God once you're saved He keeps you. Once you're saved you don't have to have the washing of regeneration again but you do need to come to the laver day by day for washing from defilement.

Now the priest, he was only washed one time when he entered the priesthood but

every day he washed at the laver. He didn't wash all over in the laver. He didn't take this bath of from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet but he washed his hands and his feet. You get the picture? You don't have to keep getting saved. Once you're saved you're saved but as a Christian we need to come daily to the laver of God's Word and wash. As a Christian daily we need to confess our sins. Daily we need to come to the Lord and get cleansing. Do you know there's one portion of furniture that's missing in the tabernacle. Do you know what it was? A chair. There was no place for the priest to sit down. And I'll tell you something else in the tabernacle that was absent. There was no floor, no floor in the tabernacle. Beautiful covering but no floor and the priest walked on the ground. There was no place he could sit down and lift his feet up off the ground. No bed to lie upon and as he was going about the service of the Lord in the tabernacle still his feet were upon the ground but he came to the laver and washed his hands and washed his feet. Not that he had to be saved all over again but even in Christ believers are still in contact with this vile world, as you already know. Even though you've been saved you're still walking on terra firma. You still live on Merritt Island and you still work at the Kennedy Space Center and you still get defiled. Oh you know Jesus, you don't need to get saved again, but you need to come daily to the laver and wash.

This is what Jesus was showing Peter in John 13. Look please in John 13. In John 13 the disciples and Jesus are going to have the Last Supper and so Jesus takes them to the upper room. Now I imagine the disciples were saying, "Well somebody's gonna have to perform the service of washing feet. It won't be me. Who's going to do it? There are no servants around." They were all amazed to find out that Jesus, Himself, did it. Jesus washed His disciples' feet and starting in verse 4: "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason,"—we could say he poured water into a laver that's exactly what it means, He poureth water into a laver—"and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, 'Lord, dost thou wash my feet?' Jesus answered and said unto him, 'What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.'"—now Jesus was giving Peter a clue that it was more than simply washing physical dirt from physical feet, Jesus said Simon Peter you look for a deeper meaning later on. What I'm doing you don't know now but you will know hereafter—"Peter saith unto him, 'Thou shalt never wash my feet.'"—now Peter was being kind of, I kind of admire Peter, he didn't want Jesus down there washing his feet. He knew that he should've been washing Jesus' feet as far as humility and menial service is concerned but Jesus just knocks him off his pins with the answer—"Jesus answered him, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.'" You can't even be a Christian unless I wash you Peter. Well, Peter gets to thinking then.

One thing Peter was, he was impetuous, but he desired, I think, it is heart to know the Lord, so he says in verse 9: “Simon Peter saith unto him, ‘Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.’”—in other words all over—“Jesus saith to him, ‘He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.’” He said you’re clean but not everyone in the room is clean, not everyone has had a bath. Now Jesus is talking in spiritual terms now and you’re going to find out that Jesus is not talking about dirt He’s talking about sin.

He says Peter let me wash your feet. Peter says you can’t wash my feet. Jesus said if I don’t wash you, you have no part with me. Peter says all right then wash me all over. Jesus says you don’t need to be washed all over just your feet. Jesus said if you had a bath you don’t need to take another bath but you walked here tonight, you were wearing sandals, your feet are dirty. I imagine Peter had already taken a bath before he went out to supper but he had to get his feet washed and so Jesus washed Peter’s feet. Now what is the picture here? Jesus said you disciples are clean but not all of you are clean because Judas was there and Judas had never been saved. The rest were saved but not Judas and He said you’re not all clean. Verse 11 explains that, “For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, ‘Ye are not all clean.’” You see, He’s talking about sin here.

Now, what is the picture? When we are washed, when we’re saved, when we come in at the door of the tabernacle, we don’t need to be saved over and over again. But as we minister in the tabernacle we are defiled and we need to wash. We are still walking, still walking on earth even though we’re in the tabernacle. There was no floor in the tabernacle. And so we as Christians must come continually, not for the washing of regeneration as Titus 3:5 says, but for the washing of sanctification as our Lord taught us to pray in the model prayer, “Forgive us this this day our trespasses.” And daily, daily, daily my friend, you must come to the Word of God, see your sin, claim the promise of forgiveness, and wash at the laver.

Now Jesus went on to say, and with this all conclude, “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.” Now some churches, therefore, have a foot washing ceremony and they actually wash people’s feet in the church service. There’s no indication in the Bible that this ever became a Church ordinance like the Lord’s Supper and baptism. Some churches do it, that’s all right I’m not arguing with them, but they’ve missed the meeting, I believe, at least missed part of it. They say, “We do this to show our humility.” Humility is never humility when it’s put on show. And I have an idea most of the time when they’re going to have a foot washing service everybody washes their feet real clean before they get to church and puts on the best socks.

Now this misses the point. We’re not against a foot washing service and I don’t even

mean to be making fun of these people because many of them are wonderful people but the message is much, much deeper. When Jesus says, “Wash one another’s feet. If I’ve washed your feet you wash one another’s feet,” what is Jesus saying? If I am willing to forgive you your sins against me day by day, you forgive one another their sins against you day by day. Be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even for God for Christ’s sake has forgiven you. If I’ve washed your feet even so wash one another’s feet. And be careful when you wash each other’s feet don’t get the water so hot you scold them. You know, there are a lot of people who are glad to wash somebody else’s feet. They get a tub of boiling water and say, “Stick ’em in bud,” or else they have ice cubes floating around in it. Have the water a nice temperature, will you?

You know, the Bible says in Galatians 6, verse 1: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness,”—not with boiling water, oh in a spirit of meekness—“considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted,”—and he scald your feet. Oh listen, listen, if Jesus has forgiven us, if Jesus is so compassionate and tender towards us, let’s be compassionate and tender one toward another. And so the altar speaks of salvation, the laver sanctification. Salvation starts at the cross but it doesn’t end there. As you’ve received the Lord Jesus so walk ye in Him that He might presenteth to Himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle. We know how we get the spots out, the washing of water by the Word. You know how you get the wrinkles out? A hot iron and it may be that God might have to put the hot iron to you.

Conclusion

Let us pray together. If you’re Christian tonight, you’ve really been saved, you have claimed the blood of Jesus Christ, I want to ask you another question, have you been to the laver today? Have you asked the Lord today to wash you? Have you been in God’s Word today? You’ll never be sanctified apart from the Word. Sanctify them by thy truth. Thy Word is truth. You can’t live the victorious life, the life of victory over sin, unless you wash at the laver, that is unless you saturate yourself with the Word of God. Only there can you see yourself and see the Savior.

I wonder while heads are bowed and while Christians are searching your hearts. I wonder tonight if there are those who would say, “Pastor, my problem is that I’m not saved. My problem is not that as a Christian I fail the Lord. My problem is that I’ve never been saved at all. I’ve never even come in to Jesus, into the tabernacle. I need to be saved. I need to be a born-again Christian.” How many would say tonight, “I’m not saved, but I want to be before you have the final prayer. Pray for me that I’ll know Jesus as my Savior.” May I see your hands. You’re not saved but you want to be. Slip up your hand for a moment, we’ll pray for you. I’ll not call you by name or embarrass you. Heads

are bowed. If you'd say, "Pray for me I need Jesus."

Our Father bless us now as we continue in this service and Lord bless those who are saved that they might go deeper and those who are lost that they might be saved. O God if there are those who need to profess faith in Thee tonight give them the courage to do it. Please dear Lord, amen.

Christ Our Supplication

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 12, 1987

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 30:1–5

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Purpose of the Altar of Incense
 - A. The Savior's Intercession for Us
 - B. The Savior's Intercession Through Us
- II. The Pattern of the Altar of Incense
- III. The Position of the Altar of Incense
- IV. The People of the Altar of Incense

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles tonight and turn with me please to Exodus chapter 30. And keep them open in your hand, because we're going to just stay right, primarily, in Exodus chapter 30. Although you might want to put a bookmark there because we are going to be looking at some corresponding verses.

I want us to think tonight about the Christian's altar of incense. I suppose for a title of our message, we might entitle the message, "Christ our Supplication." And I'll tell you why I call the message that.

Now, remember, this morning we talked to you about the Lord Jesus Christ and His humanity. And the Apostle John said in John, the first chapter and verse 14, I believe it is, "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us." And literally that word is this: "And the word was made flesh and tabernacled among us." That is, the tabernacle, the tent of worship in the wilderness in the Old Testament, was a picture, a prophecy, a type, an illustration, a shadow, a fore gleam of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we see Christ in the tabernacle. And we must see, therefore, the tabernacle in the light of Christ. And the tabernacle is resplendent and rich with great spiritual blessings. And my life has been greatly enriched as I've studied the details of the tabernacle.

And, tonight, I just want to deal with one detail in that tabernacle, because not only the tent itself and the outward wall of linen round about it and the foundation of the tent is a picture of the Lord Jesus, but each piece of furniture in that tabernacle pictures the Lord Jesus and His ministry.

For example, if you were to come into the tabernacle, the very first thing that you

would come to would be a brazen altar, and that brazen altar where the slain animal was consumed with fire is a picture of the Lord Jesus, who endured the wrath of God for us. Brass is a symbol of judgment. And that animal being slain and burned and consumed upon that brazen altar speaks of Christ our sacrifice.

And then, if you were to go right past the brazen altar, you would come to a great basin called a laver. And it was filled with water. And the priest would wash in that water. Now, you know, in the Bible that water is symbolic of the Word of God. And the Bible speaks of washing of water by the Word. And the Bible says, "Is not My word like the rain that cometh down from heaven?" And it is the Word that sanctifies us, for the Bible, Jesus said, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth." And so you come from the brazen altar to the laver. The altar is Christ our sacrifice. The laver is Christ our sanctification, because not only do I need to have my sins forgiven by His atoning sacrifice, but daily I need to be sanctified as I bathe my soul and cleanse my life in the washing of water by the Word. So when I come to the altar, I go beyond the altar and I go to the laver.

And then, next, as I go into the tabernacle, I see on one side there a table, and on that table is bread called showbread. And this bread, very sacred bread, that is baked there and put there. And the high priest, as he came in past the altar and then past the laver, would go and eat of that bread. And that also speaks to me of the Lord Jesus Christ, for Jesus is the bread of life. And so that tells me not only of Christ my sacrifice, and not only of Christ my sanctification, but also of Christ my sustenance. I am to feed on Him. I am to satisfy myself with the Lord. He is to feed me daily with the living bread. Have you been feasting? Have you been to the table of showbread? I mean, you have if you've been into Christ, because He feeds you daily with the living bread. He says, "I am that bread that cometh down from heaven." He is our sustenance.

And then we move from there and we see on the other side of the tabernacle a magnificent piece of furniture. It is, as I preached this morning, a candelabra; more aptly, a lamp stand. Seven prongs: one main stem and then six others, six being the number of man, one, the number of God, seven, the number of perfection. It speaks of Christ the light of the world. I've told you that in that tabernacle there was no outward light, no window, no skylight, no other light except for this seven-pronged candlestick that was fed with oil because oil is a type and a picture of the Holy Spirit of God, illumined from within to make and to show the shimmering, glorious beauty of the gold and the fine twined linen and the glorious colors that are on the inside. And this lamp, ignited and fueled by oil, which symbolizes the Holy Spirit, speaks of Christ our sight, Christ our sight. For He says, "I am the light of the world. Except a man be born again, he cannot see..." And so Christ is the one who, through the Holy Spirit, illumines us and opens our mind to so many wonderful, beautiful truths.

And then we come to the next piece of furniture, and that is the piece of furniture we're going to be talking about tonight. And after we pass these other things, after we've come to Christ our sacrifice, and to Christ our supplication, and to Christ our sustenance, and to Christ our sight, then we're ready to approach that next piece of furniture that was in the altar, and that was in the tabernacle, and that was the altar of incense.

I. The Purpose of the Altar of Incense

Look, if you will, here in Exodus chapter 30, verse 1: "And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon..." And this speaks of Christ our supplication, because this incense, this sweet smelling perfume that was burning continually, and an odor was just filling the place of this precious perfume that would be burning, speaks of the prayers of God's people that are rising to God continually. And also they speak of the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ as He prays for us and as He prays through us. And so there is Christ our supplication. He's the one who energizes our prayers. He's the one who teaches us to pray.

A. The Savior's Intercession for Us

All right, so we just travel now this pathway to glory. And, of course, as we're going to see, there's another piece of furniture in the tabernacle, and I'll speak of that in just a moment. But let's just stop where we are now, because we've brought ourselves right to this altar of incense, which speaks of Christ our supplication.

Now incense in the Bible symbolizes prayer. Let me give you a verse. Psalm 141 and verse 2: "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense..." "Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense." Just as incense was a sweet smelling savor in the nostrils of those priests and those who ministered, our prayers are sweet to God. They give God pleasure. Just as the scent of perfume and sweet smelling incense gives pleasure to those worshipers who might worship where incense is, is burned, then we're going to see in the Bible that the prayers of the saints are a sweet smelling savor unto God. And upon this altar, therefore, there was a continual offering of incense. And as that incense was offered, it was offered with coals that were taken from the brazen altar. How would they get the fire that would burn this perfume and make the smoke ascend to God? They would go outside to the brazen altar and they would get the coals from the brazen altar and bring those coals from that brazen altar, which speaks of Christ our sacrifice, and they would take the coals from that brazen altar and bring them to the golden altar of incense. And, of course, there's such a tremendous lesson there. You see Jesus; intercession for us, and our prayers through Him to God, must always be on the basis of a blood atonement. That's the lesson. It is the fire of that first altar that

burns and consumes the incense on the second altar. And we have no right to come to that second altar, the altar of incense, unless, first of all, we've been to that place of sacrifice, unless our sins have been cleansed, unless we're washed in the blood of the Lamb. And so, dear friend, it speaks of Christ who died for us. That's the brazen altar. And then it speaks of Christ who lives for us. That's the golden altar, the altar of incense.

Now we thank God for His finished work, the finished work of Christ. That's the brazen altar. But have you ever thanked God for the unfinished work of Christ. That's the golden altar. He ever lives to make intercession for us. Let's just enjoy a few verses here.

Turn to Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25 and let's just look at that one tonight. We'll just rejoice in these verses. They'll feed our souls and bless us as we find out that Christ is, indeed, our altar of incense. He is that tabernacle. Not just the tent, but He's every piece of furniture on the inside. Look, if you will, in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25. Do you know why we're saved and kept saved? Because we're so good? Because we're so strong, so smart? Absolutely not! Look. The Bible says here in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25, it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, our great high priest, and it says, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Now, friend, I used to preach this: that Jesus was able to save to the uttermost. I used to preach that meant He could save the worst sinners. I'd say it from the guttermost to the uttermost. Well, that is true, but that's not what this verse teaches. This verse means literally that He is able to save all the way to the end. He's able to keep you. He won't lose you. I mean, once He saves you, He keeps you. He is able to save to the end. Why? Because He prays for you. He ever lives to make intercession. He is our altar of incense. And that incense is ascending to God perpetually on our behalf.

Turn to Hebrews chapter 8 now that you're in the neighborhood, and let's read the first five verses. Hebrews chapter 8, verses 1 through 5: "Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum (in other words, the bottom line): We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle..." You see, the tabernacle here on earth was not the true tabernacle. It was just a symbolic of another tabernacle. "...of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." You see, up there in the glory place there's a tabernacle that God erected, that God pitched, and it's up there. And it's there right now. Now, listen. Our priest, who is Jesus, is in that tabernacle. And notice what it says, "For every high priest is foreordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: whereof it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he would

not be a priest, seeing there are priests that offer sac, other that offer gifts according to the law: who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, and Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed thee on the mount.”

Now, what does this tell us? It tells us that this earthly tabernacle was just a shadow, as I've already told you, of heavenly things. And up in the glory right now there's a priest, a high priest. And there's a tabernacle up there. And that high priest has an altar. And it is an altar of incense. And that incense is ascending to the Father. And Jesus the Savior tonight is praying for me. Jesus the Savior tonight is praying for you.

Look, if you will, please, in Hebrews chapter 9 now and verse 24 of this same chapter: “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.”

It's that great? I mean, He's there for us. He died for us, and now He lives for us. And He has entered into that tabernacle there. And this altar of incense that we see so long ago that God showed Moses, and He said, “Now, Moses, don't you miss it. You make it according to pattern because this is very important. There is a great lesson for My people and I want them to learn it.”

I have a wonderful Savior who is interceding for me and He ever lives to make intercession.

B. The Savior's Intercession Through Us

But not only does this altar of incense speak of the Savior's prayer for us, but it has a corresponding meaning. It also speaks of the Savior's intercession through us as He intercedes through the Holy Spirit. And He teaches us to pray also. And so there's a two-fold lesson here.

I want you to turn to the book of the Revelation, chapter 5 and verse 8. Revelation 5 and verse 8 tonight. Now John is on the island of Patmos, and God is giving him some great revelation of spiritual truth. And the Bible says that there came a Lamb. Well, let's go back to verse 6: “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns....” Seven is the perfect no, number. Horns speak of power. That is, he has perfect power. “...seven eyes...” Eyes speak of wisdom. He has perfect knowledge. “...which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth unto all the earth.” There's only one Holy Spirit, but He is perfect. And the number here is used symbolically. “And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb (now listen to this), having every one of them harps, and golden bowls (or vials) full of odors (that is, full of perfumes. Don't think of a malevolent odor, but full of perfume,

which are...full of incense is the best way to say it), which are the prayers of the saints.”

Now the prayers of the saints are also incense. Not only is Christ’s prayer for us ascending to the Lord, but the prayers of the saints like sweet smelling incense. Now that’s Revelation chapter 5 and verse 8.

And then, look in Revelation chapter 8 and verses 1 through 4: “And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in haven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer...”—and a censer is something that the incense is burned in—“...a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.”

And there are some other truths, but I’m not going to read them there. What I’m trying to say to you is that I am not pushing a truth or distorting a truth or bending the Bible when I tell you that this incense represents the prayers of the Savior for us. And it represents our prayers through the Savior to God. And this altar of incense has a very special meaning for each of us. And, oh, what a blessing it is to understand that this incense tells us that prayer is sweet to God. That when it was offered with coals from the brazen altar, it tells us that our prayers must be on the basis of a blood sacrifice or we have no right nor authority to pray. And the fire that consumes that incense speaks of the Holy Spirit who in the Bible is called the Spirit of burning. He is the One who energizes our prayers.

II. The Pattern of the Altar of Incense

And so, I’ve talked to you about the purpose of the altar of incense. Now I want to talk to you for a few moments about the pattern of this altar. Go back to Exodus chapter 30. And after we’ve talked a little bit about the purpose of it and the symbolism of it, let’s talk about the pattern of it: how it is made and how it was built.

Now, beginning in verse 2, I want to read through verse 5: “A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth hereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: and the horns thereof shall be of the same. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereon round about, and the horns thereof: and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. And two golden rings shalt thou make it, or make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof and upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim wood, and overlay them with gold.”

Now there are several things I want you to notice. In verse 2, he speaks of the dimensions of this ark of incense. And it was very small. It was the smallest piece of furniture. It was a cubit this way and a cubit that way, about eighteen inches square, very small. But it was the highest piece of furniture. You know what that tells me? It tells me, ladies and gentlemen, that prayer may seem insignificant, but we are never nearer heaven than when we're on our knees. And this was the highest piece of furniture. And I think it tells us that it is prayer that brings us close to God.

Now it was made of wood, but it was overlaid with gold, according to verse 1 and verse 3. Made of wood, but overlaid with gold. Wood speaks of the humanity of the Lord Jesus. The Bible speaks of Christ and it, it says, "He shall grow up as a root out of a dry ground." The Bible speaks of Him as the righteous branch. The Bible speaks of Him as a stem from Jesse. The Bible calls a righteous man like a tree planted by the rivers of water. Jesus speaks of Himself as the true vine. And the wood, therefore, speaks of the humanity of Christ.

III. The Position of the Altar of Incense

And then, we come to Christ our supplication, the altar of incense. And then, we come to Christ our satisfaction and security, the Mercy Seat. And how do we come boldly into the holiest of all? In the Holy ho, of Holies where the Shekinah glory of God dwells. How do we come? We come that way or we don't come at all. That's the way we come: by the blood, by the laver, by the showbread, by the candlestick, by the altar of incense, or we don't come, folks. God has a way. God has a pattern to bring us into the holy place. And all of these things are not written in God's Word just by chance or happenstance. God said to Moses, "Now, Moses, you make it according, you make it according to the pattern, Moses. It's very important. I want my people down through the centuries to learn something about prayer." Because God says, "It is there at the Mercy Seat, there I will meet thee."

I want you to turn to Revelation chapter 8 and verse 3. We've already read this verse, but you'll get the idea. Again, it's repeated in the New Testament. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer (that is, a incense burner); and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne"—that is, upon the mercy seat.

And so, what is the position of the altar of incense? Now, watch. It is right before the Mercy Seat, but it is right after the golden candlestick.

Notice in verses 7 and 8 again. "And Aaron shall burn therein, thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual

incense before the LORD throughout your generations.”

And so this altar of incense, not only is it linked with the Mercy Seat; it is also linked with the lamp stand because, you see, the incense was to be put on the altar at the time of the dressing of the lamps. Now, these lamps had to be dressed. The oil had to be replenished. The wicks had to be trimmed. And so, when Aaron the priest would go into the tabernacle to light the lamps or to trim the lamps and to feed the lamps, at that time he was to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

Now, what does that tell us? The lamp burning brightly, speaking of the light of the world, speaks of testimony. And what God is telling us here is that testimony and intercession are also linked. When we light our lamps, we are to offer our incense.

Now, friend, if you're trying to let your light shine without burning incense, you'll never be a soul winner, never be a soul winner. God says these two things are to go together. At the time of the trimming of the lamps, at the time of letting the light shine, there should also be at that time, simultaneously, there should be the offering of incense.

Now, let me tell you something. The reason that some people are not soul winners when they ought to be is they're trying to trim the lamps without offering the incense. Now, let me tell you that a man who goes soul winning and does not pray is a fool. A man who prays, but does not go soul winning, is a fraud. But a man who prays and then goes is a friend of God and of man. Now, either you're a fool, a fraud, or a friend. It all depends on what you do with the altar of incense.

Now, friend, I want to tell you that that altar of incense is placed right where it is to show us that in order to have a testimony before God, in order to let our light be as it ought to be, that, at the same time, we trim our lamps we ought to burn our incense. And that, my dear friend, is going to be pleasing to God, and we're going to come to God there at the golden altar. And so, there's the position of this golden altar of incense.

IV. The People of the Altar of Incense

Now, let me talk to you about one other thing and I'll be finished. Let me talk to you about the people of the altar of incense. Who is it that can come and offer sweet incense? Who is it that has the right to burn this perfume before Almighty God? Of course, the Lord Jesus does. But we're moving the figure from Christ our high priest who prays for us to ourselves who pray through Him. And I want you to notice here in Exodus chapter 30, beginning in verse 9. Now, look at it: “And ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt-sacrifice, nor meat-offering; neither shall ye pour drink-offering thereon.” That is, there's only one kind of offering that goes on this particular altar. “And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin-offering of atonements; once in the year shall he make atonement upon

it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the LORD.”

Now these verses tell us that only the appointed priest could offer incense upon this altar. If anybody else assayed to offer incense upon this altar, he was to be judged of Almighty God. There was only one who had a right to do it. Only one who had an authority to do it, and that was God’s appointed priest. No one else should dare to intrude upon this office to offer incense upon this altar.

You know, there are some people who carelessly and casually and callously and thoughtlessly and impiously offer pray to God. But God doesn’t hear that prayer. Not everybody has a right to saunter into the presence of God and say Father, because He’s not their Father. Jesus said, “You’re of your father, the devil,” speaking to unsaved people, “and the lust of your father ye will do.” I want to tell you, not only is such prayer not heard, it is an abomination to God. The Bible says even their prayers shall be an abomination.

In one place in the Psalms, the Psalmist asked, “Lord, how long will you be angry at the prayers of your people?” Not only does God not hear them. They move God to anger. When a person comes to God and he does not come the way of the cross, he does not come by the brazen altar, he does not come by the laver, he does not come by the showbread, he does not come by the candlestick, he does not come that way, as a priest of God, he has no right nor authority to pray. And the only prayer he can pray with any assurance of being answered is, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner. God, have mercy upon me, and God, cleanse me and forgive me.” But when he does, and when he does get saved, then he becomes a priest of God.

Have you ever seen a Baptist priest? You’ve seen a Catholic priest. Have you ever seen a Baptist priest? Want to see one? Have a look. Have a look. And there’s another one. And there’s a row of them. And another row. And another row. And another row. Friend, you’re looking at a royal priesthood. The Bible says that God hath made us kings and priests unto God. And we are priests now. And we have a right to enter because we’re coming by the blood of Jesus into the holiest. But if we don’t come by the blood of Jesus, we deserve what they deserved in that day when a man would intrude into the Holy of Holies. And it’s death just like that!

Do you know what happened to a man in the Old Testament who assumed and presumed to burn incense when it was not given to him to burn incense? I want to read to you in 2 Chronicles chapter 26. This is about Uzziah. “And Azariah the priest went in after him (that is, Uzziah), went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD who were valiant men.” Now went in after whom? Went in after Uzziah, who’s gone into the temple. And said unto him, “...it appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine

honor from the LORD..." That is, "God is not so pleased just because you're burning incense. You are trespassing. You have no right in this sanctuary. It doesn't pertain to you to do this."

And then I want you to notice, as we continue to read: "Then Uzziah was angry, and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was angry with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar." God smote this king with leprosy. He got angry because they said, "You don't have a right to offer this incense. It doesn't pertain to you. You're trespassing." You may be a big shot, but that doesn't impress God one little bit.

Conclusion

You know, today we've gotten the idea that we're all un-American unless we just put our arms around everybody else and say, "God hears your prayers just like He hears everybody else's." Friend, I want to tell you the only way you can come into the Holy of Holies is by the blood, by the blood. Past the laver, table of showbread, the golden candlestick. And we offer that sweet incense at the time of the trimming of the lamps. And that brings us into the Holy of Holies. And God says, "There I'll meet you. There I'll meet you." I want to meet with Him, don't you? I want to tell you something, friend. If you were to stop and get up above that tabernacle and take the roof off of it and look and these pieces of furniture from the top, they would form a cross. This piece, this piece, this piece, this piece, and then, this piece. It's the pathway to glory. It's the pathway to power. And I just want to remind you what old John said: "The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us. And we beheld His glory." And I hope tonight, as you've stepped inside that tabernacle, you've seen a glimpse of His glory.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you, Lord, for the glimpse of glory tonight that you've given to us. Lord, thank you for making us a kingdom of priests. Thank you for that brazen altar that reminds us of Jesus who took the fires of wrath for us. Thank you for that laver that reminds us of your Word that washes us and cleanses and sanctifies us. Thank you, Lord, for that table of showbread that speaks of Christ who feeds us and strengthens us. Thank you for the lamp stand that speaks of Christ who gives us light and helps us to be the light of the world, Christ our sight. Thank you, Lord, for the golden altar of incense that reminds us, dear Lord, that we have a Savior who prays for us and a Savior in whom and through whom we can pray. And thank you, Lord, for the Mercy Seat where you meet with us. And, Lord, that you let us, human as we are, frail as we are, come into the Holy of Holies and meet with the God of glory. Lord, we praise you for this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Developing People: A Tribute to Jim Whitmire

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 27, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 31:1–11

Outline

Introduction

- I. God Knows You Personally
 - II. God Calls You Specifically
 - III. God Equips You Uniquely
 - IV. God Empowers You Fully
 - V. God Places You Strategically
- Conclusion

Introduction

I'm going to be exceedingly brief tonight, but I have something I want to say. And I would like for you to take God's Word and turn to the Book of Exodus, if you would.

I was thinking what kind of a message would I bring tonight as we think about Jim Whitmire. And there's one characteristic about Jim Whitmire that is unique and remarkable, and that is that Jim is a developer of other people. If you don't believe that, come to one of these productions, and ask yourself, "Where do all these people come from? How do they know to do all that they do? How does he find the people that do makeup and set construction? How does he find the people that write the scripts and do the parts? Where does he get those camels? How does all of this happen?" I just stand in awe. I stay away from him. I just walk in and give the invitation. I walk in and I say, "How did this happen?" And I know that it takes many, many to make something like that happen. But I know that somebody has to be behind it all, and that person has to be creative, but they have to be a developer of people.

Now if you want to know whether or not you're a leader, just look behind, and see if anybody's following you. Now, yea, verily, *he who thinks he's a leader but has no one following him is just taking a walk*. And there are a lot of people who talk much about leadership, and even give lectures on leadership, who are not leaders. And, of course, Jim Whitmire is a leader. And the leader knows where he's going; he gets others to follow him; and he develops and equips those who follow him.

Now Moses was a leader. And I want you to look with me in Exodus chapter 31, the

first 11 verses, and I want us to see how Moses saw others. And Moses saw others, because God had spoken to Moses: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted have I put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee; the tabernacle of the congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, and the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, and the cloths of service, and all the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest’s office, and the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do”* (Exodus 31:1–11). “Now, Moses, I commanded you to do it, but you can’t do it without some helpers. So, Moses, I’m going to give you some helpers.”

Now the chief one on this list was a man named Bezaleel. And *Bezaleel* means, “in the shadow of God.” Here was a man whose life was overshadowed by Almighty God. I want to give you some factors about this man, because they apply to him, they apply to me, they apply to you, and all of us together, as we follow leadership in the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. God Knows You Personally

Number one: If you’re overshadowed by God—and you are—God knows you personally. Got it? Why don’t you just say to yourself, “God knows me personally”? Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri”* (Exodus 31:1–2). And then God just gives his pedigree—no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Here was a man in the shadow of God.

The little boy, who was quoting the model prayer, quoted it this way: “Our Father, which art in heaven; how does He know my name?”

He knows your name. He knows you personally. That’s the first thing I want you to learn.

II. God Calls You Specifically

Here’s the second thing: He calls you specifically. Look in verse 2: *“See, I have called by name Bezaleel”* (Exodus 31:2). God called him by name. God said, “Bezaleel, I have

a job specifically for you.”

Now, turn with me to the Book of Jeremiah, if you will, in Jeremiah chapter 1, and I want you to see how God works—not just in Bezaleel’s life, and not just in Jeremiah’s life, but, really, in every life—Jeremiah 1, verses 4 and 5: *“The word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations”* (Jeremiah 1:4–5). God said, “Before you were born, I had a plan for you.”

I believe that it was God’s plan that I be a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe it was God’s plan that Jim Whitmire be a minister of music. We ought to find and do the will of God. God knows us personally. God calls us specifically. If you want a good prayer to pray, pray the prayer that the Apostle Paul prayed before he was the Apostle Paul in order that he might have been the Apostle Paul. In Acts chapter 9, verse 6, he said, *“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”* (Acts 9:6). That’s a wonderful prayer: “Lord, what would you have me to do?” The Bible says that, *“We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10).

God has as many plans as there are people in this auditorium. He knows you personally. He calls you specifically. Don’t get the idea that just ministers are called, and missionaries are called, and musicians are called. Mechanics are called. Salesmen are called. Plumbers are called. Politicians are called—if they’re walking in the strength of the Spirit of God. We’re going to see this.

God called me. But when God called me to the ministry, I’ll tell you what I had to do. First of all, I reported for duty. My pastor told me what I’m telling you: that God has a plan for everyone’s life. And as a teenager I said, “God, I want to do your will. And, Lord, I am willing to do your will. Just show me, Lord. Teach me and lead me in the way that I ought to go.” I hear men talk about “surrendering to the ministry,” and “how I fought the call to preach.” I never fought the call to preach. I am infinitely, gloriously glad that God called me to preach. And not that there’s any chance of my being so, but I’d have to step down to be the President of the United States of America. I mean that from my heart of hearts. God knows you personally. God calls you specifically.

You say, “Well now, Pastor Rogers, that’s very interesting, because, when I was a teenager, I wasn’t listening to God. Had I been listening to God, I might be standing where you’re standing; or I might be pastoring a church; or I might be a missionary. But now I’m fifty, sixty, seventy. I missed the call of God upon my life. God can’t use me, because I missed His call.” That’s where you’re wrong. That’s where you’re wrong. His mercies are new every morning. God will restore the years the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25). And no matter where you are, and what your condition is, at this very moment, God has a plan for you.

Jim, we came up together in the ministry at Cape Kennedy. And at Cape Kennedy, those missiles would go up at Merritt Island, and we'd watch them—stand in the backyard and watch them go up. And I've seen some of them just explode in mid-air. But almost every missile that was programmed on the pad to go and do its job in space, every missile was pre-programmed and guided. There was a specific trajectory for that missile. But sometimes it would yaw or gimbal, get this way or that way. And there was a built-in gyro and a built-in computer that would begin to re-compute the thing, and say, "Now this is the course it should have been on; but now this is the course that it's on. What will we do with it now?" And all along the flight that thing is being re-programmed. Now, sometimes, one of those missiles would get very recalcitrant, turn around, and head back this way. Then there's a button they would push, and the whole thing would go up in flames.

Hey, folks, if you've gotten off course, God is well able to re-program you. Just don't turn around and head back the other way—okay?—so God has to push the destruct button. Just say, "Lord, here's where I am right now." God knows me personally. God calls me specifically.

III. God Equips You Uniquely

Here's the third thing I want you to know: that God equips you uniquely. Look, if you will now, in verses 3 through 5: "*And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in all knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship*" (Exodus 31:3–5). Now that's very interesting. God said, "I want Bezaleel. I've got to have somebody to build this tabernacle. So I'm going to take this man. I know him personally. I'm calling him specifically. I am equipping him uniquely. I am giving him the ability to carve gold. I am giving him the ability to carve wood. I am giving him the ability to chisel stone." That is a gift from God.

Again, who builds these sets? Who does all of this work? Do you think that a carpenter is less important to God than a preacher? Our Lord was a carpenter. Jesus was a carpenter. I mean, Bezaleel was a craftsman. He was a carpenter; he was a builder. He worked with his hands. That's what God called him to do, and that's what God equipped him to do. Now God called Moses to one kind of a ministry, and God called Bezaleel to another kind of a ministry. Moses was called to be a spiritual leader; Bezaleel was called to be a master worker. Both were called of God. And if God called you to be a plumber, you'd have to step down to be a preacher. Don't get the idea that there's a higher echelon of Christians who are *something* in "Christian work." Bezaleel was called of God specifically to work with his hands, and he was uniquely equipped of

God. Now you may not have the skill that other people have. That's not the important thing.

I read a story some time ago about a little boy who wanted to be in a school play—so badly, he wanted to be. And so he kept on telling his mama, “I’m going to try out for the school play. I’m going to try out for the school play. I want to be in the play.” She knew that the little fellow didn’t have the native equipment, and she was so afraid he was going to be hurt. When they came home, she was afraid to ask, but she asked him. She said, “Did you get a part in the play?” He said, “I did!” She said, “Well, what are you going to do?” “Oh,” he said, “I have been chosen to clap and cheer.” Isn’t that wonderful? Friend, if you can’t lead the choir, oh, you can sing when the congregation sings. And if you can’t preach, you can say *amen*. You have been chosen of God—whatever it is. God has called you specifically.

Now Moses was the spiritual leader; Bezaleel, the master craftsman. Remember this: Never divide life between the secular and the sacred after you get saved. When you’re saved, and you go to work, the Bible says you’re to work for your boss as you would work for the Lord Jesus Christ. And you are as important to God as those people who come down here to the church to work. God calls architects. God calls businessman. God calls mechanics. God calls farmers. And every *day is a* holy day; *every place is a* sacred *place; and we all work and serve in the* cathedral *of the* skies Isn’t that wonderful?

IV. God Empowers You Fully

Now, here’s the next thing I want you to notice: Not only does God call you specifically, and know you personally, and call you specifically, and equip you uniquely, but God empowers you fully. Look, if you will, in verse 3: “*And I have filled him with the spirit of God*” (Exodus 31:3). “Now I thought that God filled people with the Spirit of God when they sing solos? I thought God filled people with the Spirit of God when they preached sermons.” God said, “I’m filling you with the Spirit of God to cut stones. I’m filling you with the Spirit of God to saw timber. I am filling you with the Spirit of God to work with your hands” (Exodus 31:3–5).

Everybody ought to be filled with the Spirit of God to do what they do. You see, God empowers you fully. The Bible says clearly, in Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 18, “*Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit*” (Ephesians 5:18). That’s in the imperative mood. It’s not a request; it’s a command. If you’re not Spirit-filled, you’re living in disobedience. It’s plural in number: “*Be filled.*” It’s not just the preacher; the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call (Acts 2:39).

V. God Places You Strategically

Now, here's the fifth and final thing I want you to learn—and I'm saying this in the context of all of the things that we do here, and all of the leadership that Jim Whitmire and others help develop: the fifth thing is God places you strategically. Notice again, in this passage of Scripture, if you will, in verse 6, in Exodus chapter 31 and verse 6: *“And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee”* (Exodus 31:6). Now he says, “Look, this man is not a one-man show. I know him personally. I've called him specifically. I have equipped him uniquely. I have empowered him fully. And then I have placed him strategically. I have put him in a context with other workers.”

Now, let's go back again to the Passion Play, or the Singing Tree, or Celebrate America, or what we do here on Sunday. Nobody can do that by themselves. I can't do it by myself. I need you. You need me. God gave Jim Whitmire to this church; he is a gift of God. Read Ephesians 4. God gives the Church these kinds of people; and then God gave with him other people to get the job done (Ephesians 4:11). And God made us different that He might make us one. God gave me some gifts He didn't give you. God gave you some gifts He didn't give me. God gave Bobby Lewis all of them, and I hate him! Some people are just equipped more than other people, but God gave us to one another. And God made us different that He might make us one. Isn't this a wonderful story, how God just chose this man Bezaleel? And God said, “Now, look, you're not by yourself, son. I'm going to give you some fellow workers.”

And I'm so grateful for this church. I'm so grateful for the Spirit of God. Have you ever wondered how everything gets done around here? You just saunter in on Sunday, and you just think it just all happens? No! There is an incredible army of people who are doing this work together to get it done. And even when you're out yonder, wherever you are, in what the world calls your *secular* occupation, you're there because God has placed you there specifically and strategically.

Conclusion

And so that's the message I wanted us to have tonight. And you're going to have to be very proud of me, because I am quitting right now.

God Has a Purpose for Your Life

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 23, 2003

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 31:1–11

Outline

Introduction

- I. God Knows You Personally
- II. God Calls You Specifically
- III. God Equips You Uniquely
- IV. God Empowers You Fully
- V. God Places You Strategically

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Exodus chapter 31. Would you do that? Let me ask you a question. How many of you—now it's going to sound like a silly question, but it's really a sincere question—how many of you want God to use you? May I see your hand? That ought to be unanimous. We want God to use us. Many of us feel that God is not using us. God uses other people, but we feel like somehow we were passed by and that God doesn't use us. Maybe He doesn't want to use us, or maybe we're not usable.

Well, what I want to do tonight is encourage you and tell you that God wants to use you; God can use you; God will use you. You get yourself usable, He may just wear you out. And I'm going to talk to you about how God has a purpose for your life. And I want to chide you a little bit, almost scold you a little bit, if you're saying that God can't use you, because, really, that's not humility; you're insulting the Lord.

Now let me read to you a passage of Scripture from over here in the Book of Exodus about a man that God used: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah: and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship. And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee; the tabernacle of the*

congregation, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle, and the table and his furniture, and the pure candlestick with all his furniture, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all his furniture, and the laver and his foot, and the cloths of service, and the holy garments for Aaron the priest, and the garments of his sons, to minister in the priest's office, and the anointing oil, and sweet incense for the holy place: according to all that I have commanded thee shall they do" (Exodus 31:1–11).

Now, what does that have to do with you? An enormous amount, because we're going to look in here and find some spiritual truth for Adrian and for you. Let me give you some thoughts here that I pray God will write upon your heart.

I. God Knows You Personally

Number one: God knows you personally—God knows you personally. Now, look in verses 1 and 2: *"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah" (Exodus 31:1–2).*

Now God knew this man personally, and God knows you personally. When Jesus was down in Jericho, there was a little man named Zacchaeus up a tree. And Jesus said, "Zacchaeus, come down, for I must eat at your house and spend some time at your house" (Luke 19:5). Zacchaeus was just one of the crowd. He must have said, "He knows me. He wants me. He needs me." I can say exactly that same thing about you: "He knows you. He wants you. He needs you."

The very word *Bezaleel* means, "in the shadow of God." Here was a man who was overshadowed by the presence of God. Now I want to tell you that the very hairs of your head are numbered. God knows about you. God knows you by name. God knows what you're thinking this very moment. Does that bother you? He knows the very thought in your mind; there's not a thought in your mind but what God knows it altogether.

You know, we pray that prayer, "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name..." A little boy didn't listen well. And he tried to repeat it, and he said, "Our Father, which art in heaven, how does He know my name?"

But He does. He knows your name. And you are not an accident—not a mere incident. You are special to God. So put it down: God knows you personally!

II. God Calls You Specifically

Now, here's the second thing: God calls you specifically. Now, many times, we preachers stand up and talk about how God has called us to preach. God has called every mother's child in this building. Jesus said to His disciples, "You've not chosen me, but I've chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit" (John 15:16). Look, if you will, in verse 2 now. God says to Bezaleel, *"See, I have called by*

name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah” (Exodus 31:2).

Now God called him specifically. Let me give you some other verses where God calls people specifically. Jeremiah chapter 1, verses 4 through 5: *“Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jeremiah 1:4–5).* Before Jeremiah was born, God had a plan for his life. Before you were born, God had a plan for your life.

The Bible says that you were saved by grace. And that grace means that God has a plan for your life. Listen to Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus”—now, listen to this—“unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8–10).*

God has foreordained, planned, that you would do particular things. Acts chapter 13, verse 2, speaks of the early church praying, and it says, *“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabus and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2).* God calls missionaries. God calls prophets. God calls apostles. Listen to this—Acts 9, verse 6. Paul, who saw the Lord on the road to Damascus, began to ask this question: *“And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6).* He didn’t say, “Lord, what would you have others to do?” “Lord,” not, “what would others have me to do,” but, “Lord, what would you have me to do?”

The point of all of this is that God knows you personally; God calls you specifically. “Well,” you say, “Adrian, you were called to preach when you were in high school. I’m already an old man and an old woman. It’s too late for me.” It’s never too late for you! You take the rest of your years. That’s all the more reason that you ought to give them to God. If you’re eighty, ninety, years of age, I’m telling you, God has a wonderful plan for the rest of your life.

III. God Equips You Uniquely

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see. Not only does God know you personally; not only does God call you specifically; but now here’s the key: God equips you uniquely. Now, look, if you would, in verses 3 through 5—God says of this man Bezaleel, *“And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship” (Exodus 31:3–5).*

Now He says, “We need to build a tabernacle. So here is a man that I have gifted to work in gemology. Here is a man who will have lapidary skills: working in stones. Here’s a man who will know metallurgy: working with metals. Here is a man who will have the work of a craftsman working with wood: carving and doing all of these things.” And God says, “Look. I gave him that ability.”

There are people out here in this congregation who have ability that I could not even begin to imagine to have. I’m a preacher of the gospel. And God has called me, and God has equipped me to preach. God has given me a preacher’s mind. God has given me a voice. God has given me insight and understanding in the Word of God. That is a gift from God. I’m grateful for it. I do not take credit for it. I do not deny that God has gifted me that way; but, correspondingly, there are ways that God has not gifted me.

Now if it were up to me to take the finances of this church and handle them, folks, our church would be upside down and bankrupt in a short time. I’m serious. If it weren’t for Joyce, our finances would be in a mess. Now you can laugh at me if you want, but maybe you can’t preach. There are others who can sing. Brother Ken here plays the trombone and does all of that. I looked at him, and I thought, when I saw him, and Paul, and Bryson, and myself, “How nice it is to have all of these young men on the stage!” Isn’t he handsome, good-looking? And he’s talented. He just oozes with talent. I can’t play a trombone.

Now you say, “Well, is that a spiritual gift?” Let me tell you something. Talents are from God, just like spiritual gifts are from God. The ability to carve wood is a gift of God. The ability to work as an electrician is a gift of God. The ability to work on automobiles, like this dear brother right down here—to fix things—that’s a gift of God. Don’t separate gifts, like some are spiritual and some are secular.

The Bible makes no division between the spiritual and the secular. Everything is of God, if it is honorable. If you have a talent to sing, or talent to build, or talent to wire a house... Have you ever thought about the stage that was set up here for the Passion Play? Did you know that came out of the hearts and the minds of Bellevue people, and craftsmen here put all of that together? Have you ever thought about how all that happened; and how the veil of the temple splits in this something; and they do earthquakes, and they do all of this lightning and thunder? How does that happen? I’m telling you, some of the most gifted people on earth, that are right here in our congregation, do that. Where did they get that gift? They got it from God.

Now Moses, who wrote this scripture, God called Moses to be a spiritual leader. God called Bezaleel to be a master workman. Both were vital and important. Those people who are working behind the scenes in the Passion Play are equally important with the pastor up here giving the invitation. We’re all part of a seamless garment. God has something for everybody to do. Now some of it may seem more spiritual than the other,

but it is not. The Bible says this man, this wood-worker, was anointed with the Holy Spirit of God to carve wood, and put things together, and make things work. God gives ability to businessmen, and mechanics, and farmers, and architects. Bezaleel needed Moses, but Moses needed Bezaleel.

I stand in awe of what the people of this church do: the ushers, the nursery workers, the grounds. Do you ever just drive up here and look at our beautiful grounds, and thank God that somebody does all of that? Have you ever wondered who makes everything work around here? Well, friend, these people do that with the power and the anointing and the gifting of God. And the Bezaleels are needed just as much as the Moses people are needed.

And when you go to work tomorrow morning, you ought to work in the power of the Holy Ghost. Let me give you a scripture that points that out—Colossians 3, verses 22 through 24: *“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh;”*—now, in plain English, “your boss”—*“not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God; and whatsoever ye do,”*—that’s a big statement—*“whatsoever ye do.”* That means, “the whole enchilada”—*“do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ”* (Colossians 3:22–24).

Tomorrow, in the office, you’re serving Jesus—you’re serving Jesus. Tomorrow, in the mill, you’re serving Jesus. That’s what he says. Your secular boss, when you serve him, you’re serving the Lord Jesus. And there is a hidden paycheck from the Lord; you will receive the reward.

You see, God gives different people different gifts, different talents, different abilities. Notice what he said about Bezaleel here. Look, if you will, in chapter 31, verses 3 through 5: *“I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge...”*—you’d think he was saying, “I’m going to call him to preach,” wouldn’t you? Isn’t what he says—*“I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship”* (Exodus 31:3–5). God said, “I have filled him with the Holy Spirit to be a carpenter.” All of us have both talents and spiritual gifts. And both talents and spiritual gifts are from God. It is our joy, our privilege, to discover, to develop, and put those things to work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Now we all have different gifts, but they are all from God.

Now what I’ve said is that God knows you personally. He calls you by name. God has called you specifically. God has a plan for your life. Don’t you deny it: you are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good work. I don’t care how old you are, how young you are, how rich you are, how poor you are, how educated you are: God has a

job for you to do. Now, number three—listen, friend—this God knows you, and this God who has called you is the God who has equipped you. I don't know what God wants you to do, but you're going to find out that, if God has something for you to do—and He does—God has given you the equipment to do it. And don't you insult God by saying you can't do it.

IV. God Empowers You Fully

Number four: God empowers you fully. It's not just enough to be equipped; you need to be empowered. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *"I have filled him with the spirit of God"* (Exodus 31:3).

Have you ever thought about a carpenter being filled with the Spirit of God to be a carpenter? A stonecutter being filled with the Spirit of God to be a stonecutter? Ever thought about a butcher being filled with the Spirit of God to be a butcher? Ever thought about an accountant being filled with the Spirit of God to be an accountant, a homebuilder to be filled with the Spirit of God to be a homebuilder, a physician to be filled with the Spirit of God to be a physician, a lawyer to be filled with the Spirit of God to be a lawyer, a salesman to be filled with the Spirit of God to be a salesman? You ought to—you ought to.

Listen. That's, again, what he says over there in Colossians: "You serve the Lord Christ" (Colossians 3:24). Don't get the idea that you serve God part-time—that, when you come to church, you get off work, and come to church, and serve the Lord. Tomorrow morning, when you get up and brush your teeth, drink your coffee, and walk out of that house, you're walking into the mission field; and you're going out to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. And you're to do your job as unto the Lord with the power that He gives. And, whatever God tells you to do, God's commandments are His enablings. Behind every command of God is the omnipotent power of God to carry out that command. Now God says, "I have filled Bezaleel with the Spirit." God wants to fill you with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 says, *"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."* You say, "Well, that's for preachers and song leaders." No, that's for you and for me. The promise is unto you and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. That's what the Bible says: *"Be filled with the Spirit."*

Let me give you a little Greek lesson here. Want to learn some Greek? "Be filled" is a command. It is in the imperative mood. Now, what does that mean? You've forgotten what that means: the imperative mood. It means, "Just do it." It's because it's imperative. If I were to say to you, "Leave this building," and you say, "Why?" and I say, "It is imperative that you leave this building," that means, "It is necessary." When God says, *"Be filled with the Spirit,"* then it's not a suggestion; it's a command (Ephesians

5:18).

And listen. It is plural in number. It literally said, “Be ye filled with the Spirit.” That means, “all of you; no one is excepted.” If you’re not filled with the Spirit of God tonight—listen, listen, listen—you’re living in disobedience. “Be ye filled”—“It is imperative that you be filled with the Holy Spirit.” It is plural in number.

It is present in tense. It didn’t say, “Get filled with the Spirit.” “Be filled.” Right now, tonight, you ought to be consciously filled with the Spirit of God. That doesn’t mean emotional feeling; but it does mean that you know that God is alive, and active, and working in your heart. It is present tense.

And, friend, it is passive in voice. Now, what does that mean? It means, not that there’s something you obtain; it is something where God Himself acts upon you. It is God working in you when you surrender to Him. You see, you don’t have to persuade God to fill you with the Spirit. Just allow Him to do so. It’s passive in voice. You yield yourself up to the Lord.

V. God Places You Strategically

Now God knows you personally. God calls you personally. God equips you uniquely. God empowers you fully. Now, here’s the next thing. God places you strategically. You say, “Well, pastor, you have a sense that you’re here by God’s calling at Bellevue Baptist Church. I’m at the place where I’m at because I just needed a job. That was the only place I could find work. And so I can’t say that I’m called to where I am. I’m just stuck here. I wish I were somewhere else.”

Now, listen. Exodus 31, verse 6: *“And I, behold, I have given with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan: and in the hearts of all that are wise hearted I have put wisdom, that they may make all that I have commanded thee”* (Exodus 31:6). God says, “I put you in the midst of the people, where I want you to be. I’ve got a job for you to do. I’ve put you there.” Now you’ll find out that God arranges your circumstances even when you’re not aware that He’s arranging them. Even when you think that, perhaps, you’re out of the will of God, because circumstances have forced you to be where you are. No, friend. God is moving in the circumstances of your life.

You study the Book of Daniel: Daniel found himself, as a young captive, taken from Israel to Babylon—Iraq, if you will. That’s where he was—taken from Israel there. And he was a captive. And the Bible tells how Daniel served the Lord God there in Babylon. He didn’t choose to go there. But he was right in the center of the will of God. That’s where he found himself, and that’s where he was serving God. And God said to those people, “When you’re taken captive, you seek the good of that city where you find yourself” (Jeremiah 29:7). Now God puts you in a particular place. Maybe you didn’t choose it, but you are there for that particular reason. And God’s going to surround you

with the people that He wants you to minister with or minister to.

Philippians 4, verse 3: *“And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life”* (Philippians 4:3). Now here’s Paul. Paul is saying, “Look. Help these women who labored with me in the gospel. I don’t know what I would do without those people who have surrounded me to help me in this ministry.” I don’t know what this church would do without the women in this church. Now Bellevue is a male-led church: that’s biblical. Some people think we’re chauvinist; they think we’re haughty, or they think we’re tyrants. Bellevue is a male-led church. Have you noticed that? It is. I hope you don’t resent it. But Bellevue is not a church that cannot recognize the incredible giftedness of our women. This church could not exist without the ministry of women: loving, faithful, gifted, wise, earnest, sacrificial women who do so much. And God just puts us all together. God knows us personally. God gifts us uniquely. God calls us specifically. God empowers us totally. And God puts us together to make this wonderful church called Bellevue.

I picked this up: “The carpenter’s tools were holding a conference. Brother Hammer presided. Someone suggested that he leave, because he was too noisy. He said, ‘Well, if I go, Brother Screw must go also. You have to turn him around and around to get him to do anything.’ Brother Screw said, ‘Okay, but Brother Plane must leave. All his work is on the surface. He has no depth.’ Brother Plane: ‘Okay, if I go, Brother Yardstick’s got to go also. He’s always measuring folks, as if he were the only one who’s right.’ Brother Yardstick complained against Brother Sandpaper: ‘Well, he ought to leave too, because he’s always so rough; he rubs people the wrong way.’ And, of course, the Saw was making cutting remarks, and the drill was kind of boring. And so all of these carpenter tools are kind of in an argument with one another. And then in walks the Carpenter of Nazareth. He starts His day’s work. He puts on His apron, and He goes to the bench to make a pulpit from which to proclaim the gospel. He uses the hammer, the screw, the plane, the yardstick, the sandpaper, the saw, the drill. And when He’s finished, Brother Saw stands up and says, ‘Brethren, I have observed that all of us are workers together with the Lord.’”

God made us different that He might make us one. I need you. You need me. God has given you gifts He hasn’t given me. God has given me gifts that He hasn’t given to you. And God made us different to make us dependent upon one another.

Conclusion

What was the result of Exodus chapter 31? A beautiful tabernacle. Now Bezaleel may not have seen and may not even have known how important his work was in the total plan. Bellevue is a hundred years old. What we see is a mosaic of many, many people

who are used of the Lord. You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, I don’t have big talent. I’ve got some talent. I don’t know how God can use me.”

A little boy went to school, and he was telling his mother, and he said, “Mother, they’re having a school play, and I sure hope I get a part in the school play. It’s very, very important to me that I have a part in the school play.” She knew his gifts. She knew he was not cut out to be in the school play. But she loved him, and he so wanted to be in the school play; she hoped he would not be too disappointed. When he came home, he almost had to move his ears back his smile was so big. And she said, “Did you get a part?” He said, “Oh, yes—yes!” “What is it?” He said, “I have been chosen to clap and cheer.”

You know, that may be your part here at Bellevue. If the preacher—every now and then, you might just say *amen*, just to be happy in the Lord, just to support. But I am telling you that you will insult God if you say God can’t use you. God knows you personally. God has chosen you specifically. God has equipped you uniquely. God has empowered you fully. And God has placed you strategically. God put you in this church for a particular purpose. And if you miss it, the church will suffer. And what a blessing you will miss! Why don’t you do what the Apostle Paul did and say, “Lord, what would you have me to do?”

The Strange Case of the Golden Calf

By Adrian Rogers

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 32:1–6

Outline

Introduction

- I. A Sinful People
- II. A Sissy Preacher
- III. A Severe God
 - A. God Hates Sin
 - B. God Answers Prayer
 - C. God Accepts Genuine Repentance

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you open the Word tonight please to Exodus 32. I want us to think on this subject, “The strange case of the golden calf.” We’ll read together the first six verses and then later on we’ll read some other verses. Exodus 32, verse 1: “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, ‘Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.’ And Aaron said unto them, ‘Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.’ And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, ‘These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, ‘To morrow is a feast to the Lord.’ And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.’ And if you’ll notice what that play was like if you’ll turn over to verse 25: “And when Moses saw that the people were naked; for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies.” The strange case of the golden calf.

Now, you know, sometimes when I preach some people are afraid that I might hurt somebody’s feelings. The thing that bothers me is that sometimes I preach and don’t

hurt anybody's feelings. I think there's something wrong with the preaching that does not hurt people's feelings every now and then.

I'm kinda like the old Quaker. Woke up in the middle of the night. You know, Quakers are supposed to be peace-loving folks they're not supposed to hurt anybody. He heard somebody rumbling around in his house and the Quaker got his shotgun, course, I suppose they can use a little self-defense, and got his shotgun and saw this burglar in his house and he said to him, "Friend, I would not harm thee. I would not harm a hair on thy head. But thou standeth where I'm about to shoot."

Now, I'm not mad at anybody, but I think that many times we preachers have failed to shoot as we ought to shoot. And this is the story of a sinful people, a sissy preacher, and a very severe God.

I. A Sinful People

These Jews, when this particular incident happened, were on their way to the Promised Land and Moses had gone up on Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, graven on tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. Moses had gone up amid the lightnings and the thunderings of Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments and while he was up there, in rebellion against him and rebellion against God, the people have made for themselves a golden calf.

Now in Egypt, the calf was worshipped. These people have come out of Egypt. All of the Egyptians seem to have some god, some idol, something that they could bow down before but these people God was asking them to walk by faith and not by sight. And they wanted some sort of a god that they could see, some sort of a god that they could touch, some sort of an idol that they could get down in front of and pray, and so they asked Aaron if he would do this thing for them and he did this. But the amazing thing is that it had not been but six weeks prior to this time that these same people had said, "All that the Lord our God has said we will do." They had seen God work miraculously. God had brought these people out of Egypt across the Red Sea on dry ground. God had performed miracle after miracle after miracle and now here they are dancing naked around the golden calf and committing immorality.

How could such a thing happen? You say, "How could these people so quickly, so easily forget the vows that they've made to Almighty God?" Well before we cast too many stones at these Israelites, let me ask you, "How is it that so many of you have so quickly and so easily forgotten solemn and holy vows that you have made to Almighty God?" We've seen God work miracles. The greatest miracle that God has worked is not the Red Sea drying up. The greatest miracle that God has worked is not the changing of water into wine. The greatest miracle that God has ever worked is the saving of the human soul; this above all other miracles. We've seen God work. We've had the

testimony of all of the miracles that are in God's Word and we have even more than these people had. We have history behind us and we have the Holy Spirit in our heart but don't you remember when you were sick and you prayed to God and you said to God, "Oh God, if you'll just raise me up from this bed of sickness, God if you will just restore health to me, Lord I will do this, and I will do this, and I will do this, and I will do this."

Now, what happened to those vows that you made? I have preached my heart out on soul win and I have urged you people and I've said, "How many of you will promise God being my helper that daily I will witness for my Lord." And many of you said, "I will give myself. I will yield myself. I surrender myself to be a soul winner, a winner of souls." Are you still doing it? Don't you throw any stones at these Israelites for forgetting their vows when you forgotten yours. Some of you have promised God that you would tithe, you're no longer tithing. You placed something on the altar and now you've taken it back. Oh these were sinful people, these were people who were an idolatrous, a lustful, and an impatient people, they could not wait on Almighty God.

II. A Sissy Preacher

But now notice the sissy preacher in Exodus 32, verse 21. Moses comes back down from the mountain and he asked Aaron what's going on, "And Moses said unto Aaron, 'What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?' And Aaron said"—now hold on Moses—"Let not the anger of my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief."

Now notice Aaron, Aaron was the pastor now, he was left in charge. When I go away is just like Brother Clayton pulling a trick like this. "And Aaron said, 'Let not the anger my lord wax hot: thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.' For they said unto me, 'Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.' And I said unto them, 'Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off.' So they gave it me"—now listen to this next statement—"then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf." Oh, he says, don't get mad at me. All I did is say folks bring your earrings and I just threw them in the fire and guess what, out came a golden calf.

Now that isn't exactly the way it happened. If you'll go back and read this story you'll find out that Aaron made this. It was a graven image that he made with his own hands and it was a part of his scheming and it was a part of his conniving. But he says now, it wasn't me. He said you know these people they're just set on mischief and he said I couldn't help it. I just threw the earrings in the fire and out came the calf. "And when Moses saw that the people were naked; for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies." Notice that Aaron was to blame but here this man was

afraid to stand up against the crowd. So far as I'm concerned when a preacher ceases to be God's man he ought to just close the Book and get out of the pulpit. When he's afraid of the faces of the people. This is what was wrong with Aaron. Aaron knew better but the people clambered after him and the people led him rather than him leading the people.

Ol' Ken is talking about Fellsmere. I remember Fellsmere very well because this was the first church that I had pastored. I was nineteen years old when I started pastoring that church Brother Ken, they called me when I was nineteen. They didn't know any better and neither did I so they called me and I accepted. And I remember I'd not been there in town very long until Halloween came up and they had a school carnival on Saturday night and some of the leading people in that church and some of the leading people in that community, and there weren't very many people in the community, you know Fellsmere's kinda out of the woods, they don't even get the Grand Ole Opry until Monday night. It's a small town. On one side the sign says, "Welcome," and on the other side the same sign says, "Good-bye." That's the size of the town. But there were a few people out there and we had some schoolteachers and things and a little high school out there but they had a school carnival.

You know we've been standing hot and hard against gambling here but they had some of the teachers, and some of the PTA, and some of our members had little booths out there where the people could gamble, where the little children come along, you know, and pitch the pennies and everything. Of course, I don't guess they'd thought through the thing. They didn't see any real harm in the thing but I was kind of brash then so I preached on Sunday morning who were the real goblins last night. I'll tell you we near about had civil war in that town and I almost got carried out of town on a rail. But I found this much to be true, that God will bless the church and God will bless a preacher and God will bless a people if they'll take a stand. Right after that we had a revival where we had fifty-one people saved and led that entire Association—that association didn't even know there was a church out there—and led that association that year in baptisms. But God blesses and God will bless this church.

There are a lot of people who tried to scare us and tell us we ought not to take a stand on any issue, that whatever the people want to do, just go ahead and let the people do it. And there are some preachers in this jai alai issue that let the people dictate to them and let the people shut their mouths rather than standing up and preaching as God Almighty would have them preach. And God deliver us from sissy preachers and sissy Sunday school teachers and sissy Christians who will not take a stand. I heard of a preacher one time that was so much of a sissy that people asked him what his maiden name was.

I think that poor ol' Aaron was like so many people and they say well I just can't help

it the people's hearts are set on mischief. And he tried an alibi; he tried to blame everybody. He tried to blame the people, he tried to blame the fire, he was like Adam and Eve. Adam sinned and so when God said to Adam, "Adam where art thou?" and God confronted Adam with his sin Adam said, "Well," he said, "The woman you gave me"—now notice this—"the woman you gave me." Adam didn't say I've sinned but it's the woman you gave me. Either it was the woman's fault or it was God's fault, it certainly wasn't Adam's fault to hear Adam talk. And so when God spoke to Eve, "Eve is this true?" She said, "The serpent beguiled me." Wasn't my fault, it's the serpent's fault.

Oh listen, the Bible says, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." Let me tell you something friend, there are not enough devils in hell or out of hell to make you sin if you don't want to and if you'll trust the Lord for victory. Oh this thing of passing the buck. Oh I didn't want to gamble but everybody else was gambling, I didn't want to drink but we were just at a party and you had to drink, or you can't be a Christian out there where I work there are too many ungodly people out there, oh I would be a Christian but I know some people who claim to be Christians who don't live like Christians, and on and on and on these alibis go.

I'll tell you what's wrong with alibiing, it's lying. Friend let me tell you something concerning sin, God will accept repentance, God will accept confession, but God will never accept an alibi for sin. If you've got a vicious temper and you go talking about how temper runs in your family and you can't help it you just inherited it, you'll never get rid of your temper. You want to get rid of your temper, confess your temper to God as a vile sin, don't alibi for it. Don't go talking about how the kids made you lose your temper, about how your boss is so terrible that nobody can work under those conditions and so forth. Just say, "Oh God I'm a sinner. God have mercy on me and God forgive me."

Aaron could have been forgiven if Aaron had been willing to confess his sin. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13: "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." Friend, there is no temptation, no temptation, that you cannot overcome in God's power. And if there is any temptation that has come to you that's special that nobody else has, and if there is any temptation that comes to you that you cannot overcome with the help of Almighty God, if that were true, I would close my Bible and never preach again because it's a lie. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer a Christian to be tempted above that he is able.

Don't alibi for your sin. Don't be like this sissy preacher. James 1:13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God,"—well God made me this way I can't help it—"For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." You see, what's wrong with making an alibi? Number one, it's lying. Number two, it closes the door for improvement and forgiveness. As long as you alibi for your sin, as long as you try to excuse your sin, you'll never get any improvement and you'll never get any forgiveness.

When I was quite a young fella I read a story I've never been able to forget. In the olden days they used to put prisoners of state in slave ships down beneath the deck, down where the bilge water is, down in the hold of the ship and they would chain these prisoners there and strap them to the oars. They had no engines and this was the motor and the prisoners would pull on the oars. There would be a man up at the front with a whip who would lash these men on the back and make them row in unison.

And one day, according to this story I read, the King came and looked at some of these prisoners and walked through this slave ship and he struck up a conversation with some of them. And he asked one man he said, "Why are you in here?" And he said, "Well sire, because I was standing in a group of men when a crime was committed." And he said, "I was arrested with the group but I was absolutely innocent." Then he said, "Oh that's too bad." And he asked another man and he said, "And why are you in here?" And he said, "Well sir, I was framed." He said, "My neighbor wrote up a false charge against me and delivered it to the Sheriff and the Sheriff arrested me." And he said, "I am completely innocent." And on, and on, and on every man had an alibi just like ol' Aaron.

Every man had an alibi until finally he met one man there pulling on the oars and he said, "And you, why are you here?" "Oh," he said, "Sire because I'm a criminal." He said, "I have committed crimes against my family, against my nation, and against my King. I'm a terrible wicked criminal that's why I'm here." And when the king heard that, he said, "You scoundrel. You wastrel. You thief. You horrible vile person. What are you doing in here among so many good people? Get him out!" And so they took him out and set them free.

Oh it is the man who will confess his sin who will have forgiveness. Aaron alibied for his sin. Mark it down, there is one thing that God will not accept so far as sin is concerned and this is an alibi.

III. A Severe God

A sinful people, a sissy preacher, and a very severe God. Notice Exodus 32, verses 9 and 14: "And the Lord said unto Moses, 'I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against

them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.’ And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, ‘Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever.’ And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people.”

A. God Hates Sin

God was angry with these people. God hates sin. God’s main characteristic is not love, it’s holiness. God is a God of love but if I had to choose any one characteristic, and you cannot choose one apart from the other, but the main attribute of Almighty God is holiness. God is holy. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts. He’s the thrice-holy God of Israel. This means that God is the complete antithesis of sin. God is completely opposite of sin. God is against sin as light is against darkness, as heat is against cold, and God’s supreme example of dislike against sin is the crucifixion of the Son of God. If you want to see how God feels about sin go to Calvary and notice there the crucifixion of the Son of God. God allowed the sin of the world to come upon His sinless Son the Lord Jesus Christ and then He allowed His Son to suffer as never a person has ever suffered before.

You may alibi about your sin, you may call it error, you may call it mistake in judgment, but God calls it sin and God hates it. And the Bible says concerning God’s wrath in verse 10: “Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them.” God is a consuming fire. Don’t you play with sin. It would be better for you to put your head in the mouth of a ravenous lion or to tell Cassius Clay that he’s ugly. Don’t play with sin. Teenager, don’t play with sin. God hates sin. Sin murdered Jesus. God will punish sin. The Bible says be sure your sin will find you out. Somehow we’ve gotten the idea that God today is sort of a sentimental old granddaddy with a long white beard sitting up there on a throne and if we do something wrong that the most He’ll do is simply slap us upon the wrist.

B. God Answers Prayer

But the second thing that I want you to notice about this severe God, not only does He hates sin, but He does answer prayer. He does answer prayer. Notice verses 30-35: “And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, ‘Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement

for your sin.’ And Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, ‘Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written. ‘And the Lord said unto Moses, ‘Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.’ And the Lord plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.”

Now here’s the point, God said I’m going to destroy the entire nation but Moses stood in the gap and Moses prayed the prayer of intercession. It is true that many of the people were punished and punished severely but the rest were delivered because one man stood in the gap and prayed the prayer of intercession. God does hear prayer. Even though He’s a severe God verse 11 says, “And Moses besought the Lord his God.” We must learn the secret of intercessory prayer. Some mothers in this building tonight have some wayward sons. All of us have neighbors that are lost. You may be the only one dear mother, you may be the only one dear sir, you may be the only one teenager, standing in the gap between that person and a Christ-less hell.

Don’t you let some modernist tell you that God does not answer prayer. Some people have this idea that prayer doesn’t change God that prayer just changes us. Now prayer does change us but prayer changes God. God does things because we pray that He would not ordinarily do. Mark that down. God does things because we pray that He would not do if we did not pray. We have not because we ask not. King Hezekiah was going to die and God said, “Thou shalt die and not live.” And he turned his face to the wall and prayed and God said, “I have heard your prayer and I have extended your life,” and yet God had already told him that his days were numbered. Prayer can change the mind of God. Prayer can move the hand of God. Prayer is the mightiest force in the world because prayer moves the hand of God and God’s hand is omnipotent.

Moses went to God in prayer and if Moses had not prayed God would have destroyed the Jewish nation except for the prayer of Moses. Who knows but what God’s hand has been stayed so far as this nation is concerned and the city is concerned because of the intercessory prayer of His people. Let’s pray. Let’s pray for Merritt Island. Let’s pray the prayer of intercession. I’ve seen it work. I was preaching a revival up in Mims. We were having a mighty revival. It’s one of those revivals where the Spirit was moving. People were emboldened to pray.

One dear lady up there in that First Baptist Church of Mims got so concerned for her husband. Her husband who had been a moonshiner for years and then had become a respectable citizen and had many wealthy sons and kind of an old patriarch up there. He’d come to church but he never was saved. Thought he never really needed the Lord.

This dear woman got so concerned for her husband in that revival meeting, she told the dear Lord that she was going to get on her knees and pray until he was saved.

Now that just seemed to me like that's almost pushing the Lord because you know you have to eat, have to sleep. She didn't tell him this. She didn't tell anybody this but she went into her bedroom and got down on her knees and started praying. She prayed for fifteen minutes. She prayed for thirty minutes. She prayed for forty-five minutes. She prayed for an hour. She prayed for two hours. She prayed for three hours. She continued praying through the night. He was already in bed not knowing what had happened until in the middle of the night he woke up out of his sleep, went into the room there where she was and said, "Woman, woman, I woke up I just can't sleep. Woman I need to be saved could you help me to be saved?" and Mrs. Chess Sharp led ol' Chess Sharp, he's in glory now, led him to know the Lord.

I gave the invitation that night, that man came down the aisle and Joe Boatwright was down there in the front and ol' Chess Sharp took Brother Boatwright by the hand and with tears streaming down his cheek he said, "Pastor, I want you to stand up there no he said you go tell that preacher who's preaching to tell those folks I've been saved." So I was thrilled. I said, "Everybody listen, Mr. Sharp once all his boys and everybody to know he's been saved." He said, "Yeah and tell 'em I've been born again too." But he lived it and brother from then on you couldn't have a church service without him there. Why? Because Mrs. Sharp got on her knees and she prayed and she said God I won't stop praying until you save him. I don't know whether I'd have that much faith or not to get on my knees and say I just won't get up until you save my love one.

I know this my dear friend that may not be God's will for all of us in praying. Maybe the Lord laid that on her heart but I'm telling you this that God does here prayer and we can get on our faces and stand in the gap and keep this nation and this community and our neighbors out of hell by praying the prayer of intercession. God hates sin but God hears prayer. Let me say it again. God hates sin but God hears prayer. God said to Moses, Moses stand back and I'll consume 'em but verse 11 says, "And Moses besought the Lord his God."

C. God Accepts Genuine Repentance

The last thing I want to say is God accepts real, genuine repentance. Notice verse 26: "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, 'Who is on the Lord's side? Let him come unto me.'" Who's on the Lord's side? Moses took all these sinful people and then Moses gave an invitation and he said, "All of those of you who are truly sorry for your sin, all of those of you who will make a clear-cut decision, I want you to declare yourselves. I want you to step across this line. All of you. All right come, right now."

Some people don't believe in giving public invitations. Here was one and brother it

was a severe one. Everybody who showed that he was on God's side, that he truly repented, stepped across and then the rest were put to death. Death was ordered for all of the rest of them. This was a personal matter with each individual. Christ died for the entire world but everyone must personally make the decision for himself. A sinful people, a sissy preacher, and a very severe God.

Conclusion

We're living in the days, and we've seen it in this election, where there are not too many people who will stand as they ought to stand. Thank God for some who did. But I would to God that we had a generation of Christians in all about churches in America who would stand for that which is right and stand against that which is wrong perhaps God would heal our land and send us real revival. Let us pray together.

Practicing His Presence

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 9, 2000

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 32:30–33:3

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Promise of His Presence
 - A. His Personal Presence
 - B. His Intimate Presence
 - C. His Radiant Presence
 - D. His Approving Presence
- II. What God's Presence Will Do in Your Life
- III. Practical Ways You Can Have the Presence of God

Conclusion

Introduction

Open your Bibles to Exodus chapter 33. We want to talk to you tonight about something very, very important—and that is how to enjoy the presence of God. And you enjoy the presence of God by practicing His presence. And at the close of the message tonight, I want to give you some very practical ways to make God a bright, living reality—not somebody that you pray at, but somebody that you talk with when you pray. We live by promises, not by explanations. Warren Wiersbe has told us that. And one of the greatest promises in the Bible is a promise that God gave to Moses, but I truly believe every child of God who meets the conditions can enjoy that promise. It is in Exodus chapter 32 and verse 14: “And he said,”—now it's God who's speaking to Moses—“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”—“My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Now this promise is a glorious promise, and, in my estimation, perhaps not a sweeter promise than all of the Bible than the promise of the abiding presence of the Lord.

I. The Promise of His Presence

Now we all have problems. And it's the problems that underscore our need for the conscious presence of God with His people. Now let me tell you what had happened in the background for this passage of Scripture. God had miraculously brought the children of Israel, the Jewish nation, out of the land of Egypt, and they're going through the wilderness on their way to Canaan, the land that flows with milk and honey. And God had been working miracle after miracle. God had given them preservation. God had

given them protection. And God had given them provision. And God had met their every need. But, in spite of all of that, the children of Israel turned aside to idolatry and they made for themselves a golden calf. Moses was up on Mount Sinai getting the Ten Commandments. And when he came down, they were dancing in idolatry around a golden calf, an idol that they had made. Moses is so distraught that he has the Ten Commandments engraved on stone, and he drops those commandments. They're broken. He takes that golden calf and he grinds it into powder, and mixes that powder with water, and makes these people drink of this water and gold that is mixed together. And the great delight that these people had dancing around this golden calf has turned now to pain and shame and judgment. And Moses' heart is broken. But he's filled with indignation, and he goes to God to pray to God.

Now, notice. Go back, if you will, in chapter 32 and begin reading in verse 30: "And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." Moses goes to stand in the gap for these people who've sinned. "And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, "Oh, this people hath sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin..." It's really an unfinished sentence. He's so broken he cannot continue. And then he says, "...and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written." He's saying, "O God, forgive them." And he so identifies himself with them in intercession. He's saying, "God, if you don't forgive them, just blot me out." And the Lord spoke to Moses, and I want you to listen to what He said. "And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book. Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee..." Now, underscore that. It's very important. "I'm going to send an angel escort to take care of you." "Mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made."

And then God gives an answer, but it's almost no answer at all. Go over to chapter 33 and look in verses 1 through 3: "And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt,"—that is, "I won't destroy them." Okay, go on—"you and the people, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it. And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: unto a land flowing with milk and honey:"—now notice this very carefully now in chapter 33 and verse 3—"for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way."

Now God says, "Now, Moses, you don't want me to destroy the people. You want

them to go on into Canaan? Then, all right, I'll let them go. I'll even send a mighty angel to guide them and to guard them. But, Moses, I am not going to go with you." It's almost as if God says, "It would be dangerous for me to be in their midst—not dangerous for me, but dangerous for them for me to be in their midst."

Now many people would have said, "Well, Lord, that's mighty nice of you. Thank you, Lord, that you're going to let us go and that you're going to send us an angel escort," but it did not satisfy Moses. There was something wrong with it. Moses did not want an angel. He wanted the conscious presence of God. To have this sort of a situation was sort of a hollow answer. It would be like a marriage with separate bedrooms. He would have provision. He would have protection. But he would not have the presence of God.

Now right here we need to learn something, folks. Did you know that you can be successful in life, seemingly, without the presence of God? You can have a seeming success. You can have eternal security. You can be a member of a Bible-believing church. You can know theology. You can go on mission trips. And God protects and God provides, but you don't have what you really, really need, which is the presence of God. In other words, you can have all of these things and miss the thing that you need the very most. Don't ever mistake God's provision for God's presence, because God is blessing you. Maybe you live in a nice home. Maybe you're surrounded with loved ones. Maybe you have plenty to eat. Maybe you have a good job. And you say, "Well, I've got what I want." God has led you with an angel escort into a land flowing with milk and honey. That didn't satisfy Moses. And it ought not to satisfy you, because God makes it to rain upon the just and the unjust. You can have the blessings without the Blessor—and that ought not to satisfy us. As a matter of fact, we can be so occupied with getting the provision and the protection that we forgive the presence. Moses wanted the presence of God.

Go back—go look again, if you will, in chapter 33, and begin in verse 12: "And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said,"—and I love this—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." That is, "God, if you don't go, count me out. If your presence doesn't go, don't take us forward." And then, notice the reason. Notice how Moses knew how to intercede. "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the

earth.”

Now, what was the sign that God’s presence was with them? Well, there was a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day. We call that pillar of cloud and that pillar of fire and that holy cloud the Shekinah glory of God. It was the Old Testament counterpart to the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And it was that Shekinah glory that set them apart. Moses is asking, in verse 16, “How can people know? How will they recognize that we are a distinct and a separate people?” And the thing that would make the difference was not an angel, not a land flowing with milk and honey, but the very presence of God.

I want to tell you something else. Did you know it’s the glory of God that separates, not only one nation from another, but one believer from another? Not everybody in this building has the glory of God upon them. Oh, you may be saved. You may have come out of Egypt. You may be heaven-bound. But do you have in your life; I mean, really, actually, literally, the Shekinah glory of God in your bosom? Are you different from those round about you? Now, friend, you’re going to need the conscious presence of God. In times of disappointment—and they will come to you—when you’re disappointed, when your heart is aching and breaking, when your hopes lie shattered on the ground, do you know what’s going to make the difference to you then? The presence of God.

Moses was disappointed. He was leading the people by God’s divine hand out of Egypt into Canaan, and God had gone before them, and God had opened up the Red Sea, and God, who had piled victory upon victory—and now, look—now, look—what a disappointment as he comes and finds those people that he’d given his life for dancing around a golden calf!

I’m going to tell you something. Just because you’re saved, you’re not going to be immune to disappointments. There’s not anybody here, if you live long enough, who’ll not have your heart broken. I’ve had my heart broken many times. I have been disappointed. I’ve been disappointed in some of my brothers in the ministry. I have sometimes been disappointed with people that I’ve had to work with. I’ve been disappointed in faithless people. You’re going to be disappointed sometime. You’re going to have a wayward child, someone that you have poured your life into, somebody that your mother went down through the valley of the shadow of death to bring into this world, somebody that you have sacrificed for and lived for and loved for, and they’re going to break your heart. They’re going to break your heart. I’m telling you, what you need then is the presence of God. Some of you are going to have business go upside down on you. You’ve been honest. You’ve been a tither. You have been living for God. And somebody’s going to steal from you, or somebody’s going to mismanage for you, or some corporate downsizing is going to happen, or some crazy thing in the market. You’re going to be disappointed. You think you’ve had enough for retirement, and it’s gone. Maybe you’re a minister, a pastor, and you’ve sacrificed and poured your life into

the church, like Moses had poured his life into these people, and it just doesn't work out the way you thought it would work out when you were a young preacher, when you were ordained, when they laid their hands upon you, and your wife gave you a hug, and your mom and dad stood there and beamed and thought, "How wonderful our son is in the ministry!" Now you're in some church. The church is divided. They're angry at you for preaching the Word of God. You're overworked, underpaid, unknown, unappreciated. You're disappointed. It can happen. I've seen it happen many times. Maybe you've had a friend, some faithless friend, somebody that was a companion, and that friend has betrayed you and turned on you. I'm telling you, friend, Moses knew disappointment. And that's the reason Moses said, "God, I need you. I want your presence." In times of disappointment, you need His presence. In times of discouragement, you need His presence.

You see, for Moses, at this time, it looked bleak. I mean, here he is out there. He's led them out of Egypt, and they're out there in the wilderness, and they're going around in circles, and they've turned to idolatry—and he's discouraged.

I wonder if you're discouraged right now. If you are, let me tell you what you need. You need the presence of God. I mean, the conscious presence of God. In times of desertion Moses now felt all alone. I mean, they've gone from him. He seems deserted. The people have gone the wrong way. You can get lonely. You can get lonely in a crowd. You can be misunderstood. You can be forgotten. You will need, sooner or later, really, all the time. There are problems, and so you need the presence of God. That's the reason when Moses said, "Don't send any angel. This is a God job. I want you, God. I want you."

A. His Personal Presence

Now God gives this promise. Look at it again in verse 14: "And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." Actually, He says, "I myself, will go with you." I mean, God makes it very personal. Not an angel—Himself!

Now don't get the idea that when you're practicing the presence of God that God is up there in heaven peering down through the clouds and looking at you. No! His very personal presence. God Himself will be with you.

Years and years ago, I read something I cannot forget. It said that the mighty sun that's up there holding all of the planets in orbit ripens a little bunch of grapes like it had nothing else to do. And the God that runs this mighty universe says, "I'll go with you. I will go with you." His personal presence.

B. His Intimate Presence

And it is His intimate presence. Look, if you will, in verse 11 of this same chapter: "And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend..."

And His presence, My presence—literally in verse 14—is translated literally, “My face will go with you.” God is saying, “I’m going to turn my face to you.” You know, that’s very important to those of us who live in New Testament times. Second Corinthians 4, verse 6, says, “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” His face goes with us. He’s talking here about a very intimate, face-to-face, friend-to-friend, heart-to-heart relationship with the Almighty God.

C. His Radiant Presence

And not only is it His personal presence, His intimate presence, but, friend, it is His radiant presence. Now in verse 14 He says, “My presence will go with you” And the word *presence* I’ve said it literally means, “My face.” And what is the face of God? Well, the face of God is radiant. The face of God is shining. Put in your margin Numbers chapter 6, verse 26: “The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” When God looks at you, His face shines. I left out verse 25. That’s the one I wanted. Numbers 6, verse 25: “The LORD make his face to shine upon you”— “to shine.”

Have you ever thought about God’s face just shining on you? If you want to make me happy sometime, just put me on a beach at sunset. Now I love the east coast of Florida, but there’s one thing the west coast of Florida has better than the east coast, and that’s sunsets. Been there. You go to somewhere like Bradenton Beach, somewhere like that, at sunset and let that sun be sinking into that gulf. And I don’t know why, but it seems like all of the pelicans and all of the seagulls and everything at that time of night begin to fly and they’re always flying north. I don’t know why they do that. They’re flying in that direction. And you just see them, and that big old sun is sinking down there like a great big thing of liquid gold, and it’s just sinking into the ocean. And, of course, I don’t want to be there alone. I want the sweetest girl on this earth to be there with me. And, hey, this sounds good. I think I’m going to do this: just be walking there at sunset. And that great big old sun is going down there. But you know what happens? As you walk down the beach, there is a golden path that comes from the sun right to you. Have you ever seen it? A golden, shimmering path. It’s so beautiful. And, as you walk down the beach, it just follows you. All the way down the beach it follows you. Now you think it’s only following you. But if you’re somebody else a block away, it’s following them. No matter where you are on that beach, that same sun that is for me, and you and you and you. Isn’t it amazing how that God doesn’t love all of us, God loves each of us? God loves each of us. And there is a golden, shimmering path of love coming from the Sun of righteousness right to our hearts. And it is the shining face of God. God makes His face to shine upon us.

D. His Approving Presence

And, you know, when His face is shining upon us, not only is it His radiant presence; it is His approving presence. Do you know, when God spoke to Moses face to face, that means, “Moses, I love you.” Have you ever had anybody turn their back on you? You’d be talking to them and they get so mad they just turn around like this. Do you know what revival is? Revival is the smile of God. It is the face of God. When God looks to you face to face, and you see His face, it means His approval. That’s the reason the formula for revival is found in 2 Chronicles chapter 7, verse 14: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and”—what?—“and seek my face.” Seek my face. What are most of us doing? We’re seeking God’s hand. No, we need to be seeking God’s face. And so it’s the presence of God that I need in my life. If Moses needed it, Adrian needs it.

II. What God’s Presence Will Do in Your Life

Now, let me talk to you a little bit about what that presence will do in your life. Let me speak to you about what it will do. Look again in verse 14: “And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” Now He’s not talking about idleness. He’s not talking about laziness. He’s talking about rest: rest from fear and doubt and anxiety. As Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” And when you’re discouraged, when you’re discouraged, His presence will see you through. God is not some impersonal force. He is real. He’s never too busy to listen to you.

I go to funerals. I go to hospitals. I do counseling. There are so many heartaches, so much trouble. I don’t see how people make it without Jesus, I really don’t. And, you know, God is there to take care of you. And so, when you’re in trouble, when problems come, I want to tell you very definitely, when you’re discouraged, His presence is going to see you through. And when you’re lonely, His presence is going to cheer you up.

I love Psalm 139, verses 17 and 18. The Psalmist is speaking, and he says, “How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand,”—he said, “I couldn’t count them anymore than I could count the seashore, the grains of sand.” We sing, “Count your many blessings, name them one by one.” Well, the Psalmist said, “You just can’t do that.” And he says—“and when I awake, I am still with thee.” I love the song that we sang, “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face.” That’s what we need to do. Psalm 25, verse 16: “Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.”

I’m speaking to some lonely people tonight. Some of you have been deserted by your husband. Others have been separated by death. Some of you have been forgotten

by your children. Some of you travel a lot and you're separated from your family. Some of you are living in old age, and all of those most intimate to you have gone on over to the other side. Some of you may be so successful that you're lonely, because you're all by yourself up at the top. You can be lonely in a crowd. That's when you're going to need the presence of God. In trouble, in heartache, you're going to need the presence of God. Do you know—and this is true—I take a walk with Jesus. I take a drive with Jesus. When I'm in the car by myself, I'll roll up the windows and sing to Jesus, and He likes it. It sounds good to Him: to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 16, verse 11: "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasure evermore." And when I'm worried, His presence will calm me down. We have enemies, but my enemies are His enemies. And God said to Moses, "Moses, I will go with you."

I love Isaiah 43—I read it at many funerals—verses 1 through 3: "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. And when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior." Oh, when you're worried, you need the presence of God.

I heard of some people who were on a boat. They were in rough weather, really rough weather. Some of the people were huddled together in their cabin, wondering if they were going to go down. One man said, "I'm going to find the captain and find out just how serious it is." And he went outside the cabin, made his way up to the place, the helm, where the captain was, and the captain was there. And the man opened the door, looked in at the captain, and the captain, realizing he was a frightened man, waved at him, smiled at him. The man went back to his friends, and he said, "We're going to be all right. I've seen the face of the captain and he smiled at me."

You know, when you get in trouble, when you think your little boat's going to go under, what you need is the smile of God, His presence. And when you're tempted, His presence is what is going to help you out when you're tempted. You're going to be tempted, perhaps tonight, tomorrow, this week. You're going to face some temptation. What is it that's going to help you? It is the conscious presence of God.

I could not imagine how somebody could commit some vile sin like adultery knowing that God is there. That's what David prayed when he prayed in Psalm 51, "Against thee, and thee only, have I done this sin in thy sight, in thy sight." Oh, it's His presence that keeps you from temptation. It's His presence that helps you out of temptation. The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye

are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape.”

III. Practical Ways You Can Have the Presence of God

Now, let me conclude the message tonight by telling you some very practical ways that you can have the presence of God tomorrow morning, and, yes, even tonight, before you go to bed. I want you to see what Moses did, and then we’re going to do it ourselves.

Now, go back to chapter 33, and look in the first four verses. And what I’m giving you right now is by way of review, because I have reminded you of this before. But the first thing is there must be a determination. There must be a determination. And look, if you will, “And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed I will, will I give it. And I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way. And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man put on him his ornaments.” In other words, there was weeping in the land because they did not want victory and success without the presence of God. And what did Moses say? Go over to verse 15: “And he said, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not hence.”

Question: Do you have that same kind of determination or would you be satisfied? Let me ask you a question. Would you be satisfied to have a great day tomorrow without God? Would you be satisfied to get through your business tomorrow? Would you be satisfied to have no aches and pains? Would you be satisfied to be surrounded by friends? Would you be satisfied to have an angel escort without the presence of God? Moses said, “I don’t want that.” There is a determination. That’s the first thing.

Secondly—now we’re in chapter 33, verses 1 through 4—now, let’s look in chapter 34, verses 1 and 2: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning,”—underscore that—“and come up in the morning unto Mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount.”

I have written down not only determination, but preparation. “Be thou ready in the morning.” You have to prepare yourself to meet the Lord. God said of Jehoshaphat, in 2 Chronicles 19, verse 3, “Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.” Sometimes we just carelessly saunter into the very presence of God. Prepare your heart. Think about God. Meditate on Him. Be ready.

Determination. Preparation. Number three: Isolation. Chapter 34, verse 3: “No man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor the herds feed before that mount.” That is, “Look, Moses, I don’t want anything to distract you. You want me? All right, be determined. Don’t take a substitute. Be prepared. Prepare your heart. And now, get alone before me.” Isolation. He was isolated from the people to be isolated for the people.

Do you know the best time I spend on your behalf is not when I’m before you talking you about God, but when I’m away from you talking to God about you. Isolation. Be alone. Pastors need isolation. Many preachers are too busy. And the pastor that’s always available isn’t worth a whole lot when he is available because he has not been alone before God with God. Sunday School teachers need to isolate themselves. Get alone with God. Parents, who are so busy, young mothers, need a quiet time, a place to get alone. Jesus taught us to get alone with God. Jesus said, “When you pray, enter into your closet and shut the door.” When you shut the door, you open the window to heaven. You look up into the face of God.

And if you’ll study the great men of God in the Bible, they all had a blessing when they got alone with God. Abraham, when he was alone with God, met God there. Daniel, when he was alone with God, met God. Paul in Arabia met God. Peter on the rooftop met God. John on the Island of Patmos met God. Moses in the wilderness, we just talked about. Jesus would even withdraw Himself from ministry and get alone with God. So there’s isolation.

Are you following? Determination. Preparation. Isolation. And then, expectation. Look, if you will, now chapter 34, verses 4 through 7: “And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first: and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto the Mount, unto Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two tables of stone. And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD.” Why didn’t Moses take two tables of stone? He was expecting God to give him something. He was expecting God to write upon those tables of stone. You know, when we come before God, we need to come with the same expectation. If you pray for rain, you need to bring an umbrella to the meeting. I mean, if you’re having a quiet time—I can’t even think of having a quiet time without a pencil in my hand or a pen, a yellow legal pad. I mean, if you expect God to give you something; if you think it’s from God, then you ought to have a time to capture what God has given you. As it were, two tables of stone. There is expectation.

And then, that’s followed by adoration. Look, if you will now, in verse 8 of this same chapter. We’re in chapter 34. And the Bible says here that Moses begins now to praise the LORD and to worship Him with a spirit of adoration and presence. Notice in verse 8: “And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.”

Worshiped! God occupies the praise of His people. And when you come with determination, and you come with preparation, and you get alone in isolation, you come with expectation, expecting God to give you something, then began to worship Him. And as you just worship Him, as you bow your head, that's the reason why you need to be alone.

Very frankly, I don't really like to worship personally with people around. I don't mind worshipping corporately. But, you know, sometimes I act kind of silly when I worship alone. Do you act kind of silly? And sometimes I'll laugh. I've been known to get up and dance around. Sometimes I'll stretch out and put my face in the rug and just weep. And I love my wife, but I don't want her there when I'm doing that. I don't want you there. I just want to worship God. I mean, just worship God. And God doesn't mind it. He likes it. But you just want to be somewhere where you just pour your heart out to Him in worship. That's what Moses is doing here. Now it's adoration. "And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped."

When you've done this, then you're ready for the next step, which is intercession. Notice now in verse 9 he begins to pray for others. "And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance."

Now here's a man standing in the gap for others, as we need to do. This is always where real intercession takes place. And God gives you people that you need to stand in the gap for. I don't know who they are. But if you're walking in the Spirit, God is going to lay some people upon your heart. It may be your class. It may be your family. It may be your church. It may be your nation. We all don't pray for the same thing. But as God gave Moses a prayer burden for the nation of Israel, God will give you a prayer burden, someone that you need to intercede for. They're your prayer responsibility.

Next, number seven: Observation. Now, begin to look, if you will, in verses 10 and 11, and see what happens that comes out of this. "And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing"—that means it's a terrifying thing—"that I will do with thee." But now, notice verse 11: "Observe thou that which I command thee this day." Now the word *observe* here, observation, does not mean to behold with your eyes. It means to obey, to observe His commandments. "Behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, the Canaanite, ta-da..." Keep His word. When you pray, when you intercede, when you worship, and God speaks to you, then, if you want God to be real to you, obey Him.

Let me give you a New Testament verse that deals with that—John 14, verse 21. Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth

me.” Don’t you have the unmitigated gall to sing, “Oh, how I love Jesus,” when you don’t obey Him—because you don’t love Him. You’re singing a lie. “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,”—now, watch this—“and I will manifest myself to him.”

Bible study gives you knowledge about God. Obedience gives you knowledge of God. God makes Himself real when we obey Him. And there shall be observation.

Now, what is the sum total of all of these things? It is transformation. Go on down to verse 29, if you will, in this same chapter, and look at it and see what happens. I’m going to fast-forward all the way over to chapter 34, verse 29: “And it came to pass, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai...”—he’d been up there now in the presence of the Lord—“when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not”—that is, he did not know—“that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and after the children of Israel came nigh, and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. And until Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.” The face of Moses was so radiant because he’d been beholding the shining face of God. He was just reflecting in his own face the Shekinah glory. “But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.” So when he’d go before God, he’d take the veil off. When he’d go out there and because of his shining face, he’d put the veil on. Now, notice in verse 35: “And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone: and Moses put the veil on his face again until he went in to speak with him.”

Moses is transformed. He has become like that which he has been in the presence of. And when you’re in the presence of God, it’s going to be evident that you have been in the presence of God. The Shekinah glory of God will be shining out of you, not literally, but spiritually. And let me give you a verse, and I’m almost finished now. Just turn to 2 Corinthians, if you will, for a moment, and look with me in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, and look with me now in verses 7 and 8: “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious,”—he’s talking about the Ten Commandments on stones—“so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” That means, more glorious. Folks, we’ve

got something Moses never knew. Say *amen*. What he's saying is this: "Look, if Moses went up there to get the Ten Commandments, the law that brings death, not life, and in that experience his face shone, how much more should the glory of God be revealed in us?"

Now, skip forward in 2 Corinthians 3 to verses 17 and 18: "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass"—in a mirror—"the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." What's he saying? He's saying, "Look, Moses is not the only one that ought to have the Shekinah glory of God on him. Adrian ought to have the Shekinah glory of God. Mark ought to have the Shekinah glory of God. Jamie ought to have the Shekinah glory of God. Rob, and you, and you, and you, and you, as we behold Him, the Lord Jesus Christ. It's transformation.

Conclusion

Now, if you get a roaring fire going; I mean, a big, hot fire, and take a poker from the fireplace, and put that poker in the fire and leave it in there long enough, and bring it out, it will be glowing, will it not? Because when you put the poker in the fire, before long the fire will be in the poker. And you put yourself in the presence of God and leave yourself there, and I'm telling you, friend, the presence of God will be in you, and there will be that glow of the Lord. The presence of God. You need nothing more, and you should settle for nothing less. You ought to say to God, "I don't care what you give me. You can give me an angel. You can give me anything else. But, Lord, if you don't go with me, I'm not going. I am determined to have your conscious presence in my life."

How to Enjoy the Presence of God

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 19, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 33:1–4

Outline

Introduction

- I. Direct Disobedience
- II. Divided Devotion
- III. Displaced Dependence
- IV. Determined Defiance

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you be finding the Book of Exodus chapter 33, as we continue our study on worship. If you were to give a definition of worship, what would it be? Is worship enjoying God? I believe it is. I think that worship is enjoying the presence of God. Just put it in a sentence: Worship is enjoying the presence of God. And that's what I want to talk to you about today: "How to Enjoy the Presence of God."

Now, folks, the longer I live, the more I study, the more I experience, the more I realize that that is the bottom line, the highest good, most wonderful fulfillment: to know God intimately and to enjoy Him personally—enjoying the presence of God. Now, let me ask you a question. Do you know God personally? I'm not asking if you know about Him. You might know about George Washington. I'm asking, "Do you know God personally?" Is He today, this moment, in your heart, in your life, a bright, living, vital reality? If so, you know the deepest pleasure. You have fulfilled the deepest need. You have attained that for which you were created: to know God personally, because, you see, worship is enjoying the presence of God. You need nothing more; you should settle for nothing less. You need nothing more; you should settle for nothing less.

Now there are many Christians today who do not have the conscious presence of God in their lives. They show up at church. They sing the songs. They may muster an *amen*, but there is a deadness, a blindness, and a void in their life. Now, let me tell you some of the most frightening words in all of the Bible. They're found here in Exodus 33, verses 1 through 3: "*And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto thy seed will I give it: and*

I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way” (Exodus 33:1–3). What are the frightening words? God says, “I’m not going with you. I will not go up in the midst of you.”

Now, what is the situation? The Jewish people, the sons of Abraham, were out there in the wilderness. God has given them a covenant, and God has given them a promise. And they’re headed toward the Promised Land, and in the middle of that journey they sin terribly against God. And God said, “All right, I promised that I’m going to give you the land, a land that flows with milk and honey. I will give you an angel escort into the land. And when you get there, the land will flow with milk and honey. But,” God says, “I am not going with you.”

Now that’s frightening: to have success, to have possessions, to have protection, but not to have the presence of the Lord. “I’m going to give you an angel to take care of you,” He says. “I’ll get you into the land, but I am not going with you.” That would be like people getting married, and the husband taking care of the wife, but they’re living in separate bedrooms. Don’t settle for success without the Lord. What happened? Our seeming success without the Lord. As a matter of fact, it has well been said that, whatever a man does without God, he will either fail miserably or succeed even more miserably.

Now, let’s get the background a little bit. Moses had gone upon Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments and instructions for the tabernacle. While Moses was gone, Aaron, his brother, led the people into a revolt against Almighty God. What Aaron said is, “We don’t know what’s happened to Moses. He’s been up there a long time. Maybe he’s never coming back. We need some guidance. We need some help. We need some leadership. You people give me your bracelets and your earrings, and we will make a golden calf, and we will worship that golden calf.” And that’s what the people did.

Just go back to chapter 32 and look in verse 4, and you’ll pick it up: “*And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt”* (Exodus 32:4). Now the people there are having a Bacchanalian feast, an orgy—verse 6: “*And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: now*

therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation” (Exodus 32:6–10).

Now what happens is this: When Moses comes down off the mountain, he sees this charade, this orgy, this feast. They made themselves naked. They are committing immorality. They’re doing terrible, horrible things—dancing around the golden calf. Moses is so grieved that he takes the Ten Commandments and casts them to the ground, and breaks those tablets of stone. Then he takes that golden calf and has it ground into powder, and mixes that powder with water and makes the people to drink it. And their greatest delight now has become their greatest displeasure. And then 3,000 of the chief rebels are slain and put to death. Moses knows that this is a crisis, so Moses goes to God to intercede.

And look, if you will now, in verses 30 to 32—chapter 32, and begin in verses 30 to 32: *“And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.”* Moses goes up to stand up between God and judgment; he goes up to intercede. *“And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin...”*—it’s sort of an unfinished sentence; his heart is just broken—*“Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin--; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written”* (Exodus 32:30–32). And Moses is praying, and interceding, and putting himself in the place of these people.

Now after this intercession is the text that I’ve just read to you in Exodus chapter 33, verses 1 through 3. God says, “All right, I won’t destroy them. All right, I’ll not destroy them. Moses, for your sake, I will bring them into the land. I will give them an angel escort. I will give them protection. I will give them provision. I will fulfill my promise, but I will not go with them into the land” (Exodus 33:1–3). Now, look up here, and let me tell you something, folks. If you’re a brother and sister in Christ, do not settle for a deal like that. Do not settle for protection; do not settle for provision; do not settle for Promised Land, without the presence of God. Just don’t do it. Now I’m telling you—I’m telling you—*when you have the presence of God you need nothing more, but you should settle for nothing less.*

You say, “How does that apply to me this morning, pastor?” Well, there are a lot of you today who are saying, “I have salvation. I have eternal security. I’m not walking in joy. I’m not walking in victory. God is not real to me, but I honestly expect to go to heaven.” And when the pastor asked, “How many of you know, if you were to die today, you’d go to heaven?” you’d lift your hand. But if you would be honest with me, you would say, “Pastor, God is not real in my life. I do not have the manifest presence of God in my life. I have His protection. I have His provision. I have His promise. But I do

not have that presence of God in my life.”

Now, don't think that, just because you have provision and protection, you're right with God. Don't think that for just one moment. Oh, you may be on your way to heaven, but I'm going to tell you one thing. You're certainly traveling there second-class. I remind you that even a nonbeliever has certain provisions: food, and air, and clothes, and houses. And, you know, we can be so preoccupied with getting that provision, and that protection, and claiming that promise, that we fail to have His presence.

Israel, however, knew better than that. And thank God that they did. Look in verse 4—and this is Exodus 33, verse 4: *“And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned”* (Exodus 33:4). And I want to say to you today that it is an evil thing to have gifts without the Giver, to have blessings without the Blessor, to have the promise without the Provider and the manifest presence of God.

Again, I want to ask you this question: Is God real to you? Is the presence of God, the Shekinah glory of God, this moment very real to you? Or, are you just fulfilling your duty, sitting in church Sunday morning, listening to some pastor bum away, and, really, very frankly, you're not very interested, and when the group stood and sang “Our God Reigns,” your heart was not thrilled and filled with the presence of God? This message is for you, because worship is enjoying the presence of God. We're going to show you, in a moment, you need nothing more; you should settle for nothing less.

What made Israel different from the other nations? It was the manifested presence of God in the midst of them. It was the Shekinah glory. I wonder, are there some of you who once knew the glory of God, and now that glory has departed, and that glory has faded, and the glory of God is gone, and your life is dry?

What caused God to withdraw His manifested presence from His people? I want to mention four things. Those four things are the same four things that will rob you, denude you, of the manifested presence of God in your life, and will be the archenemy of worship. Worship is enjoying the presence of God. Now, what were these four things? What happened to Israel, where God said, “Well, I'll not destroy them; I'll send an angel, but I will not be in their midst”?

I. Direct Disobedience

Number one: They disobeyed God. Look, if you will—Exodus 32, verses 7 and 8, again. Go back to it—Exodus 32: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves:”—*notice God calls them, to Moses, “your people,” now. And notice verse 8—*“they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them...”*—just underscore that—*“they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them”* (Exodus 32:7–8). And, because they disobeyed God, the manifested presence of God was

withdrawn from them.

Do you know what the problem with a lot of people, and some in this auditorium, is? You walk down this aisle; you've confessed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; you have subscribed to the authentic doctrines of the church; you've followed the Lord in believer's baptism; but you do not have the presence of God. You don't even have the assurance of your salvation. And I have people come to me and say, "Pastor, could you help me? I don't know whether I'm saved or not." Well, let me tell you, I can't tell you whether you're saved or not. That's not my job; that's not my responsibility. Do you know whose responsibility it is to tell you that you're saved? It's the Holy Spirit's. It's the Holy Spirit of God that gives you the assurance that you belong to Him. That is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Listen to these verses, and put them down—1 John chapter 4 and verse 13: "*Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given to us of his spirit*" (1 John 4:13). Could anything be more plain than that? Listen to it again—1 John 4:13: "*Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit.*" That's plain. How do we know that we belong to Him? The Holy Spirit. Let me give you a companion verse—Romans chapter 8 and verse 16: "*The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*" (Romans 8:16). Now those two verses make it crystal clear that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to give us that assurance that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. John says, and Paul says, because of the Holy Spirit, we have the assurance of our salvation.

"Pastor," you say, "what does that have to do with a manifested presence of God? And what does that have to do with disobedience that you just read about?" Simply this: When you knowingly, willingly, with eyes wide open, disobey God, do you know what you do to the Holy Spirit? You grieve the Holy Spirit of God. That's the reason the Bible says that you're not to give place to the devil and grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Ephesians 4, verse 30: "*Grieve not the holy Spirit of God*" (Ephesians 4:30)—"*grieve not the holy Spirit.*"

Did you know that you can only grieve somebody who loves you? Let me illustrate this, and you'll understand what I'm talking about. The neighbors' kids may vex you. Your own children grieve you. What's the difference? Grieve is a love word. The Holy Spirit of God loves you, but you can so grieve Him, when you disobey the commandments of God, that the Holy Spirit just closes up. Again, the Bible says, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 19, "*Quench not the Spirit*" (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Do you know what the word *quench* means? It means, "to pour cold water on a fire." The Holy Spirit is like a gentle dove. The Holy Spirit is like a glowing ember. You can frighten away that dove. You can pour water on that ember. The Bible says, "*Be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:18). Then the Bible says, "*Grieve not*"; "*quench not.*" "*Be*

filled.” “Grieve not.” “Quench not.”

Now, listen again. I want to ask you this question: Who gives you the assurance of your salvation? The Holy Spirit of God. Who is it that manifests the life of God in you? The Holy Spirit of God is to you, in this age, what that pillar of cloud was to those people in that day. He is the Shekinah glory of God. He is the manifested presence of God. The Holy Spirit of God is the manifested presence of God in your life. The Holy Spirit of God is the manifested presence of God in your life. Now, listen to me. If you willfully, knowingly, deliberately disobey God, you grieve the Spirit; you quench the Spirit; and when you do, God ceases to be real to you. You can even wonder, “Am I saved?” I’ve met many people who doubt their salvation, that, I believe, were truly saved, but they’re living in direct disobedience to God; and, as a result of that, they do not have the manifested presence of God.

Now, put this verse in your Bible—John 14, verse 21. It’s one of the key verses in enjoying the presence of God. Now, listen to it. Jesus said, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me...”*—now, folks, when people truly love God, you don’t see it just when they stand in the congregation and sing “Oh, How I Love Jesus,” but they obey Him—*“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father,”*—and watch this—*“and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21).

Aren’t we talking about the manifest presence of God? Do you see how the Bible links the manifest presence of God with keeping the commandments of God? Because, when we disobey God, we grieve the Holy Spirit; we quench the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is in us to make God real to us, and when we do that, we might have eternal security; we might go to heaven; God may send an angel escort to bring us to heaven when we die; but would you settle for that rather than the manifest presence of God? Many Christians are.

A man came and talked to his pastor, and he said, “Pastor, I don’t know what’s wrong with me, but God is not real to me anymore. I don’t have any joy. The presence of God is not real in my heart, in my life, like He used to be.” This wise pastor asked him a direct question. He said, “Is there any known sin in your life—any un-confessed, un-repenting of sin in your life?” That moment, that man, in a moment of honesty, said, “Well, pastor, let me tell you something.” He said, “I used to bring a tithe of my income to God. I believed the Word of God when the Bible teaches that we’re to bring all the tithe into the storehouse. But,” he said, “some time ago, I got the idea that perhaps God didn’t need that as much as I needed it; and,” he said, “yes, pastor, I have ceased to be honest with God.”

And you know what this pastor told him? The pastor said, “Do you know what you’ve done? You’ve begun to steal from God.” He said, “Sir, you wouldn’t put your hand in the

offering plate, would you, when the offering is passed—put your hand in the offering plate, and take some money out that other people have given to God? Would you steal from the offering plate?” And then he said, “Malachi says, ‘When a man is not faithful in stewardship, he’s robbing God’” (Malachi 3:8).

Now he said, “What do you think God does when His child does that—when God sees His child willingly disobeying Him? Will God say this: “My child has chosen to disobey me; number one, He’s stealing from me; number two, He cannot trust me to take care of his needs, he cannot trust me with his resources; number three, He will not obey me; now this week I think I will bless him with even more financial resources, and I will make my presence very real to him”? Do you think God would do that? And God says, “I’m going to display myself. I’m going to give him a deeper sense of my presence and my approval”? No, no. Why? Because here was a man in willing disobedience to Almighty God.

Now I want to say something else. Do you know who it was that encouraged these people to disobey God and lose the manifest presence of God? It was Aaron. You know who Aaron was? Aaron was a priest, a religious leader. And I’m going to tell you something else. There will always be plenty of people who will give you a reason, an excuse, to disobey God. It may even be a religious leader. They’ll lead you into unscriptural marriage, some immorality, some transgression of the commandments of God, and they’ll say, “That’s all right; times have changed, and things are different.” But I remind you one more time that Jesus says, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21).

Now if you want an angel escort, and if you want to go to heaven without having the presence of God in your life, that’s your business. But I don’t. I want the manifested presence of God in my life. I need nothing more. I will settle for nothing less.

So ask yourself this question; if God is not real to you, ask this question in your heart this morning: Have I rejected a direct command of God? Am I living—am I right now living in disobedience to a known command of God? If you are, there’s no reason that I can think of in all of the Bible where you ought to have a sense of the manifest presence of God. God loves you too much to manifest Himself to you in glory and joy, and yet have you to live in disobedience, because I cannot think of a worse lesson that He would teach you.

II. Divided Devotion

So, question number one: Can I discern any direct disobedience to God? Let me ask you the next question, if God is not real to you: Can I discover any divided devotion to God? Not only direct disobedience, but divided devotion. Look again in chapter 32, and

look in verse 4: “*And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it*”—that is, the golden calf—“*with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel*” (Exodus 32:4). Now, what had these people done? They had divided devotion. They claimed to be Israel. The word *Israel* means, “people of God.” And yet they made a golden calf. They made for themselves a god that was no bigger than their own imaginations. And then, rather than trusting Almighty God, they began to trust the work of their hands. This was idolatry.

As I’ve told you before, the Bible says, “When people make an idol, they become like the idol.” First, the man molds the idol; and then, the idol molds the man. What is an idol? An idol is just a magnified sinner. A man just takes his own ideas and puts them into the work of his hands, and then he begins to worship it. And what he’s really worshipping, ultimately, therefore, is himself.

You say, “Well, Adrian, I’m not guilty of idolatry.” Well, let’s check up and find out whether you are or not. Maybe there might be a golden calf in your life. What is an idol? Anything that you love more than God is an idol. What is an idol? Anything that you fear more than God is an idol. What is an idol? Anything that you serve more than God is an idol. Anything that you trust more than God is an idol. G. K. Chesterton said it well. He said, “When we cease to worship a true God, it is not that we worship nothing; it is that we’ll worship anything.” Is there any direct disobedience? Is there any divided devotion? Is there something that you love more, fear more, serve more, or trust more than Almighty God? If there is, no wonder God’s presence is not real in your heart and in your life—divided devotion.

Now, answer this before God. Don’t answer to me out loud, but answer it. If the glory of God is gone in your life, if God is not real to you, ask this question: Is there anyone or anything that takes precedence over God in your life? You say, “Well, I give God a place in my life.” God doesn’t want a place in your life. You say, “Well, I give God prominence in your life.” God despises prominence in your life. God demands preeminence in your life. He will take nothing less. God’s throne is not a duplex. Is there anything that is a greater controlling factor of your behavior? Is there a relationship that means more to you? Is there treasure that means more to you? Is there anything that gets more of your attention than Almighty God? Then, friend, it should not come as a surprise to you that, because of that golden calf in your life, God says, “I’m not going with you; I’ll not be in the midst of you; I just won’t do it”—any direct disobedience; any divided devotion.

My wife knows that I love her with all of my heart, but she knows she’s second place, not first place in my life. And she doesn’t mind being second place, because she knows that, when God is first place, I will love her with a love I could never love her with if she were first place. Now, friend, there are certain relationships in your life that are wonderful relationships, but none can take the place of an undivided relationship to

Almighty God. Idolatry is the mother sin, the father sin, the sin of all other sins.

III. Displaced Dependence

Now, here's the third question that you might ask yourself, if God is not real in your life, if you do not have that manifested presence of God—and worship is enjoying the presence of God: Do you, thirdly, detect any displaced dependence? Direct disobedience. Divided devotion. Displaced dependence. Look, if you will again, in verses 7 and 8: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf,”*—all right, there you have direct disobedience and divided devotion. Now, what's this?—*“and have worshipped it, and sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt”* (Exodus 32:7–8).

Now they begin to put their dependence in the work of their hands, their ugly god that they've made with their own hands. And now no longer is there dependence upon Almighty God that brought them through the Red Sea. Do you know what happens when you do that: when God gives you a victory, and you give the glory to something else or someone else, and then depend upon that rather than the God who gave you the victory? You're going to lose the presence of God.

I was thinking about that this morning. These buildings that we worship in today: I love this land; I love these buildings. I'll tell you, these walls are saturated with prayer, and these carpets are saturated with the tears of God's people. I want to tell you about this place. This place is the place that prayer, faith, and obedience built. Somebody said to me the other day on an airplane, “Oh, Rogers, you've done a good job out there; you've really built a great thing out there.” I thought, “Dear God, it's a lie; and, dear God, help me never to believe that kind of a lie.” God has done this. God has done this. But suppose, after God has done it, then we get to saying, “You know, we have a pretty good building committee. You know, we really did give our money. You know, we're pretty smart folks. Look what we have done.” And that moment God says, “All right now, you've got it. I'm out of here,” when we begin to depend upon our ingenuity, our wit, our wisdom, and say, “Look what we have done.”

You see, they took those earrings off their own ears. They took those bracelets off their own hands. And with a graving tool they made a god, and then they said, “That's our god, and that's what is delivering us.” And God says, “All right, I'm not going with you anymore.” I can remember, Brother Gene, we used to get in those building committee meetings, and cry and weep before God, and say, “God, we don't know what to do. There's no way we can do it.” And yet God did it. God did it.

Not long ago, when George Bush was the President of the United States, our nation

came up against what we thought was an implacable foe: Saddam Hussein. And the word *Hussein* sounds a lot like *insane*. And that man, I really believe, is demonic—I really do. And there’s a malevolent force. And, you know, they basically say, “In any kind of a war, you cannot defend your life against the man who’s not afraid to lose his.” And these fanatical Republican troops were marshaling for this at war. I can remember staying up at night and watching CNN, and watching those missiles fly in the air—those patriot missiles. I can remember this church after that happened. I can tell you, my dear friend, that Sunday morning our attendance, it seems to me, was up twenty-five percent. People across the land—not just at Bellevue, but all other places—they filled the churches of the land. And they cried out to God, and there were prayer meetings—fasting and prayer—saying, “Oh, God, we don’t want to get bogged down in the Middle East in some desert war. And, God, you know, what could be germ warfare, could be atomic warfare, could break up in the Middle East, where they’re shooting those missiles over—the SCUD missiles—into Israel. And Israel may retaliate with atomic bombs. Who knows but what? It’s all about to blow up right in our face.” Do you remember those times? Or have you forgotten? And our boys were going off, and we were praying, “Oh, God, help us; oh, God, deliver us.”

And I want to tell you something, friend. God answered prayer. And do you know what happened as soon as Desert Storm was over? Rather than giving God the glory, do you know what we did? We began to say, “Boy, Schwarzkopf: what a general! Colin Powell: what a strategist! What about those patriot missiles! Boy, we showed him, didn’t we? We kicked some *you know what*.” I heard all that kind of talk. Isn’t that true? I want to tell you we failed to give God the glory. We failed to have national revival. We failed to continue to follow God, and love God, and serve God. And since that time our nation has gone down into a cesspool of rottenness and filth. Never since I’ve been preaching have I seen a nation take a nosedive like this nation has taken since Desert Storm. Never did we have a more glorious victory, I don’t believe. Never did God protect the people, and, in mercy, move into us, and let us get out of a mess like we got out of, with such blessings. But then we made a golden calf, and said, “Look what brought us out of Desert Storm”—just like they made a golden calf, and they said, “These are our gods that brought us through the Red Sea,” and they failed to give God the glory.

I’m going to tell you something, precious, sweet friends. You listen to me. God has said, “I will not share my glory with another.” And when God gives you a blessing, and when God is good to you, and God brings you through the storm—whether it be Desert Storm, or any other kind of a storm—and then you have that displaced dependence—you begin to give credit where credit is not due, and fail to give God the glory—is it any wonder that His presence is not real in your life?

IV. Determined Defiance

Is there any direct disobedience? Is there any divided devotion? Is there any displaced dependence? One last question, quickly, and I'll close this message this morning: Is there any determined defiance? Listen. Look, if you will, in Exodus chapter 32 and verse 9: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people"* (Exodus 32:9). What does that mean? *Stiffnecked* is the opposite of being meek and pliable. God was wanting to lead them, but they were like a horse with a stiff neck, who rears up, who will not yield.

You want God to be real to you? Don't be stiffnecked. If God gives you a specific revelation—God speaks to you about what He wants you to do—then obey Him. Has God told you there's somebody He wants you to witness to? Has God been laying somebody on your heart and you're not witnessing to that person? No wonder God's not real to you! Has God been putting some impulse in your heart to serve in this church—perhaps to work in the preschool, the nursery; perhaps to be a youth worker; perhaps to work on the parking lots; perhaps to serve in the kitchen; but you say, "I don't want to do that"? Has God been laying something on your heart He wants you to give, some sacrificial gift—not even to a need, but for the glory of God? Has God been laying on your heart somebody that you need to go to and apologize to and reconcile with and make things right? Has God been telling you there's a relationship that you're in that you need to break off, young lady, and get out of it; or, young man, that it's a wrong relationship? Has God been speaking to your heart and calling you into missions or into fulltime Christian service? Has God been telling you to do something, go somewhere, be something, give something, and you have said *no*? You've had a stiff neck? And then you say, "I wonder why God is not real to me. I wonder why God says, 'Oh, all right, I'm going to take you on to heaven. I'm going to give you an angel escort all of the way, but I'm not going in the midst of you.'" Thank God, Moses had enough sense to say, "No deal." He said, "God, if you don't go with me, I *ain't* going. I am not going without you, the manifest presence of God, in my life."

Conclusion

What is worship? Singing songs? No. Saying prayer? No. Coming to church? No. Giving money? No. Worship is enjoying the presence of God. Is God real to you? He wants to be real. Again, Jesus said, "He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me will be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). Lord Jesus, manifest yourself to Bellevue. Be real to us. Amen? Amen.

What to Do When God Seems Far Away

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 25, 1993

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 33:1–3

Outline

Introduction

- I. Do I Discern Any Direct Disobedience to God?
- II. Can I Discover Any Divided Devotion?
- III. Do I Discover Any Displaced Dependence?
- IV. Do I Have Any Determined Defiance?

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word and find the book of Exodus—that's the second book in the Bible—and we're going to begin reading in chapter 33. Have you ever tried to pray and it seemed like God was a billion years away? You know that you're saved. You know you're right with God so far as salvation is concerned. You know that you have eternal life and yet, it all seems so dry. It all seems so perfunctory. Where is the presence of God? Why isn't God near? I know that God is real. But why isn't God real to me today? Why this deadness? Why this dryness? Where's the blessedness, the joy, the nearness, the manifestation of the presence of God.

I want to speak to you on this subject, "What to do when God seems far away." Exodus 33:1: "And the Lord said unto Moses, depart and go hence thou and the people which thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt into the land which I swear unto Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob, saying unto thy seed will I give it and I will send an angel before thee, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite and the Perizite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite"—expecting him to say, and the termite—"into a land flowing with milk and honey." Well, so far it sounds wonderful. God says, "Go up. I'm going to send my angel before you. I'm going to drive your enemies out. I'm going to bring you into a land that flows with milk and honey, for I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiffnecked people, lest I consume thee in the way." And God says, "Moses, take the people and take them into Canaan. I'm going to give you an angel escort. I'm going to give you victory over the Canaanites, but I am not going to be in

your midst. I will not be in the midst of thee.”

Now the God who has manifested Himself to them in times past was saying, “You’re going to go. You’re mine. I’m going to provide for you. I’m going to protect you. But my presence won’t be there.” When I read that, I thought, that’s almost like people who are married and somehow an estrangement comes and the husband or wife moves out of the bedroom into another bedroom. And he says to her, “I will provide for you, I will pay your bills, I will protect if somebody tries to break in this house, but you and I are not living together as husband and wife truly ought to live together.” A strange thing. Together but not together. Protected but not fellowship. Provision but no sharing. These were frightening words.

Now that tells me something right away. And I want you to pay attention to this. You can have God’s provision and you can have God’s protection without having God’s presence. You can have heaven and you can have eternal security and yet there can be a dryness and a deadness in your life, while God is not manifesting Himself to you.

Now, what had happened? What had caused this? Well, if you go to the prior chapter, you’ll find out what caused this. Moses had gone up to Mt. Sinai. God had sent Moses up to Mt. Sinai or brought Moses to Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments and to get the instructions for building the tabernacle and other things and up there on the mountaintop, amidst the thunder and the lightening, God spoke to Moses. God wrote with his fingertip on tablets of stone, those Ten Commandments. Then when Moses is coming down from the mountain, he finds out that while he was up there, Aaron had caused the people to take their earrings and their jewelry, their bracelets of gold and Aaron had melted them down and he’d made a golden calf, an idol, and the people had begun to dance around that idol and they’d gotten themselves in a drunken orgy. They pulled off their clothes. They were living in debauchery and sin, and when Moses came down from the mountain, that’s what he found.

Look, if you will, in chapter 32, verses 7 and 8: “And the Lord said unto Moses, Go get the down for thy people which thou brightest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They’ve turned aside quickly out of the way which I’ve commanded them and they’ve made them a molten calf and have worshipped it and have sacrificed thereunto and said, these be thy gods oh Israel which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

That’s what the people had done. Moses with righteous indignation is so incensed that he takes that golden calf, has it ground into fine powder mixed with water, and makes the people to drink of it. That which had been their delight now becomes their displeasure and their discipline. Then Moses said, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Come unto me.” And a slaughter began. Three thousand fall to the ground dead. Then Moses

knows that Israel is in serious trouble and he goes to God and he begins to intercede before God, he begins to pray.

Look in chapter 32, if you will, verse 30: “And it came to pass on the Mara that Moses said unto the people, ye have sinned a great sin and now I will go up unto the Lord for adventure. I shall make an atonement for your sins.” Moses said, “Listen. You’re in serious trouble with God, and I’m going to go up now and ask God if there’s some way, somehow that this sin can be atoned for.” Verse 31: “And Moses returned to the Lord and said, oh, this people hath sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold, yet now if thou will forgive their sin.” And he just stops. It’s an unfinished sentence—perhaps the only unfinished sentence in the Bible. He is so consumed with grief and fear. “O God,” he says, “forgive them, and if not, blot me I pray thee out of the book thou has written.”

Moses so identifies with them in his intercession that he says, “O God, if you can’t forgive them, then, O God, just blot me out with them.” What intercession this was! Because of that intercession, we have the verses that I read to you in chapter 33. God says, “All right, I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I will send you on into Canaan. I’ll give you an angel escort. I will give you provision. I will give you the Promised Land, Moses. Just one thing, though: I’m not going with you. You are not going to have my conscious presence with you. My manifest presence will not be with you.”

When the people heard that, they were terrified. Because it was the Shekinah glory of God, it was the presence of God, that set Israel apart from all of the other nations of the world. And they said, “Moses, go back to God. We don’t want to go up without God.” And Moses said, “I don’t want to go God without you.” Moses went back before the Lord to find further grace.

Now it is possible from this passage of Scripture to learn this: that you can have God’s provision. You can even have God’s protection. You can even have God’s protection. You can even have God’s blessings, the Promised Land, the land that flows with milk and honey, and still not have the best of all which is the bright, burning, blessed reality of God Himself in your life. I dare say there’s many in this congregation tonight, and many who are listening to me tonight by radio, and many who will listen later by tape, who will say, “That’s me. I know I’m saved. I know that. I know I’ve been born again. I know it. I know that God gives me provision. I know that God provides for me. I know that I have eternal security. I know I’m going to heaven. And yet God is not real to me. I don’t have that sweetness. I don’t have that communion. I don’t have that reality that I want, that I ought to have. The Shekinah glory of God is not on my life. The glory is gone.”

Now, don’t answer out loud. But is that true about you? You know you’re saved. You

belong to an evangelistic, soul-winning, Bible-believing church. There was a time when you received Christ. There was an eternal transaction. You have been born again. You now that heaven is your home, but if you would be honest to God tonight, you'd say, "Pastor Rogers, it's not there. The presence is not there."

Now if the presence is not there, I want to give you four questions to ask, and if you'll ask these four questions, I think you'll find out why the presence might not be there. Four things to ask yourself tonight if you're wondering why is God so far away. Why don't I know? Why can't I feel the presence of God?

I. Do I Discern Any Direct Disobedience to God?

Question number one: Do I discern any direct disobedience to God? Now, look in chapter 32 with me, and look, if you will, in verses 7 and 8: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go get thee down for thy people which thou brightest up out of the land of Egypt hath corrupted themselves." Now, look at verse 8: "They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I have commanded them."

Now God said, "I gave them commandments." Ask yourself this question: Have I been disobeying the commandments of God? Is there any direct disobedience to the commands of God? Have I turned aside from any explicit command of God?

Now you might say, "Pastor, you preached on assurance this morning, but I wonder if I'm saved. I don't sense God in my life. Pastor, am I saved?" I want to tell you something. I cannot give you the assurance that you're saved. There's only One who can give you the assurance that you're saved—and that's the Holy Spirit.

Now it is the Holy Spirit's job to give you assurance. Let me give you two verses to prove that. First John 4:13: "Hereby know the that we dwell in Him and Him in us because he hath given to us of His Spirit." Let me give you another one—Romans 8, verse 17: "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Now those two verses tell me very clearly that it is the Holy Spirit's job, not the pastor's job, to give you the assurance of your salvation. But when God gives you a direct command, and you disobey that direct command, do you know what happens? The Holy Spirit of God grieves, and the Holy Spirit of God will convict you of that disobedience.

Now, if you go on willfully, deliberately disobeying God, not only is the Spirit of God grieved, but the Spirit of God can be quenched. The Bible says, "Grieve not the Spirit of God whereby you're sealed unto the day of redemption and the Bible says, quench not the Spirit." The word quench means to put out a fire.

Now it is the Holy Spirit's job to give you assurance, but the Holy Spirit is also there to convict you of wrongdoing when you do wrongdoing, but when you deliberately,

willfully transgress a command of God, you override the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God just back away now, you don't lose Him but He closes up in you. He doesn't speak. You have quenched the Spirit of God. You have grieved the Spirit of God and therefore God is not manifested to you because you have been breaking a direct command of God.

Do you know one of the most wonderful verses in the New Testament is this? Listen to it. Put it in the margin of your Bible. John 14, verse 21—Jesus says this, now listen. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me. And he that loveth me shall be loved of my father and I will love Him and will manifest myself to Him.” Did you hear that? The one who has His commandments and keeps them, that's the one who loves me. Don't sing, “Oh, how I love Jesus,” if you're not keeping His commandments. You're singing a lie. Don't sing. “He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he's the one that loves me, and he that loves me will be loved of my father,” and Jesus said, “I will manifest myself to Him.”

Now if you're breaking His commandments, no wonder He's not manifesting Himself to you. God said to these people, “They have quickly turned out of the way that I commanded them to do.” And the Spirit of God that is there to make Jesus Christ real to you, closes up. You have grieved Him and you have quenched Him, and therefore God is not real to you.

A man came to His pastor. He said, “Pastor, there was a time when God was very real to me. God is not real to me. God seems far away. I wonder if I'm saved.” That pastor was very perceptive. He said, “I want you to get alone and ask God this question. ‘God, is there any direct command of yours that I'm transgressing?’” The next day, the man came to the pastor, and he said, “Pastor, I did what you asked me to do, and God showed me immediately.” He said, “Several months ago, I quit tithing.” He said, “I was a tither. I quit tithing because I felt that I needed the money more than God needed it, and God would understand, and therefore I quit tithing.” And he said, “Since that time, the presence of God has not been real in my heart.”

Now you can understand that, can't you? What would you think of a man when the offering is taken tonight, who, rather than putting something in, would reach in his hand and take something out, and put it in his pocket and steal from God? You say, “Well, no one would do such a thing like that.” Well, God said that if you fail to put it in, it is stealing from him. Malachi 3:10: “Will a man rob God? Yet you've robbed Him. But you say, wherein have we robbed Him. Tithes and offering.” And then God makes this promise and this challenge: “Bring ye all the tithe into the storehouse and prove me now herewith say the Lord of Hosts. Shall I not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, there shall not be room enough to receive?”

Now, let's go back to that man who said to his pastor, "God seems far away." And let's suppose God looks down and God sees that man who has decided he's not going to obey anymore. He knows what God has commanded, but he's just decided that he's not going to do it. What is God going to do? Is God going to say, "Now there is my servant. He is stealing from me, and he cannot trust me in his resources. Now here's what I will do. I will bless him with more resources, and I will manifest myself to him; I will give him a great sense of my presence? Will God do that? Of course not. Why? Because he's transgressed the command of the Lord.

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he that is that loves me. He that loves me will be loved of my father and I will manifest myself to him." Now, very frankly, folks, if you know you're saved, you know you're going to heaven. You know you have God's protection. You know you have God's provision, and yet God is not real. Ask yourself this question. Can I discover any direct disobedience to God? Just ask yourself that question and see if you can.

And, by the way, there are plenty of people who will tell you it's quite all right to disobey God. As a matter of fact, some of them will be religious leaders. Aaron was the one who encouraged these people to disobey God. He was the priest. He was one of the spiritual leaders. Yet he was the one who told them to make this golden calf. And if you want to get married outside the will of God, if you want to marry an unbeliever, there'll be plenty of so-called clergy who'll tell you, "Oh, that's quite all right." You want to commit fornication? There will be plenty of clergy who'll tell you, "Oh, that's all right." You want to—well, you just name it. You'll find someone somewhere who not only will allow it but who will encourage. But when you get away from a direct command of God, you know what you do? You lose the conscious presence of God.

II. Can I Discover Any Divided Devotion?

Second question I want you to ask. Not only, can I discern any direct disobedience, but, number two, can I discover any divided devotion? Can I discover any divided devotion? Now, look again, if you will, in this passage of Scripture—verse 8. "They've turned aside quickly out of the way which I've commanded them, and they have made them a golden calf and worshipped it." Is there an idol in your life? If there's an idol in your life, it's no wonder that God seems far away. They made a god of their own. They made an idol. And the god that they made was no bigger than their imagination.

And what is an idol? Very simply, an idol is anything we love more, fear more, serve more, or trust more than Almighty God. That is an idol. Do Americans have idols? Of course they do. Our idols are not made of sticks and stones necessarily. Sometimes they're made of chrome and fiberglass and upholstery. We have strange gods. G. K.

Chesterton said this: “When we cease to worship God, we do not worship nothing; we worship anything.” Did you get that? “When we cease to worship God, we do not worship nothing; we worship anything.” An idol is a magnified sinner. That’s all an idol is. What a man does is, he sees his worst vices, and once he sees his worse vices, like lust and war and greed and selfishness, then he makes a god out of them. And now they become legitimate vices, and they can be worshipped. And, this self-deification leads to self-indulgence, because a man’s god must be worshipped. And nothing is too good for a man’s god, and so when you become an idolater, you’re going to be indulging yourself just like verse 6 says: “The people they made a golden calf and then they rose up to play.” What they wanted to do was just express their lust.

We have many gods in America today. Now they’re just old gods with new names. In the Old Testament there was the god named mammon. Remember, Jesus said, “You cannot serve God and mammon.” Mammon is just simply the god of riches and wealth and success. Most Americans are worshipping this god and they wonder why God is not real to them.

They also worshipped in olden times a god named Bacchus. You know who Bacchus was? Well, his name today is Seagram’s Seven, Old Granddad, whatever; it’s just the god of drugs and debauchery and alcohol. The god of wine. They worshipped him then. We worship him today. The goddess Aphrodite, she was the sexual goddess, the goddess of lust and sex. These are the gods of today. See these men driving around with a little play-bunny hanging down from their rearview mirror? That’s their little idol. That’s their little god. They’re worshipping the goddess Aphrodite.

Or the god Mars. Who was Mars? He was the god of hatred and war and force. That’s why you can’t walk the streets of Memphis tonight and feel safe: because of a god, Mars. The god of power and revenge.

Some of these gods seem very fine. They worshipped the goddess Sophia. That’s the word we get our word sophistication from. Sophia. That’s the god of knowledge and science, which, rather than the Bible has become our guide. We worship at the shrine of our computers. It makes no difference. You need to ask yourself this question. Is God far away from me? Ask this question, and I want you to ask it. What is the greatest controlling factor in my behavior? Ask this question: What do I treasure most? Ask this question: What gets my greatest attention? No wonder that God seems far away.

It is amazing. What happens in churches? I went to a church. I’m not going to embarrass the people of this church by calling the name of this church, because you’d all know it. And the people in this church would be chagrined if they knew that I told this story and named their church. But I tell you, it’s one of the finest, best-known churches in America, and I went there to preach a revival crusade. I went there on a Sunday

morning, and I began that revival crusade on a Sunday morning, and they said, “Pastor Rogers, there is couple who is going to host you today. They’re going to take you to lunch. They’re going to host you for our church.” Well, I thought, “That’s nice. A wonderful couple has been assigned to me.” And they took me to one of the finest restaurants in that city. We sat down and had a wonderful meal, and then they said, “Well, we want you to know that we’re not going to be able to come to the meeting tonight, to the crusade tonight.” I said, “Oh, I’m sorry. Is there any problem?” “Oh, no problem. We just have season tickets to see the professional football team play. They’re playing in town tonight, and we have season tickets, so obviously we won’t be there. I wanted to throw up what I’d eaten. Really. I thought, the unmitigated gall of saying, “Of course we can’t be there. We have bought season tickets.” I tell you, my dear friend, as far as I’m concerned, they have an idol in their heart. Their church down there pleading, praying for souls, inviting an evangelist in, and I’ve come and given my time to come over there and to preach that meeting. But you know the thing about it is, they never blushed, never blinked, and never thought they’d said anything wrong. I put my fork down. Lost my appetite.

So many in America are like that. They have set up idols in their heart. Where is your biggest treasure? What gets you most attention? What do you love, serve, or fear the most? If it’s anything other than Jehovah God, don’t wonder that He seems far away. Ask yourself, can I detect any divided devotion? Our Lord demands all of your devotion. These people have set up gods in their heart. Why should I be enquired of by them?

III. Do I Discover Any Displaced Dependence?

And so, if God seems far away, you might ask a third question: not only, do I discover any direct disobedience, not only do I detect any divided devotion, but number three, do I discover any displaced dependence? Now, look, if you will, in chapter 32, verse 8: “They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them.” That’s disobedience. They have made them a golden calf. That’s divided devotion. “And have worshipped and sacrificed there unto and have said, these be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” Displaced dependence. They’d begun to depend now upon the work of their hands rather than almighty God, and now they’re giving some stupid golden calf, the work of their hands, credit for delivering them—their ugly god. They have become dependent upon a piece of molten metal. “These are thy gods which have brought thee out of Egypt.” And God had performed miracles for them. God had opened up the Red Sea. God had given them that glorious night of the Passover.

Do you remember not long ago when America went to war in Desert Storm? Do you remember that? I remember. I remember after they gathered the troops and sent them to the sandy shores there in Saudi Arabia. I looked out here on Sunday morning, and I believe our attendance was up at least twenty-five percent—at least twenty-five percent. There was a humility. There was a seeking of God. They were saying, “You know, we’re about to get enmeshed in some sort of a terrible war over there. Who knows what’s going to happen with those Republican troops coming out of there? Who knows whether Israel is going to turn lose of the atomic bomb? Who knows what’s going to happen, how many of our boys are going to be slaughtered? Is this the beginning of World War III? Who knows?” And we got down on our face, and we said, “O God, help us, help us. O God, deliver us.” And when that war was over, you know what happened? We said, “Look what we did. Boy, what about those missiles? What about that American technology? What about that Colin Powell? What about that Schwarzkopf? What about that George Bush? What about our boys? Boy, I mean, we really showed ’em, didn’t we?” “Yea, we did.” And since that time, dear friend, we have sunk to the very pit, the very cesspool of wickedness and debauchery and vileness. I’m amazed that this nation could sink as low as it is at this moment. Right after a such of victory. And what we have done, we have said, “Oh, it’s the work of our hands. These are our gods that have delivered us.” No, they haven’t. God says, “If you think they’ve delivered you, then I’m going to let you do it from now on without me.”

You know what frightens me? Is that America is facing a future without the conscious presence of God—without the conscious presence of God. “These are thy gods, O Israel. They deliver thee.” “We broke off our earrings. We took our bracelets. We made us a golden calf. Look what we have done.” Does God seem far away? Do you detect in your life any displaced dependence? Giving glory to anything or anybody else other than Jehovah will cause God to seem far away, because God says, “I will not share my glory with another.”

It may be that God gave you victory over alcohol. It may be that God gave you victory over nicotine. It may be that God brought back wayward son or a daughter. And at first you were so grateful. Now you’re going around telling everybody about how to raise children, telling everybody, “Boy, if you only had the willpower I had, you could quit that stuff.” And you begin to take credit for what God alone has done. And God says, “All right, go on, but you’re going on without me,” because God says, “I will not share my glory with another.”

IV. Do I Have Any Determined Defiance?

Now, here’s the fourth and final question you need to ask if God seems far away: Do

I display any determined defiance? Now these other things are bad. But, look, if you will, in chapter 32, verses 9 and 10: “And the Lord said unto Moses I have seen this people and behold it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them and that I may consume them. And, I will make of thee a great nation.”

Now, here God is talking not only about deliberate disobedience, not only about divided devotion, not only about displaced dependence, but now he’s talking about determined defiance! They are a stiff-necked people.

What’s He talking about? Do you know what an animal is with a stiff neck? It doesn’t mean you’ve got a pain in your neck. That’s an animal that bows the neck against the bridle, against the bit. An animal that cannot be controlled. The opposite of being stiff-necked is being meek. When a horse is made where it can take the bit and the bridle and the saddle, that horse has been made meek. But a stiff-necked horse, an animal that may be strong but rebellious, is of no real good.

Has God been leading you to do something and you’ve failed to do it? Have you bowed the neck? You say, “Why is God not real to me?” Has God given you a witnessing assignment, somebody he wants you to lead to Jesus, or at least witness to and you’ve failed to do it? And you wonder why God is not real. Has God laid an impulse on your heart to work in the nursery or to serve in this church in some task or to serve anywhere? Has God placed on your heart an amount of money that you give? Has God told you to go reconcile with some person that you need to reconcile with. Or, has God told you break off an association with somebody that you ought not to associate with? Has God laid something on your heart? Has God called you into the ministry, or has God called you to the foreign mission field, and you bow the neck, and God pulls the reign this way, and you go that way? And God says, “You’re just defiant. You’re stiff-necked. You can go on into Canaan if you want to, but I’m not going with you. I’ll give you provision. I’ll give you protection. I’ll give you eternal security. You’re saved and on your way to heaven. But you’re not going to have my conscious presence in your life. You want to live that way? I don’t want to live that way. I’d rather die than live that way. I want the reality, the bright burning reality of God in my life.

Tom Elliff tells about a man, who was called of God into the ministry. This man went to college. When he went there to college, you know what they said about him? They said is the most gifted, most well-equipped, most promising young man in this college. Right away, he seemed to rise to the top. He seemed to have so much of the presence and the power of God in his life. When he went to seminary, the same thing. They said, “This man is the most gifted, the best equipped; this is a man that God’s hand is on. God is going to greatly use him.” They all felt that way. And when he got out of

seminary, he went to a church, and that church began to grow and to be blessed. And the power of God and the presence of God was on this man's ministry. But in the midst, in the zenith, of that ministry, he decided he didn't want to be in the ministry anymore. A business made a very attractive offer to him, and he went into business and out of the ministry. He turned defiantly from what God had called him to do. Do you know what happened in the business? He prospered. He rose to the top. He became a leader. He began to make much money. He'd forgotten the church, the call, the ministry, the presence.

One day, he was interviewing a young man for that business. He and the young man were in a car together and they were driving around. The young man was a Christian. He knew God. The young man not knowing that this former pastor, preacher, man of God, not knowing that he even knew about God, turned to him and said, "Sir, may I ask you a personal question? Do you know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord? If you were to die today, are you absolutely certain that you would go to heaven?" And the man just said, "Son, thank you for asking that question. But let me tell you about me." And he told the young man about his call to preach. He told him about his college and his seminary days. He told him about his church. He told him what it was to stand in the pulpit and preach the Word of God.

The young man could hardly believe it. He said, "Sir, may I ask you another question? Do you miss that? Do you miss that relationship with God that you once had and knew?" He said, "Son, it's like this." He said, "In the olden days, when there would be a battle, and they would gather the troops in the morning to go to battle, the trumpets would sound, and the soldiers would gather to battle as the trumpets would sound in the morning." He said, "Do you know what I miss? I miss the sound of the trumpets in the morning."

Conclusion

Friend, I don't ever want to miss that, do you? I mean, I don't want to wake up in the morning and not hear the trumpets sound, not hear my Lord, not greet my Lord, not go out with the real presence of God as the trumpet sounds and calls His army to go to war for him. God needs to be real to us, a bright burning reality, and we need more than His provision and His protection. We need His presence. Thank God they went back to God. And the Bible says, "They found grace." And God says, "All right, I'll go with you, and you can find that grace too."

Let's bow our in prayer. Father, God, seal the message to our hearts tonight. And, Lord, if there's anybody here living in direct disobedience, help them to repent of their sin. If there's anybody here with a divided devotion that has set up an idol, a golden calf

in their life, help them, O God, to repudiate that idol, to turn from it, to refuse it and to enthrone and enshrine the Lord Jesus. Lord, if there's anybody here tonight with displaced dependence, depending upon anything or anybody other than you, O God, stealing away your glory, help them, Lord, tonight to place their total dependence upon you. If there's anybody here who's defiant, deliberately defiant, stiff-necked, help them, Lord, that they might yield to you. In Jesus name. Amen.

How to Practice the Presence of God

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 5, 1997

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 33:1–4, 14–15

Outline

Introduction

- I. There Must Be Determination
- II. There Must Be Preparation
- III. There Must Be Isolation
- IV. There Must Be Expectation
 - A. What to Do With a Passage of Scripture to Cause It to Burst Aflame in Your Hand
 1. Read It Through
 2. Think It Out
 3. Pray It In
 4. Write It Down
 5. Live It Out
 6. Pass It On
- V. There Must Be Adoration
- VI. There Must Be Intercession
- VII. There Must Be Observation
- VIII. There Must Be Transformation

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you be finding in God's Word the Book of Exodus chapter 33, and when you've found it, look up here, and let me tell you that we're talking tonight about "How to Practice the Presence of God." Now we told you this morning that, when we worship our Lord, we're to worship in spirit and in truth. But worship is not in a particular locale. Worship is anywhere that we breathe the name of Jesus. We are temples of God. The Lord lives in us and dwells in us. But I'm afraid that many of us are not conscious of the presence of God in our lives. We do the best we can. We have certain duties that we perform; we have certain rituals that we go through; we have certain beliefs that we adhere to. But God is not a bright, burning, living reality in our lives.

Now the message tonight is going to be exceedingly simple, but I pray God that it will not be simplistic, that you'll understand that we're talking about how to have a

personal and a vital relationship with God. Now we're going to be in the Old Testament, but don't think that because we're in the Old Testament tonight that that doesn't apply to you. The Bible says clearly and plainly, concerning those Old Testament saints, that the things that happened to them happened to them that they might be examples to us (1 Corinthians 10:11).

And what we have here is a lesson in the life of Moses. Moses had an encounter with God. The presence of God was so real in Moses' life that his face literally—not figuratively, but literally—shone. He had seen God to such a degree—or, at least, he had experienced the presence of God to such a degree—that the life of God was so in him that his face literally shone to the degree that he had to wear a veil over his face when he would go out into public. And he would take the veil off of his face when he would go in to speak face to face with the Lord. And the people knew, when Moses spoke, that Moses had a message from God, because of his shining face.

Now the sad thing is this: that Moses lost the glow. There was a time when that glow faded, but Moses continued to wear the veil: this time not to veil the glory of God, but now he's wearing the veil to keep people from knowing that the glory of God is no longer there. And I'm just wondering if we don't have some staff people tonight who are wearing a veil: not to veil the glory, but maybe to hide the fact that the glory is not there. I wonder if we don't have some deacons like that, some Sunday School teachers like that, some of you in this auditorium, and some who are listening by radio, that there was once a time when God was very real to you, and you still go through the motions. I don't know what veil it is that you are wearing, but you're still outwardly saying, "Yes, Jesus is real and precious to me," but inwardly you know that you're hiding behind some kind of a veil.

Well, let me give you some steps to make God real, to get the glow back: what to do when the glow is gone.

I. There Must Be Determination

Number one: There must be determination. There must be a determination that you will have God in your life. Look in chapter 33, verses 1 to 4: "*And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:*"—God said, "I made a promise. I'm going to keep my promise, Moses. And so get up and go into the land." And then notice verse 2—"*and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: unto a land flowing with milk and honey:*"—now, notice this, and I have it underlined in my Bible—"*for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way*"

(Exodus 33:1–3).

God says, “Now, Moses, I have promised you the land. You’re going to get the land. I’m going to send an angel, a mighty angel, to go before you. He’s going to drive these Canaanites out. But, Moses, I am not going to go with you. I’ll give you victory. I’ll give you success. I’ll give you the land. But you won’t have my presence.” Now, when God said that to Moses, the people mourned, and rightly they mourned, because they had enough sense to know that, without God, what good is the rest of it? What good is the land without the Lord? What good is the victory without the Victor? What good is the blessing without the Blessor? What good is the gift or the gifts without the Giver? And so the people said, “We’re not going to settle for an angel.”

Look over in verse 14. Moses is speaking to the Lord: *“And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”* (Exodus 33:14–15). And what Moses is saying is, “Lord, I’m not going without you. Lord, if you don’t go, I’m not going.” And, you know, I think many of us would have settled for what God said to Moses. Many of us would say, “Lord, you promised me eternal life. I’ve got eternal life. You promised me heaven. I’ve got heaven. You promised me that you would see me through. You’re going to see me through. Thank you for the angel, Lord. Thank you for heaven, Lord. Thank you for eternal security, Lord.” And that’s what you’d settle for. You would settle for that without the conscious presence of God. I want to beg you not to do it.

You know what that’s like? That’s like a husband and wife who remain married but separate, and he provides for her. He says, “All right, I’ll pay your rent. I’ll buy your groceries. I’ll cut the grass. But we’re not going to live together.” Friend, do you want that kind of a relationship with God? Do you want what God will give without having God Himself? Or, are you saying, “I am not satisfied with separate maintenance; I want to know the Lord intimately”?

And so there must be a determination. And I pray God that that will be true in my own life, because, folks, very frankly, I want to be a growing Christian. I don’t think that I have attained. I’m not there yet. And I want to determine this coming year, and I pray that you’ll determine with me. And as pastor and people we’ll say, “We want the conscious presence of God in our lives and in our church.”

II. There Must Be Preparation

All right, there must be determination. Now, secondly, there must be preparation. Let’s go to the next chapter. And Moses says, “Lord, listen. We’re not going to take second best. We don’t want an angel. We want you.” And so now the Lord is ready to give them what they want. So look, if you will, in chapter 34, verses 1 and 2: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these*

tables the words that were in the first tablets, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount” (Exodus 34:1–2).

Now God had already given Moses the Ten Commandments. One time Moses came down and found the people dancing around a golden calf. And in anger Moses broke those two tablets of stone. And God was ready to say to the people, “My presence is not going to go with you.” Moses said, “O Lord, I’ve got to have your presence.” And so God says, “All right, Moses. Get you two more tablets, and get ready, and come up on the mountain, and I am going to deal with you one more time.”

Now if you expect the presence of God, you need to do what Moses did, and what God told Moses to do. Look at it in verse 2: *“Be ready in the morning”* (Exodus 34:2)—*“Be ready in the morning.”* Don’t carelessly, casually, haphazardly seek the presence of God. God does business with those that mean business. Did you know the Bible speaks of preparing your heart to seek the Lord? Let me give you two scriptures that you might jot down. These were very meaningful to me. One deals with a man named Rehoboam. And Rehoboam did not have the presence of God. And here’s what the Bible says about him in 2 Chronicles chapter 12 and verse 14: *“And he did evil...”*—now, why did he do evil? Well, listen to it—*“And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD”* (2 Chronicles 12:14). Now is that not an interesting verse? *“He did evil”*—Rehoboam. Why?—*“because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.”* It doesn’t even say that he did evil, because he didn’t seek the Lord. *“He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.”* There must be preparation. You must be ready.

Or let me give you the converse of that now in 2 Chronicles chapter 19 and verse 3. Now this speaks of a man named Jehoshaphat, a good man. And in 2 Chronicles 19, verse 3, God said to Jehoshaphat, *“Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land,”*—that is, the places of pagan worship—*“and hast prepared thine heart to seek God”* (2 Chronicles 19:3). Do you see the emphasis that God makes upon preparation? You prepare yourself to seek the Lord. And I hope tomorrow morning, when you have your quiet time with God, that you’ll prepare your heart, that you’ll get away, that you’ll close the door—and we’re going to say more about that later on—that you will get proper ventilation, that you will get a readable Bible, that you will get a notebook, that you will come with all of the distractions put away, and that you will say, “God, I have but one business right now, and that is to prepare my heart to seek you.”

III. There Must Be Isolation

Again, it is not a casual, haphazard thing that will help you to have—enable you to

have—the conscious presence of God. There must be determination. You must say, “God, I will not take your blessings without you. I don’t want any angel. I need you”—determination. Number two: preparation. Be ready in the morning. And I pray God you will be ready in the morning. Now, here’s the third thing—determination, preparation—number three: isolation. Look in verse 3—chapter 34, verse 3: “*And no man shall come up with thee*” (Exodus 34:3). That is, “Moses, it’s just going to be you and me alone.”

Now Moses was the pastor of three million backslidden people. And they were bothering him. They were complaining. They were criticizing him. It reminded me of a pastor who said, “I don’t mind being swallowed by a whale; I just hate to be nibbled to death by minnows.” And that’s what was happening to Moses. And God says to Moses, “Now, leave these people. Get alone with me.” It’s very important, because you understand that later on Moses is going to intercede for those same people that he was getting away from.

Do you know the best time I spend for you is not when I’m with you talking to you about God, but when I’m with God talking to God about you? Did you know that? Do you know the best time that you are for your children is not necessarily when you’re with your children, but when you’re not with your children, talking to God about your children, and those problems that you have that you need to isolate yourself from and get alone with God? Pastors need to get alone with God. Sometimes people are disappointed because the pastor is not always there at their beck and call. I want to tell you something, folks. *The man of God who is always available isn’t worth a whole lot when he is available.*

There are times when you need to be alone with God. And not just pastors, parents; not just parents, Sunday School teachers—whoever you are, wherever you are, if God has given you a responsibility, you need to get alone with God. Jesus taught us that. What did Jesus say? “When you pray”—what?—“enter into your closet and pray” (Matthew 6:6). Now He didn’t mean a clothes closet. He meant a closed place, a place where you shut the doors and open the window to heaven. Get alone with God.

If you’ll study the history of people in the Bible who have been blessed, and have therefore been a blessing, these are people who met God in a place of isolation. Abraham was alone when the Lord spoke to Abraham and gave him that great covenant. Daniel was alone when God spoke to him and gave him a prophecy. Paul was alone in Arabia where God gave him the epistles, the great things that he wrote down for us in the Book of Romans. Peter was alone on a rooftop when he had a vision, and God spoke to Simon Peter up there about Cornelius and opening the door to the Gentiles. John was alone on the Isle of Patmos on the Lord’s Day when God gave him the Book of the Revelation. Moses was alone in the wilderness when God gave him the Ten Commandments. And the Bible tells us about the greatest example of all: the Lord

Jesus. In the midst of a busy, fruitful ministry where miracles were being done He withdrew Himself to the wilderness to pray.

IV. There Must Be Expectation

Determination: it must be there. Friend, preparation: it must be there. Isolation: it must be there. “When you pray, enter into your closet and pray” (Matthew 6:6). Here’s the next thing, if you want that conscious presence of God—and that is expectation. Notice now, beginning in verse 4: *“And he”—that is, Moses—“hewed two tables of stone like unto the first;”—now, why did he hew two tables of stone? Well, he expected God to give him something to put on them—“and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and he took in his hand the two tables of stone. And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and to the fourth generation”* (Exodus 34:4–7).

Now Moses went up there to find out something from God, and he got a revelation. God spoke to Moses, and God said, “Now, Moses, I’m going to give you something. I want you to be prepared to take it down. Take with you two blank tablets.” I wonder, when you have a quiet time, are you expecting God to give you something? I mean, when you open the Word of God, do you expect to learn? I carry in my pocket—I have two kinds of pens. I don’t know why. But I have this one that I pull out if I’m with you, but I have this one that I pull out when I’m by myself. This is a Flair, just an old Flair felt-tipped pen. It can be any kind, but this kind I like to chew on, because I meditate by chewing on this thing. I’m glad I don’t smoke cigars, but that’s the closest I get to it. And I would hardly ever think to open my Bible to read without taking this out, or something like this, and a yellow legal pad to read the Bible, because I expect to get something when I read the Bible. And, folks, it’s easy for me to forget what I get.

Let me tell you something. The weakest ink is better than the best memory. You will think you will never forget it, but you will forget it. And if you come to God, and you expect God to give you something, be ready to write it down. And you’ll be surprised how it will clarify your mind when you write it out. Writing helps you to think clearly and to put things down cogently: that it writes it not only upon the paper; it writes it upon your heart. It helps you to organize these things. You see, if you’re expecting God to give you something, get ready for God to give you something. Somebody said, “When you go to a prayer meeting to pray for rain, you ought to bring an umbrella.” Isn’t that

right? When you have a quiet time, you ought to have a notebook.

A. What to Do With a Passage of Scripture to Cause It to Burst Aflame in Your Hand

Now I've given you a little formula before to cause the Bible just simply to burst aflame in your hand. But what do you do with a passage of Scripture? This is so indescribably simple I hate to give it to you. And yet it is profoundly wonderful, and it's blessed me through many, many years. What do you do with a passage of Scripture?

1. Read It Through

Just open the Bible: read it through. All right now, jot this down on a piece of paper. Read it through—read it through.

2. Think It Out

Number two: Think it out. Just bring your mind to it. Remember what we said this morning: You're to love the Lord your God with all your mind. Why would the Lord renew your mind if He didn't expect you to use it (Romans 12:1–2)?

3. Pray It In

So read it through. Think it out. Then pray it in. Talk to God about it. One of the finest ways to learn the Scripture is to pray the Scripture. When God tells you something in the Bible, or shows you something in the Bible, tell Him about it. Ask Him about it. Thank Him for it.

4. Write It Down

Read it through. Think it out. Pray it in. Write it down—write it down. I've been having a wonderful time the last few days in the Book of First Timothy. I've just been blessed just being able to take it just verse by verse and just write down the thoughts that God has given me.

5. Live It Out

Then next, live it out. This is the way that it really becomes real to you. When you find something in the Word of God, these promises and these truths are not museum pieces to hang on the wall; they're checks to carry to the bank. Live it out. Take it. Take these promises of God. Take these precepts. Take these warnings and put them in your life. Say, "I will live by that today."

6. Pass It On

And then last of all, pass it on. You know, when we meet folks day by day, we ought to have something, a little nugget from the Word, to share with them. We ought to have a little verse, a little truth, something that God has given us. And when we give it away, it comes back to us. That's the secret of remembering anything. That's the reason why pastors are blessed to be able to preach the Word of God. When I preach the Word of

God to you, it does probably more good for me than it does for you. And it's not that I'm just up here telling you what to do. Every time I point that finger out, three are pointing back at me. And this is God's Word to me. And as I share it with you, it becomes so real in my heart. Well, we can do the same thing day by day with our friends as we share the Word of God.

So when you have this quiet time, you get alone; you have this determination; you have this preparation; you have this isolation. Have this expectation that God is going to speak to you, hew you two tablets of stone. Well, if you don't want to do that, go down to Walgreens and get a notebook, and be prepared for God to speak to you.

V. There Must Be Adoration

Now, here's the next thing: After that expectation, there comes that adoration. You see, God spoke to Moses. God gave Moses one of the most incredible, concise revelations of His nature and character. You say, "Well, I already knew that." You know why you knew it? Because God gave it to Moses, and Moses recorded it. You didn't think it up. I mean, this is heavy-duty stuff.

But now, when Moses has this revelation, what does he do? Look in verse 8: "*And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped*" (Exodus 34:8)—adoration. Now, on the basis of truth, he worships. Remember what we said this morning. We worship God how? In spirit and in truth. Real worship is intelligent worship based on the revealed Word of God.

Now, are you ready to receive the Word of God? You know, James says we're to receive the Word with meekness (James 1:21). And that means we're to humble ourselves and welcome the Word of God. The reason that many of us don't receive more from the Bible than we do is, the Bible says Jesus said that God has hidden these things from the wise and the prudent. He's revealed them unto babes (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21). If you come to the Bible as a know-it-all, you're not going to get much. You just have to receive truth with a humble heart as you adore and worship the Lord.

VI. There Must Be Intercession

Now next, listen to this. After he comes and gets this revelation, and he has this adoration, then there comes this intercession. Notice in verse 9. Now he's ready to pray for others. And he says, in verse 9, "*And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O LORD, let my LORD, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people...*"—when he says, "Let my Lord go among us," he's saying, "Lord, I want your presence"—"*for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance*" (Exodus 34:9).

What's he doing? This is called intercession. He's praying for others. But, you see,

his intercession is based on revelation and adoration. I mean, he comes with expectation; he gets a revelation; he gives an adoration; and then, he gives an intercession. He begins to pray for other people.

Now, many times, we pray for other people, and we really don't know how to pray, because we don't pray on the basis of truth. But notice what engendered him to pray this way. Look in verse 6: *"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in mercy, in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin"* (Exodus 34:6–7). He says, "Okay, I've got it now. I know what kind of God you are. And now, Lord, these folks are in a mess. And, O God, they need you." And now he begins to plead for them, and pray for them, and intercede for them.

Let me just stop here and say for a moment, "Who should you intercede for?" Well, don't try to intercede for everybody. If you try to intercede for everybody, you'll end up interceding for nobody. It will just become such an onerous task; it will become so big that you'll just say, "Well, I'm frustrated. I don't know who to pray for, or what to pray for." God will give you an assignment in prayer if you're walking in the Spirit. God will speak to you. Moses said, "Lord, forgive this people." He didn't pray for all the people on earth. He had those people that were around him. These were his responsibility. Your children are your responsibility. This church staff is my responsibility. These deacons are my responsibility. My children are my responsibility.

You remember that parable that Jesus gave about the man who wanted some bread, and he woke up his neighbor and he said, "A friend is come to me in his journey. I have nothing to set before him" (Luke 11:6). And what our Lord was talking about there was intercession. And He was not talking about physical bread, in the meaning of the parable, but, "I need truth for this man; I need the Holy Spirit." He says, "How much more shall God give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11:13). That's the purpose of that parable.

And what I'm trying to say to you is this: that when you are in the Spirit, when God is speaking to you, God will lay something upon your heart. And nobody else can do this, but God will do this.

And sometimes I say this, and I feel funny when I say it, because people will sometimes glibly say to me—or, sometimes, perfect strangers. I'll be preaching sometime, standing down at the front, maybe in a Bible conference, and shaking hands, and somebody will come by and say—"I'm so-and-so and so-and-so. Put me on your prayer list." I don't say it out loud, but I say, "Fat chance!" You say, "Oh boy! You're just so unspiritual!" No, I'm not. I mean, if I were to put everybody on my prayer list that glibly asks me to get on a prayer list, I wouldn't be able to pray for those assignments that God gives me to pray for. Now, generally, if a man says, "Put me on your prayer

list,” I’ll say, “Hey, let’s just pray right now.” And I’ll stop right then, and I’ll pray for him.

Not that I’m against prayer, but, folks, I want to tell you something. If you’re on anybody’s prayer list, you’re blessed. Did you know that? Did you know that? There are times people meet me, and they say to me—and I know they mean it—“Pastor, I pray for you every day.” It brings tears to my eyes right now thinking about it. “I pray for you every day.” Listen. There are about six billion people on this earth. If somebody is praying for you regularly, you’re blessed. You are blessed. And God gives us assignments: people and things that we’re to pray for. These were Moses’ people. He was the commander-in-chief. And now he is having that time where he intercedes for them.

VII. There Must Be Observation

But it’s not finished yet. You want the presence of God? Moses said, “I’m not going into Canaan without it.” Adoration, intercession, and then look in verses 10 and 11: observation. Look, if you will now: *“And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all the people I will do marvels, such as have not done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee.”* Now when He says, “a terrible thing,” what He means is, “It is going to be terrifying to those ’round about you when they see the mighty hand that I have for you, and the power over you.”

And then, look in verse 11: *“Observe thou that which I command thee this day...”*—now when He says, “observe,” He doesn’t mean, “to look.” He means, “to obey.” *Observation* here means, “to obey; to keep the commandments.” Notice—*“Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I will drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite”* (Exodus 34:10–11). You expect Him to say “and the *termite*. I’m going to drive all of these out, if you will obey me.”

Now, folks, this is one of the most important points right here that I have to say to you all tonight—and I’m almost finished. This really gets down to the crux of the matter. And all of the rest of it will kind of unravel if you don’t understand this part. When God speaks to you—when you have this determination, when you have this preparation, when you have this isolation, when you have this expectation, when you have this adoration, when you have this intercession—if you do not then begin to live what God shows you, none of the rest of it works. You’ve got to obey. Sorry about that, folks, but it’s true. I’m not really sorry about it, but I just kind of hate to see you disillusioned. Don’t get the idea that you can claim the promises without obeying the commandments. It just does not work that way.

Do you know why God is not real to many of you—to many of us? Let me give it to

you. John 14, verse 21—put it down and listen to it. Here’s what Jesus, our Master, said—listen to it: *“He that hath my commandments, and...”*—anybody know that next word?—*“and keepeth them...”*—that’s observation—*“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me...”*—now, friend, if you’re not obeying the commandments of Jesus, you ought to shut your mouth when the church stands up and sings, “Oh, How I Love Jesus,” because you’re telling a lie—*“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:”*—now, watch this—*“and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,”*—now, wait; listen—*“and will manifest myself to him”* (John 14:21).

That’s very, very important. We’re talking about the manifest presence of Jesus. The Lord says, “You want me to be real to you? You want to know why I’m not real to you? Because, you don’t love me.” “How do you know, Lord, I don’t love you?” “Because you don’t keep my Word.” “Well, if I did love you, would I keep your Word?” “Yes, yes, you would.” “And what would happen if I kept your Word?” “I’d be very real to you. I would manifest myself to you.” If Jesus Christ is not real to you, get His Word, keep His Word, and see what happens—see what happens. He will manifest Himself to you—observation.

VIII. There Must Be Transformation

And then, last of all, transformation. Look, if you will now—let’s just fast-forward to verses 29 through 35 and see what happened: *“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tablets of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not”—*that is, he did not know—*“that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.”* His face was so bright they couldn’t look on it. It was frightening to them. Verse 34: *“But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him”* (Exodus 34:29–35). That’s very interesting.

What had happened is that Moses is spending so much time with the Lord face to face that Moses’ face begins to shine as a reflection of the Shekinah glory of God.

You know, in my fireplace I have a poker. I can take that poker and just kind of poke

around in the fire and put it back, and it will hardly be hot. But I can take that poker, if there's a roaring fire, and put that poker in the fireplace, and leave it in there long enough, and do you know what will happen? It will begin to glow, because not only will the poker be in the fire; the fire will be in the poker. And when you spend enough time in the presence of God, the presence of God gets into you. Not only are you there in the presence of God, but the presence of God gets into you. And as Moses is there beholding the glory of the Lord, the glory of the Lord is infusing itself into Moses, and Moses is transformed.

"Well," you say, "pastor, that's all Old Testament." Yep, that's true. So I want you to turn to the New Testament. And I'm finished now in just a moment, but turn, if you will, to 2 Corinthians chapter 3. This is worth looking at, because I want you to see how what we're talking about applies to you in New Testament times. In 2 Corinthians chapter 3 now, let's look in verses 7 and 8: "*But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious,*"—he's saying, "If, when God gave Moses the Old Testament Ten Commandments, if that was glorious, those Ten Commandments that really brought death, if we didn't keep them..."—"so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:"—"it ultimately faded," is what he said—"how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?" (2 Corinthians 3:7–8). That means, "more glorious." I mean, what he's saying is, "Look. If Moses going up there on Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments could only minister death, if his face shone, what about us who now have the ministration of the Spirit? Shall that not be rather more glorious?" And now, skip on down to verses 17 and 18: "*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord,*"—now he's talking about us, not Moses—"are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17–18).

You know, I taught this morning about God wanting us to worship Him: "*For the Father seeketh such to worship him*" (John 4:23). Why does God want us to worship Him? Why does God want us to sing, as the choir sang tonight, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty?" Is God a little insecure? I mean, does He have to be constantly pumped up? Is God a celestial egotist that you have to keep telling Him how great He is? Listen, friend. All of your praise put together doesn't make Him one ounce more glorious. His glory doesn't depend upon us. He had that glory before the world ever began. We don't add to His glory. Why does He want us to worship Him? Because of what worship does for us. Because, when we behold Him, we're changed into the same image: from glory to glory. And the way to be like Him is to see Him, and to worship Him, and praise Him; and then you're changed. You are made like Him.

You know, you become like what you spend time with. My precious wife is down

here. People say, when husband and wife live together for a long enough time, they begin to look like one another. Frankly, Joyce is getting concerned. Friend, listen. When you spend time with Him, you're looking into the mirror of God's Word, and you see in that mirror; you see yourself. And you see Jesus in there at the same time. And then you and Jesus begin to be alike. You're changed from glory to glory. And what he's saying is, if Moses, in the Old Testament, spent time going up there on Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments, how much more will we be changed as we look into the face of our Lord through His Word?

Conclusion

That's the presence of the Lord. Folks, be ready in the morning.

Knowing the Ways of God

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 13, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 33:12–15

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Difference Between God's Works and God's Ways
 - A. The Difference Between Rest and Relapse
 - B. The Difference Between Intimacy and Infatuation
 - C. The Difference Between Being a Teacher or a Testifier
 - D. The Difference Between Peace and Panic
 - E. The Difference Between Intercession and Interest
- II. How Are You Going to Know the Ways of God?

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn your Bibles to Exodus 33:12. I want to speak to you on this subject: "Knowing the Ways of God." Now Moses is facing a great task. And because of the task that he's facing, he prays a special prayer, and it is recorded in the scripture that we are about to read in verse 12: *"And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way,"*—it is very important; mark it: Moses' prayer—*"that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence"* (Exodus 33:12–15).

Moses had the task of leading a congregation, more than three million people, through the wilderness, and into the land of Canaan. And Moses knew that he was not able, not fit for the task. So his prayer is this: "O God, if you love me, and if you have called me, and if you have this job for me to do, then, dear God, show me your way. Show me your way. I want to understand the ways of God." Was this prayer answered? Did God show Moses His way? Indeed He did. In Psalm 103:7, we read this, and it is very significant: *"He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel"* (Psalm 103:7). God *"made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the*

children of Israel.”

There are two levels of the knowledge of God. You can know God’s ways or you can know God’s acts. You can know God’s ways or you can know God’s works. Moses knew God’s ways; but Israel knew God’s works. There are a lot of people that know the ways of God, and others know but of the works of God. Some know God so much differently than others know God. There are two levels of the knowledge of God. What is the difference between knowing the ways of God and the works of God? When you know the works of God, you know what God does. But when you know the ways of God, you know God. One is to know God simply by observation. The other is to know God personally and intimately, to know God’s character.

Moses was saying, “God, I don’t want you just to show me what you do. I want you to show me why you do it. I want to understand what makes you operate as you operate. Now, Lord, if I’m going to be your leader, if I’m going to be your man, if I’m going to have to carry these people into the Promised Land, Lord, show me your ways. I want to know your ways.” Ladies and gentlemen, when you understand the ways of God, it will transform your life. That’s not an overstatement. To understand the ways of God will transform your life.

Most people simply know the works of God. Therefore, if they are saved at all, they remain immature, baby Christians. They are never much good to the service of the Lord, because they only know God by observation, but they do not know God by revelation. They do not know God intimately. They do not know the ways of God. I am preaching a two-point sermon.

I. The Difference Between God’s Works and God’s Ways

First of all, in the first point, I want you to notice the difference between God’s works and God’s ways. Notice what he says, in Psalm 103:7: *“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.”* What is the difference between God’s works and God’s ways?

A. The Difference Between Rest and Relapse

In the first place, there is the difference between rest and relapse. Some of you are relapsing when you ought to be resting. Some of you are caving in. Some of you are not able to carry the load. Things happen to you, and you just come apart, because you don’t understand the ways of God. God said to Moses, “Moses, when you understand my way, then you’re going to know my rest. I want to prove to you that what I’m saying is right.” Turn to Hebrews 3:7–10: *“Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works...”*—

underscore that: “your fathers,” the Israelites—“*saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart.*”

They always made mistakes. They never could get God understood. They never could do the right thing. God was grieved with them. They provoked God. They put God to the test, and yet these were the people that saw God work miracle after miracle after miracle after miracle after miracle. You think that, if you were to see God work miracles, that would be all you need. But you’re wrong. They saw the works of God, but they never really understood God.

Notice: “*When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways...*”—notice, in verse 9, they “*saw my works.*” Verse 10—“*they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest*” (Hebrews 3:9–11). *When you see* God’s works, *but you don’t know God’s ways, you will never have God’s rest.* Moses said, “Lord, show me thy way.” God said, “I will, and I’ll give you my rest. You’re going to have my rest.”

It’s not going to work in the morning. That’s not what it is. It’s not sleeping till ten o’clock. That’s not what He’s talking about. The rest of God is simply trusting the finished work of God. It is a heart that is free from anxious cares. It is a heart that is free from worry and fretting and problems. It is a life that has ceased from struggle. Too many people are trying when they ought to be trusting. Too many people are relapsing when they ought to be resting.

The Israelites never really entered into the land of Canaan, which pictures the land of rest, because all they saw was the works of God. They saw the plagues. They saw the Red Sea. They saw the fountains of water. They saw the manna. They saw it all. But that’s all they saw. They saw the works of God, but they never understood the ways of God; and they never found rest to their souls.

Some of you have problems. Some of you are worried. Some of you are perplexed. Some of you are in consternation. Some of you are in turmoil. And you’ll never find rest until you know the ways of God.

B. The Difference Between Intimacy and Infatuation

Now, what is the difference between works of God and the ways of God? It is the difference, number one, between rest and relapse. Number two: it is the difference between intimacy and infatuation. Notice, in Exodus 33:11, the relationship between Moses and Jehovah: “*And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend*” (Exodus 33:11). Say, how would you like to be on terms like that with the Almighty? “*And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.*” Just as I talk to you, that’s the way the Lord and Moses were

carrying on. Abraham was called a friend of God. Jesus said, “I call you no more servant, but friend” (John 15:15). Intimate relationship.

But there are others who don't know God intimately. All they are is infatuated with God. Know what infatuation is? It's that thing that we call love, but it's not love at all. It's puppy love that some people get married on, and end up with a dog's life—infatuation. When one teenager is infatuated with another teenager, he thinks it's love, but it's not love.

Do you know what? You can't love someone until you know their ways. But where do we get infatuated? We see a person's works. We look at them from observation. *There's been many a man who fell in love with a dimple and made the mistake of marrying the whole girl* All he saw was observation. He just looked, and it was infatuation. And then people get married; and then, before long, the honeymoon is over. Somebody has said, “The honeymoon is that period of time between ‘I do’ and ‘You'd better.’” What is that? Infatuation. We see something, and we say, “That's wonderful! That's what I want!” And, later on, when we get what we want, we don't want what we got, because we did not really know that person.

You cannot love a person until you know their ways, and you can't love God until you know God's ways. That's the reason people don't get blessed. What is the prime requisite for blessing? It is obedience. All right, why don't we obey God? I'll tell you why we don't obey God: because we don't trust God. We're just afraid to obey God. Why don't we trust God? Because we don't love God. You see, when you love someone, you trust them, right? Well, why don't we trust God? Because we don't know God. We don't get blessed, because we don't know God. *To know God is to love God. To love God is to trust God. To trust God is to obey God. And to obey God is to be blessed* But you don't obey God, because you don't love God; and you don't love God, because you don't know God. And there are too many people who don't know God.

Oh, they see what God does, and they get infatuated. That was the problem with Israel: they had an infatuation with God, but it didn't last. There they were at the Red Sea, leaping and dancing and praising, saying, “What God is like our God? What God is like our God? Oh, hallelujah!” And three days later, just three days later, they were murmuring and complaining. The honeymoon was over. They had an infatuation. All they saw was God's works, but they did not know God's ways, and because they saw the works of God but did not know the ways of God. They were simply infatuated with God.

And the difference between knowing God's works and knowing God's ways is the difference between intimacy and infatuation. Moses spoke with God face to face, but what all Israel did was to see what God did. That's the reason that some people come to church. They'll come to church when the glory is on it, when people are being saved,

and they say, “I want to be a part.” It’s a bandwagon instinct. They don’t know God. All they see is what God is doing. But I’ll tell you the proof of a real Christian are those folks who stay by the stuff when the bloom is off, who still love the Lord, who still go on, because they are not simply miracle-mongers.

Look in John 2:23, one of the most amazing scriptures in the Bible. Jesus had performed the miracle of turning the water into wine, and many people saw it. They saw the works of Jesus. But now, notice verse 23: *“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did...”*—they saw His works, and they believed in Him, but they weren’t saved. Watch this. There are two kinds of belief. There’s infatuation. Notice—*“many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man”* (John 2:23–25).

Jesus knew they didn’t really believe. Jesus knew all they were, were miracle-mongers. They saw the works of God, and when they saw the works of God, they said, “I want to follow a man who turns water into wine.” But Jesus would not commit Himself unto them. And this same bunch of Israelites that had seen God open the Red Sea in three days were murmuring because they had no water. All they knew were the works of God, but they didn’t know the ways of God.

C. The Difference Between Being a Teacher or a Testifier

Thirdly, the difference between works and ways is the difference between being a teacher and being a testifier—the difference between being a teacher and being a testifier. When all you see is the works of God, that makes you a testifier. When you know the ways of God, that will make you a teacher, that will make you a preacher, that will make you a counselor.

Some are simply testifiers. All they can do is just simply tell what they saw God do. No doubt, something has happened to them. Israel could have given a testimony. They could have said, “Yes, we came through the Red Sea. Yes, God fed us with manna. Yes, God gave us water to drink out of the rock.” They could have given testimony, but they could never have been teachers, because they simply saw the works of God, but they did not know the ways of God.

Do you remember that man that was born blind, in John the ninth chapter? Jesus Christ healed this man that was born blind, and later on, the Pharisees and the others found this man, and they said to him, “Who was the one who healed you?” And the man gave his testimony. He said, “I don’t know who He was, but once I was blind and now I see.” All he knew was the works of God. That was good, as far as it went. They said, “Tell us, was He a sinner? Was He a blasphemer? Who was He?” This man said,

“Whether He was a sinner or not, I don’t know. I don’t even know. All I know is once I was blind and now I see” (John 9:24–25). That was a good testimony for that day, but suppose twenty years later you walk up to that fellow and say, “Who healed you?” “I don’t know. I don’t know why He did it. All I know is once I was blind and now I see.” That testimony wouldn’t be so good.

You see, he ought to be able to know why the Lord healed him, and what was the truth behind the healing, and what was the inner working of the mind, and the heart of God. Later on, Jesus Christ came back to this same man and didn’t leave him with that “once I was blind and now I see” business, but Jesus explained who He was, and what it was all about, so the testifier could become a teacher.

Some of you will never be of real good to the service of the Lord. Oh, you can give your testimony. One man was talking about how the Lord had done so much good for him forty years ago: “And the Lord filled my cup forty years ago, and not one drop has come in, and not one drop has gone out.” Somebody said, “His cup must have wiggle tails.”

Have you learned the ways of God? or, are you just simply a testifier and saying, “Oh, God, heal me, or save me”? That’s good, as far as it goes. But you’ll never become a teacher, you’ll never become a spiritual counselor, you will never become a person who can lead as Moses led, until you pray the prayer, “Oh, God, show me thy way. I don’t want to know you by observation; I want to know you by revelation. I don’t want to know you by infatuation; I want to know you intimately.”

D. The Difference Between Peace and Panic

Fourthly, the difference in knowing God’s works and knowing God’s ways is the difference between peace and panic. Friend, if you have your eyes on the works of God, and that’s all, you are going to find yourself in panic and consternation from time to time. At the Red Sea, when the sea was before them, Pharaoh was behind them, the mountains on one side, the desert the wilderness on the other side, no place to go—they were between a rock and a hard place, so to speak; everybody was in consternation. There they were in panic. The only person there who wasn’t in panic was Moses, because he knew that God had led them that far, and God was going to lead them on. That’s the difference between knowing God’s ways and knowing God’s works. If you know God by simply knowing the works of God, when God’s works are the way God’s works ought to be, you’d be shouting. But when God’s works are not the way you think God’s works ought to be, you’ll be doubting or pouting.

What’s the difference? You need to let God be God, and find out who God is and what God is like; and then, come weal or come woe, come thick or come thin, come good or come bad, come sun or come rain, “*though he slay me, yet will I trust in him*”

(Job 13:15), for I know the ways of God. So many simply know God by His works; then they come apart when God doesn't do it like they think He ought to do it. Somebody has said, "If you can keep your head when all those around you are losing theirs, it's a sign that you don't understand the situation." I would say that maybe that's true; but if you can keep your head when all of those around you are losing it, it might be a sign that you know the ways of God; you know the ways of God, and all those around you just simply know the works of God.

People just don't understand how God operates, and so they think maybe things are off-schedule. They think the world is in chaos, and everything's in a mess, and so they say, "Well, look what's happened: God has failed." So they don't know the ways of God. We sing that Christmas carol:

*I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat,
Of peace on earth good will to men.*

*And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.*

*And in despair I bowed my head
"There is no peace on earth," I said,
"For hate is strong and mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good will to men."*

*Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail
With peace on earth, good will toward men."*

—HENRY W. LONGFELLOW

Brother, when you know the ways of God, when you see the plan of God, when you understand the master situation, when you know what our Heavenly Father is up to, and when you see that the conditions that prevail in the world today are such as God has written down in His Word and prophesied thousands of years ago—the perilous times—then, when you know the ways of God, bad news becomes good news. Amen? When all these things begin to come to pass, the Bible says, "*Lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh*" (Luke 21:28). And the child of God can say, "Praise God, it's

getting gloriously dark! Oh, the King is on His way!” Because a person knows the ways of God, what God is up to. Not simply what God does, but why God does it.

E. The Difference Between Intercession and Interest

Fifthly, the difference between knowing God’s works and knowing God’s ways is the difference between intercession and interest. The person who sees what God does is on the interest level, he says, “How interesting! Oh, how interesting! Did you see what God did here? Did you see what God did there? God healed this person! God did this thing! God did that thing!” But when a person knows the ways of God, then it is not mere interest. He joins God. He sees what God is up to. And then he begins to intercede and to pray. But you can never pray as you ought to pray until you first of all know the ways of God. Prayer *is not* bending God’s will *to your will, but prayer is* finding *the will of God and getting in on it*. That’s what prayer is. And the only man that can really intercede and pray is the man who knows the ways of God.

Do you remember when God said He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah? Abraham talked with the Lord. In Genesis 13:17, “*And the LORD said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do.*” God says, “I’m going to destroy this city, but I’m not going to hide that from Abraham. Abraham is going to know. Abraham is going to understand.” “*Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets*” (Amos 3:7). Isn’t that great? You see, *God doesn’t have any favorites but He does have some intimates* He has some people that have the gift of wisdom, who know the way of God.

So God said to Abraham, “I’m going to destroy Sodom.” And Abraham said, “Now, Lord, it’s not like you to destroy the righteous with the wicked.” And then Abraham began to intercede, and Abraham began to pray. But the reason that Abraham could pray as he prayed was this: that he knew the ways of God. That’s what makes you an intercessor. The reason we pray so many silly prayers is that we don’t know the ways of God.

I imagine, when the Israelites were out there in the wilderness, they were saying, “Oh, God, kill these snakes. Look at these snakes. God, get rid of these snakes, these fiery serpents you sent.” But Moses went to God, and God said to Moses, “Moses, put a serpent upon a pole, and whoever looks at it will live.” Moses knew how to intercede. He knew how to pray. He knew the ways of God. We would have said, “Kill the snakes.”

People say today, “Why doesn’t God kill the devil?” God doesn’t kill the devil. He puts His Son on a cross, amen? Some people don’t know the ways of God. All they see are the works of God, and when they see the terrible situation that’s in the world today they don’t know how to pray. They pray, “God, kill the devil.” What they ought to be praying is, “God, glorify your Son, the Lord Jesus,” because they know the ways of God.

I imagine, when Saul was wrecking havoc and devastation upon that early church, all those disciples were praying, “Lord, strike him dead! Strike Saul dead! Strike him dead!” But God didn’t strike him dead. God struck him alive, and saved him. He became a mighty apostle.

There are some people who know how to pray. They have insight, and they become intercessors, because they know the ways of God. The difference between knowing the works of God and the ways of God is the difference between intercession and mere interest.

II. How Are You Going to Know the Ways of God?

How do you know the ways of God? How does God reveal His ways to you? The works of God, that’s obvious: God does it, you see it. But how does a person know the ways of God? Go back to our scripture now, Exodus 33, and notice verse 11: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend...”* Verse 14: *“And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”* Verse 19: *“And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy”* (Exodus 33:11, 14, 19).

How did Moses know the ways of God? Moses knew the ways of God, not by observation, but by revelation. He knew the ways of God by direct confrontation with God, by spending time alone with the Lord. How do you get to know anybody? I know the works of Elmer Bailey. Virginia knows the ways of Elmer Bailey, amen? She lives with him, and she knows his ways. I know some of his ways, because I work with him. But if I lived with him, I would know more of his ways. The way to learn the ways of a person is to spend time with him, an intimate association.

God and Moses spent time with one another, face to face, as a friend with his friend. Many times, we go to a counselor, when we have problems, and we want that counselor to tell us what to do. Shall I sell my car and buy this car? Shall I move from this city to that city? Shall I do this? Shall I do that? And we would like for the counselor to take the place of the Holy Spirit in our life, and say, “Do this, and don’t do that.” When I counsel, I don’t do that, friend. I don’t give that kind of advice, because that’s not the job of a spiritual counselor. My job as a spiritual counselor is to help give insight into the ways of God and to bring you face to face with God for yourself.

Conclusion

Many times we wonder why we come to these problems. These problems that we have that make us seek out a counselor are God’s Red Seas that are closing every door to us, so no door will be open but one: straight up. So we will have to come face to face

with God, is what the school is for; but a lot of folks drop out. God wants to bring you into face-to-face confrontation with Him. When you get alone in the secret council halls of the Almighty, then you know the Lord face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend, and God reveals to you His way, what a difference it will make! *“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel”* (Psalm 103:7). God was provoked with the children of Israel, and said, “They will never enter into my rest” (Hebrews 3:7–11). When you find the ways of God and stop worrying about the works of God, it will bring rest sweet rest to your soul.

Knowing God Intimately

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 3, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 33:11–16

Outline

Introduction

- I. Three Things About Knowing God Intimately
 - A. It Is the Way of Tranquility
 - B. It Is the Way of Stability
 - C. It Is the Way of Necessity
- II. How Do You Know God Intimately?
 - A. By Direct Dealing with God
 - B. By Spending Time with God

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to the Book of Exodus, if you will this morning, chapter 33—Exodus chapter 33—and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 11. When you've found it, look up here, and let me ask you this question.

You know about Buddy Green, because you just heard him. You saw him. You realize that he is a gifted and a versatile musician. But most of you, that's all you know. You may know that he is a Dove Award winner. You may know that he is known among musicians as a great musician. But how many of you know him intimately? I would say that most here don't know him intimately. All you know is what you know about him. You don't know him intimately. But his wife Vicki knows him intimately.

Now I want to talk to you about not just simply knowing about God. I think all of us here know about God, but I would daresay that not everybody here, even those who claim to be saved, know God intimately. And, frankly, folks, that's one of the great problems in today's church. We have many who know about God, but few who know God intimately. And how sad it will be in the resurrection to meet a God face to face that we have not known heart to heart.

Now, look, if you will, in verse 11: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend...”*—now, how would you like that? How does that sound? It sounds wonderful to me—*“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle. And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not*

let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now they way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him,—that is, Moses said to Jehovah—*“if thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth”* (Exodus 33:11–16).

Now if that passage seems a little complicated to you, I want you to stay tuned, because it is an incredible passage that deals with the necessity of knowing God personally. Know the key is in verse 13, and in verse 13 is a prayer of Moses. I want you to look at it very carefully. Get your Bibles now, and look in Exodus 33 and verse 13. If you want to know God intimately, here’s the key. Moses prays this: *“Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight...”*—have you been saved by grace? Then don’t stop there—*“if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee”* (Exodus 33:13)—*“shew me now thy way, that I may know thee.”* Underscore that: *“Shew me now thy way, that I may know thee.”* Have you got it? *“Shew me now thy way, that I may know thee.”* In order to know God intimately, you have to know the ways of God. Have you got that? In order to know God intimately, you have to know the ways of God.

Now there are two ways that you can know God: casually or intimately. You can know about God, or you can know God. Now to know about God is to know God’s works. To know God intimately is to know God’s way. Have you got that? To know about God is to see God’s works. To know God intimately is to know God’s way. Most people know God on the first level. All they know is the works of God. They know what God does, but they don’t know the ways of God. They don’t know who God is.

Now put in your margin Psalm 103 and verse 7. Now Moses prayed, “Lord, show me thy way” (Exodus 33:13). Was that prayer answered? Absolutely! Psalm 103, verse 7, says this clearly: *“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts”*—*acts*: another word for that would be his *works*, his *works*—*“unto the children of Israel”* (Psalm 103:7). He made known his ways to Moses. *“He made known...his acts”*—or his *works*—*“unto the children of Israel”* (Psalm 103:7). Moses knew God in a way the rest of the people didn’t know. The rest of the people saw the works of God, but Moses knew the ways of God. And, folks, that just divides everybody up. There are those people today who know what God does, but they don’t who God is; they don’t know God intimately. They know about God. They see the works of God.

Just like you heard the songs of Buddy Green. That’s what he does, and you know

about him by sitting here listening to him. But his wife knows him intimately; she knows his ways.

Now what we need to do today is to look beyond the works of God and to see the ways of God. Some people know God in a different way than other people know God, because they know the ways of God; they know God intimately. Now that brings a question: Does God have favorites? No, but He does have intimates. And even in the New Testament, you'll find there was that little trinity of disciples—Peter, James, and John—who were not necessarily the favorites of the Lord Jesus, but they were the intimates of the Lord Jesus. How would you like to be on intimate terms with God? How would you like for God to show you His ways? When you know the ways of God, that will bring peace to your troubled soul. It will bring stability to your life. It will bring victory in your lifestyle.

Now the difference between knowing God's ways and God's works is the difference between intimacy and infatuation.

Now a lot of folks are simply infatuated with God, just like a boy gets infatuated with a girl. I mean, he sees a girl; he doesn't know anything about her ways, but, boy, he looks at her, and she's beautiful. I mean, he sees her style; he looks at the way she's formed physically. He looks at her, the way she just handles herself, and he thinks he falls in love with her. But he's not really in love with her. You can't be in love with someone until you know their ways. And many a man has made the mistake of falling in love with a dimple and marrying the whole girl. And the problem is, it's infatuation.

Have you ever noticed that some people seem to get divorced for trivial reasons? Do you know why folks get divorced for trivial reasons? They got married for trivial reasons. I mean, that was infatuation. They really did not know one another. Joyce and I celebrated yesterday our wedding anniversary, and I can tell you, after these years of living with Joyce, I know her ways. She knows my ways, and I love her all the more. And I thank God for the physical charm and all of those outward attributes; but, oh, for that deeper love that God gives to a man and wife when they know each other intimately!

Now, let's talk about knowing God intimately.

I. Three Things About Knowing God Intimately

And I want to say three things about knowing God intimately. And then I want to tell you how you can know God intimately.

A. It Is the Way of Tranquility

Now to know God intimately will give you tranquility; it will give you rest. Look in verse 14: *"And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest"*

(Exodus 33:14). Now if you only know God casually, if you're only infatuated with God, if you only see God outwardly, if you only see God's works, you will never have rest. As a matter of fact, you will be constantly pushing the panic button. Now God made known His ways to Moses; God made known His acts to the children of Israel (Psalm 103:7).

Now, you see, the children of Israel, they were constantly frenetic, constantly worried, constantly murmuring. Why? Because all they saw were the works of God. They saw God do His miracles. They saw God open the Red Sea. They saw God give manna in the wilderness. They saw God give water out of a rock. You'd think that would satisfy them, wouldn't you? You'd think that they'd just have a heart full of rest, but they were constantly murmuring. Why? They didn't know the ways of God. All they knew were the works of God.

And here's a key verse,—and put this verse down in your margin also—Hebrews chapter 3—listen to it—verses 10 and 11. It is a very key verse. Hebrews chapter 3, verses 10 and 11—listen to it. God speaks of those Israelites who were constantly murmuring and yammering and carping and complaining, and were filled with fear, no rest, and here's what God said about them: *"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation..."*—this is Hebrews 3, verse 10—*"Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart;"*—now, notice this—*"and they have not known my ways."* They don't know my ways. *"So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest"* (Hebrews 3:10–11). "They don't know my ways. They'll not have my rest. I'm grieved with them. They don't know the ways of God."

Now remember Psalm 103, verse 7: *"[God] made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel"* (Psalm 103:7). Hey, folks, let me tell you something. If all you see is what God does, and you don't know God intimately, you'll never have rest. You'll have the spiritual heebie-jeebies all of your life. Listen. God said, *"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest"* (Exodus 33:14)—Exodus 33, verse 14. You see, the children of Israel were doing fine as long as the works of God pleased them. I mean, as long as God was opening the Red Sea, as long as God was giving them water out of a rock, as long as God was feeding them with manna from heaven, they were doing fine, as long as the works of God pleased them. But then, when God didn't do things just the way they thought that God ought to do, they pushed the panic button.

There's an oft-repeated illustration about the bookmark that some of us have in our older Bibles. Beautifully embroidered on one side of the bookmark is just a mass of tangled threads; but on the other side it says, "God is love." And when it's embroidered, in order to embroider it, on one side, you just have all those threads, you know; but you turn it over, and the message is on the other side. Now some just look at it from the backside, and they just see that tangled mass of threads. They don't see the ways of God, that God is love. But, you see, our ways and God's ways are so different. And

you'll never have that peace, that deep peace, until you understand the ways of God; because, folks, God's ways are often confusing to human wisdom.

Peter and James were both put in prison. They were servants of the Lord Jesus, apostles of Christ, arrested, and put in prison for preaching the gospel. Old Herod put them both in prison. You know what happened to James? His head was cut off. Do you know what happened to Peter? Peter was delivered miraculously out of the same prison. Folks, how are you going to explain that? Are you going to say, "Don't worry about when you go into prison, because an angel will get you out?" Or, are you going to say, "When you go to prison, get ready to have your head cut off"? Are you going to say that God loved Peter more than He loved James?

Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost. He stood up for the Lord Jesus Christ and accused that crowd of crucifying Jesus; and 3,000 souls came to Christ. Stephen preached. He didn't get 3,000 souls; he got 3,000 stones. They stoned him to death. Folks, if all you see are the works of God, you're going to be hopelessly confused. You're going to say, "Does God have people's heads cut off?" Or, "Does God let people out of prison? Does God give 3,000 souls when you preach, or do you get stoned when you preach?" I mean, if all you see is what God does, if you don't have a deeper insight into the ways of God, you're going to be pushing the panic button all the time.

You will never rest until you know God intimately. You see, to know the ways of God is the way of tranquility. To know God intimately is the way of tranquility. God says, in that verse—look at it again—verse 14, "I will give you rest—when my presence goes with you" (Exodus 33:14). There is nothing that will bring rest to your troubled soul like an intimate knowledge of God. If all you see is what God does in this world, folks, you are going to be one nervous Christian—until you learn to know the ways of God. Have you got that one?

B. It Is the Way of Stability

All right, to know the way of God is the way of tranquility. Now, let me show you something else. To know the ways of God, to know God intimately, is not only the way of tranquility; it is the way of stability. It's the way of stability. Now the difference between Moses and Israel: Israel, who only saw what God did, they were so fickle—they were so fickle. You ever know any fickle Christians? These are the ones, they're just infatuated with God. That's fickleness; that's infatuation.

When God opened that forty-eight-lane superhighway through the Red Sea, boy, they went through the Red Sea, just like *this*, towering walls of water on either side. They got on the other side, and then all that water tumbled in on the Egyptians. You know what the Bible says? The first song, Jim, in the Bible, is recorded right there in Exodus 15. They sang "The Song of Moses and the Lamb." They were leaping and

dancing and praising God for what God had done. “What a mighty God we serve,” they wanted to sing.

And He is a mighty God. Three days later—just three days later—they got out there in the wilderness, and no water, and they’re murmuring; they’re complaining. They want to go back to Egypt, just like a girl gets married, and three days into the honeymoon she wants to go home to Mama. I mean, the honeymoon is over. They had been singing “The Song of Moses and the Lamb”; and now they’re criticizing Moses. Moses has gone from hero to zero in three days. I mean, there’s not a greater leader than Moses. He brought us through the Red Sea. And then they say, “What did you do? Bring us out in the wilderness to die? There’s no water out here.” They were so fickle.

To know God intimately is the way of tranquility. To know God intimately is the way of stability—stability. If you don’t know God intimately, you’ll not be a stable Christian. You’ll be just like Israel was. You’ll blow hot and blow cold. “Good Lord, good devil. Sometimes I’m up; sometimes I down. I’m down.” Why? Because all you see is the works of God. You don’t know the ways of God. You don’t know the heart and mind of God. You don’t know God intimately, so you blow hot and blow cold.

I’ve seen it happen in churches. Boy, a church, you know, it will be sailing along, and everything is up. The income is up. The Sunday School attendance is up. The building program is up. And everything is. The statistics are up, and people join a church when the bloom is on it. It’s good to be a part of church when the bloom is on it. The bloom is on this church right now, and I thank God for it. That’s wonderful. That’s a lot of folks, you know. They join when the bloom is on a church. Then you let trouble come, let persecution come, let difficulty come, let adversity come, and they leave. Why? They don’t know God intimately. All they see are the works of God. And if the works of God please them, then, “Fine, just count me on. I’m on.” But then you let difficulty come, and they say, “You know, I think maybe we need a new pastor,” just like people said, “You know, Moses, you’re not the leader we thought you were. I mean, you brought us through the Red Sea. That was great, but now, look. Here we are out here in the wilderness, and no water.”

Why? No stability. And why no stability? All they see are the works of God. They don’t know the ways of God. He’d made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel (Psalm 103:7). We need in our lives stability.

You know, there were those who followed the Lord Jesus when they saw His works. It’s an interesting thing; it’s worth turning to. Turn to John chapter 2—just turn to this. Keep your bookmark there in Exodus 13, and turn with me to John chapter 2, and look with me in verse 23. See if this doesn’t remind you of a lot of folks that you know of right now: “*Now when he was in Jerusalem...*”—this is speaking of Jesus—“*when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name*”—now, notice

this—*“when they saw the miracles which he did.”* You see that? What was that miracle that He did? He just turned water into wine. They saw His works. “Man,” they said, “I like that. Did you see what He did? He turned water into wine. Sign me up. I want to be a part.” But notice in verse 24: *“But Jesus did not commit himself unto them,”*—now the word *commit*, in verse 24, and the word *believe*, in verse 23, in the Greek language, are the same word. They believed in Jesus, but Jesus didn’t believe in them—*“because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man”* (John 2:23–25).

Jesus knew these were just miracle mongers. Jesus knew that they didn’t know His ways. All they saw were His works. They saw the miracles that He did. That’s all they saw. They didn’t see the crucifixion. They didn’t see the coming cross. You go on a few chapters in John—the fifth chapter and the sixth chapter—where Jesus fed 5,000. Oh boy, the crowds were following Him! But when He talked to them about the deeper spiritual verities—eating His flesh, and drinking His blood, and all of that—they left them. Jesus had to say to His disciples, “Will you also go away? Will you also go away?” (John 6:67). Fickleness, no stability.

If all you do is to see the works of God when everything is fine, the sun is shining, and all of that, boy, you’ll be marching in the parade! But just let adversity come. Just let difficulty come. Let something come that you can’t understand. You say, “God, why did you do this? How did you allow this? I’m going home to Mama.” You know why you want to hotfoot it back to Egypt? You’re fickle. You don’t know God intimately. You can’t stick. You see, listen. To know God intimately is the way of tranquility. To know God intimately is the way of stability.

C. It Is the Way of Necessity

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to notice: that to know God—to know God intimately—is the way of necessity. It’s not just simply that you’re going to get tranquility and stability. I mean, it is necessity. Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2. Let’s get the context of this whole story. When you see a text in its context, then it begins to make sense.

Now what has happened is this: I mean, how does this prayer come about, anyway, where Moses is praying this prayer? Well, Moses had gone up on Mt. Sinai, and up on Mt. Sinai God was giving to Moses the Ten Commandments. And not only is God giving to Moses the Ten Commandments, He’s giving to Moses the plan for the tabernacle. And now Moses comes down from Mt. Sinai, and Moses’ brother Aaron has collected golden earrings from all of the people, melted the gold, and made a golden calf like they worshiped in Egypt. And the people, in a naked orgy—in debauchery—are dancing around an idol, a golden calf. God’s wrath—God’s anger—is burning against them. And

well, it might. Moses is frightened for his people. He knows that God has every right to eradicate them. Moses begins to stand in the gap. Moses begins to intercede. And, by the way, only the person who knows the ways of God knows how to intercede. Only a person who knows God intimately can be an intercessor. And Moses begins to intercede, and Moses says, “Oh, God, don’t do it! Don’t destroy this people! Oh, God! God, have mercy!”

And then, in answer to that prayer—look in Exodus 33, verses 1 and 2: “*And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou has brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will give it:*”—he says, “All right, okay, then go on to Canaan”—“*and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite:*”—these are all the Canaanites. These were all demonically empowered people. And God says, “I’m going to send an angel before you. This angel’s going to clear out that bunch.” And then he says, in verse 3, “I’m going send you into”—“*a land flowing with milk and honey:*”—but now, notice this—“*for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way*” (Exodus 33:1–3).

Now God says, “All right, all right, you want the land? You want victory over the Canaanites? You want the Promised Land? You want somebody to provide for you and protect you? I’m going to take my chief angel. Angel, go with those folks. Take care of those Hivites, and those Jebusites, and Perizzites, and termites. Take care of them. Just drive them all out. Let those people go into that land. Let them have the milk. Let them have the honey. Let them have the corn, the wine, the oil, and pomegranates. Let them have it. But,” God says, “I’m not going with you. I am not going with you. You will go, but you won’t have my presence.” Boy, when Moses heard that, a chill went over him.

And look, if you will, in verse 15. Now here’s what Moses prays: “*And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence*” (Exodus 33:15). That is, “God, if you’re not going, I’m not going. God, I don’t want Canaan without you. I don’t want the blessing without the Blessor. I don’t want the victory without the Victor. I don’t want the land without the Lord. I don’t want it. God, if you’re not going, I am not going.” You see, to know God intimately means tranquility. To know God intimately means stability, but to know God is necessity.

Now so many of us don’t understand this. This is what it’s all about, you see. Learn this, folks, and learn it well: You can have provision, and you can have protection, and still not have God’s presence. Now that ought to frighten you. You know, a lot of folks just settle for eternal security. They just say, “Well, I’m saved. I’m going to heaven. That’s all right. I don’t want the intimate presence of God, as long as I’m saved.” You’re

just like this bunch here. I mean, there are a lot of people who would have taken that deal in a heartbeat. You say, “You mean, God, you’re going to send an angel? I’m going to have victory all the way? You mean I’m going to have the land that flows with milk and honey? I’m going to know victory? Thank you, Lord.” And they would not have been bothered that God’s presence was not with them.

Now, folks, let me tell you one of the most frightening things I can tell you this morning. You can have provision, and you can have protection, without having the presence. That’s what this teaches: it’s possible. Don’t just think that, because you have the things you want, you know God intimately. The Bible says, on another occasion concerning these Israelites, that God gave them the desire of their heart and “*sent leanness into their soul*” (Psalm 106:15).

You know, the problem with many of you—maybe, many of us—right now is you’re just doing fine. You live in a beautiful home. Your children are healthy. They’re making good grades. You’ve got a job. You’re putting money in the bank. Your retirement looks good, and you’re satisfied. May God have mercy upon you! You are satisfied. Moses said, “I don’t want Canaan, Lord, without you” (Exodus 33:15). Many people would have taken that first deal. And you live in a prison of prosperity. And you think, because you’re there, that everything is fine.

You know what Dr. Vance Havner said? We miss Dr. Havner. He’s gone to heaven now. But Dr. Vance Havner said this—and I quote from him. He says, “I’m often amused and amazed at the way we equate Christianity with success, popularity, and prosperity. We may not admit it, but we use the same old gauge the world uses, except we employ religious language. It would appear that gain is godliness with us, in spite of Paul’s formula that godliness plus contentment equals prosperity.” So often we say that money will not satisfy, but listen to me, folks. That all depends on what we’re trying to satisfy. The problem is not that money doesn’t satisfy. Come up close and listen now. The problem is not that money doesn’t satisfy; the greater danger is that money does—I mean, that you have it, and you’re satisfied.

H. H. Farmer wrote these words: “To Jesus”—to Jesus—“the terrible thing about having wrong values in life and pursuing wrong things is not that you’re doomed to bitter disappointment, but that you are not; not that you do not achieve what you want, but that you do.”

Now, think about it. You say, “Pastor, I don’t know what you’re saying.” I’m saying, folks, that if you can be satisfied with the things of this world, if you have can have Canaan without the presence—victory, and angel clearing the way—that’s a very dangerous thing. You see, to know God intimately—to know God intimately—that’s tranquility. To know God intimately, that is stability. To know God intimately, that is necessity. And don’t you take prosperity; don’t you take victory; don’t you take a land

flowing with milk and honey; don't take anything as a substitute for knowing God intimately.

Last week, I said something I want to repeat. Maybe hearing it twice will drive it into your heart. St. Augustine, one of the early church fathers, asked this question: "If God were to come to you, and God were to say to you, 'I'll give you anything you want, every pleasure you desire; nothing will be withheld; you will live forever; every desire of your heart will be met; nothing will be a sin to you; you can have whatever you want, with this one exception: you will never see my face,' would you take that proposition?" St. Augustine said, "If you would say *no* to that, then you have the pure love of God." He said, "If a chill went over your soul when you heard that phrase, 'you will never see my face,'" he said, "thank God for that chill. That is the most precious thing about you, because it means you have the pure love of God. That means more to you than this whole wide world."

And that's what Moses said. Moses said, "Hey, I don't want Canaan without you. I don't want an angel. I don't want victory. I don't want milk and honey. I want you, O God" (Exodus 33:15). And God is not satisfied with you, and God is not finished with you, until your chief desire is God and God alone. To know God intimately, folks, it brings tranquility; it brings stability. It is necessity to know God intimately.

II. How Do You Know God Intimately?

Well, how do you know God intimately? Obviously, our time is gone, but you're not going to know God intimately by human reason. Can a man by reason find out God? The answer is obviously *no*. How do you know God intimately?

A. By Direct Dealing with God

You know God intimately by direct dealing with God. This is why God kept bringing them into situations. Why did God bring them to the Red Sea? Why did God bring them to a place where there was no water? Why was God bringing them into this situation and into that situation? Why was God bringing them to difficulty? Why? So they'd have to deal with God.

Now if you're a counselor, and people come to you with problems, and you're a counselor, if you solve the problems for those people, you're not a good counselor. Do you know what good counseling does? It brings people to God. I mean, why do you have those difficulties? Why do you have those problems? God is wanting you to come face to face with Him. You learn God by direct dealing with God, and God puts you in places where there's nowhere out but up. When they came to the Red Sea, the only way that they could turn was to God—to God—to know to God intimately.

B. By Spending Time with God

Now, listen, folks. You cannot know God by hearing sermons about knowing God. Sorry about that. You cannot know God by reading books about knowing God. You can't know anybody that you don't spend time with. You see, to know Him is to love Him. To love Him is to trust Him. To trust Him is to obey Him. To obey Him is to be blessed. And to be blessed is to be a blessing. And it all begins with knowing Him. And you can't know anybody that you don't spend time with. How do I know Joyce? We've just been married all these years. I've spent time with her. She's spent time with me.

Conclusion

If all you see are the works of God, you're just infatuated with God. When the bad times come, like a scared rabbit, off you'll go. But when you know God, when you know the ways of God, when you know the heart and mind of God, when God speaks to you face to face, as He spoke with Moses, folks, that's wonderful—to know God intimately.

Knowing the Ways of God

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 29, 2002

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 33:12–14

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Difference Between Knowing God's Ways and Knowing God's Works
 - A. It Is the Difference Between Rest and Relapse
 - B. It Is the Difference Between Intimacy and Infatuation
 - C. It Is the Difference Between Being a Teacher or a Testifier
 - D. It Is the Difference Between Peace and Panic
 - E. It Is the Difference Between Intercession and Indifference
- II. How Can You Know the Ways of God?
 - A. Not Through Human Reason and Human Ingenuity
 - B. Through Intimate, Face-to-Face Dealing with God

Conclusion

Introduction

There is something else we need to know—and that is the will of God. Most of us are saying, “Lord, I want to know your will for the coming year.” But may I say that there is something more important than knowing the will of God—and it is knowing the ways of God. I want to talk to you tonight about knowing the ways of God. Would you find, in God's Word, Exodus chapter 33. The truth that I am going to share with you tonight, my brother, Ron Dunn, who is now in heaven, shared with me; and I was blessed by it, and I want to share it with you.

Exodus chapter 33, beginning in verse 12: *“And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight. Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”* (Exodus 33:12–14).

Now Moses is facing a great task. He is to take the chosen people, called the children of Israel, and he is to lead them all the way through the wilderness and into a land called Canaan, the Promised Land. And faced with this tremendous task, with

many things unforeseen, unforeknown, he makes a prayer. It is a great prayer. It ought to be the prayer of each one of us here, tonight. It is found in verse 13: *“Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way”* (Exodus 33:13).

Now, there are two ways that you can be acquainted with God. For example, you can know God’s works: what God does; or you can know God’s ways: who God is. Now Moses didn’t say, “Lord, show me your works.” He had already seen plenty of God’s works. He says, “Lord, if I’ve got a task to do—a gigantic task to do—Lord, I want to know your ways.” And God answered that prayer.

Put in your margin Psalm 103 and verse 7. The Bible says, *“He made known his ways unto Moses, and his acts unto the children of Israel”* (Psalm 103:7). Moses knew God’s ways. Israel knew God’s works. They saw what God did, but Moses knew something that the rest of Israel did not know. There are two levels of knowledge about God. Some know God’s works: they see what God does; others see God’s ways: they see insight into God’s character. Now, to know the ways of God will bring peace in a troubled world. And God knows that we are facing a troubled world. And as we face this New Year, my prayer for you, as your pastor, is—and for my own personal life—that I might learn the ways of God. To learn the ways of God will bring peace in troubled times.

I. The Difference Between Knowing God’s Ways and Knowing God’s Works

Now, let me talk to you about the difference, therefore, between God’s works and God’s ways.

A. It Is the Difference Between Rest and Relapse

The difference between knowing God’s works and knowing God’s ways is the difference between rest and relapse. For example, God promised Moses rest. Look, if you will, in verse 14: *“And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”* (Exodus 33:14). Israel found no rest. Go look into the New Testament now, and let’s just find the commentary on this. Turn with me to Hebrews chapter 3 for a moment—and it is worth turning to. And I will wait until you find it—Hebrews chapter 3. And I want you to see what God has to say—and God is commenting on this very same passage right here, Hebrews 3—and let’s begin in verse 7: *“Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me,”—now, watch this—“and saw my works forty years.”* For forty years Israel was wandering in the wilderness, and they saw the works of God. But now, notice in verse 10: *“Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.”* “They saw my works, but they never

knew my ways.” So now, notice in verse 11: “*So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.*” (Hebrews 3:7–11).

Now Moses said, “Lord, I want to know your ways.” God says, “Moses, I am going to give you rest.” Israel knew God’s works, but they never found rest. When you know God’s ways, it is the difference, therefore, between rest and relapse. You see, you can know God’s works—you can see God’s works—without knowing God’s ways. The land of Canaan represents the believer’s rest. They were to have rest, but they never found rest. Those of us who know God’s ways are going to find that we are living in a perpetual Sabbath: not a seventh-day Sabbath; a 365-day-a-year Sabbath. Every day this coming year can be a day of rest, if you will know the ways of God.

Now, why don’t we know this? Why don’t we have this blessing? Well, there is no blessing without obedience. And there is no obedience, because there is no trust. And there is no trust, because there is no love. And there is no love, because there is no knowledge. You can’t trust someone that you do not know. And you cannot know anyone, if all you see is their works, and you don’t know their ways. So you have to know an individual. You have to know their ways in order to love them. You have to love them in order to trust them. And you have to trust them in order to obey them. And the reason that Israel never found rest is because they saw the works of God. They saw the miracles of God. They saw the plagues on Egypt. They saw the Red Sea opened. They saw all of these things. But they never understood the ways of God. And they never found rest. The difference between knowing the works of God and the ways of God is the difference between rest and relapse.

B. It Is the Difference Between Intimacy and Infatuation

Another thing: To know the ways of God rather than merely the works of God is the difference between intimacy and infatuation.

Now it is easy to be infatuated with God. If I were to do a miracle here tonight—which I have decided not to do—but if I were to do a miracle here tonight—just some spectacular miracle—the news would spread through this community. If we were to bring a little child in a wheelchair here, and I could go down and lay my hands on that child and heal that child—it would be an obvious, industrial-strength, conclusive miracle—why, the word would go through the community. In the next service we would not be able to put people in here with a shoehorn, because they would want to see the miracles of God. They would be infatuated with these miracles.

But to know the ways of God: people are not always that interested in the ways of God. It is easy to be infatuated with the works of God. I have seen many people infatuated with God. People can get infatuated with a church when the bloom is on the church. But let the church have difficulty, let the church have problems, and they leave.

They don't have genuine faith. They don't know the ways of God.

A man sees a girl. He thinks she's beautiful. His heart begins to beat. He is infatuated with her. And he falls in love with a dimple and makes the mistake of marrying the whole girl. And she's gorgeous when he marries her. But now she is fat and forty. Now he is bald and bulging. And they don't really know one another intimately.

Moses knew the ways of God, and he had an intimate relationship with God. Look in verse 11: "*And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend*" (Exodus 33:11). That's knowing the ways of God. That is not simply knowing the acts of God.

In today's world there are a lot of people that I call miracle mongers. They are looking for a miracle. You can turn on television—religious television—today, and you will see one sideshow after another. Now there is a big difference. Jesus did miracles and didn't advertise them. These people advertise them and don't do them. But people still are looking for a miracle. They are looking to see the works of God. And so they come, thinking they are going to be convinced.

You will find those kinds of people in John chapter 2, when Jesus turned water into wine: a genuine miracle. But the Bible says, "Many followed Him when they saw the miracles that He did" (John 2:23). "Many believed on Him" is what it literally says. But the Bible says, "*Jesus did not commit himself unto them*"; and He uses the same word in the Greek: "Jesus did not believe in them." They believed in Him, but He did not believe in them—"for He knew man, and needed not that any should testify what was in man" (John 2:24–25). Jesus knew that people could be infatuated by miracles, but they did not know Him intimately.

Later on, in the Gospel of John, when Jesus fed 5,000, why, the people flocked to Him. They said, "Look! A human cafeteria! That is incredible! Look! He's feeding us with bread and fish!" And they followed Him. And then Jesus began to talk to them about knowing His ways, knowing Him intimately, eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And they left Him like rats leave a sinking ship. They were miracle mongers. They were infatuated, but they never really knew the Lord.

Israel was infatuated with God at the Exodus. I mean, when they came out, God opened up a forty-eight-lane superhighway through the Red Sea. And here they go through the Red Sea, leaping and dancing and shouting and praising God: infatuation. It wasn't long until they were moaning and groaning and complaining. And Moses, their leader, had gone from hero to zero, because it was mere infatuation. That was a honeymoon when they went through the Red Sea. But it wasn't long until they wanted to go home to mother.

I have noticed that people who get divorced for trivial reasons are the people who

got married for trivial reasons. It's infatuation; it is not genuine love. You can't love a person if you don't know their ways.

Now Israel saw the works of God. They saw the miracles of God, but they did not know the ways of God. God made known His works unto Israel, and His ways unto Moses, because Moses prayed, "Lord, show me your way." It is the difference between rest and relapse. You will have a relapse when trouble comes if you don't know the ways of God. It is the difference between intimacy and infatuation. You will want a divorce from God if you are merely infatuated with God because of His works.

C. It Is the Difference Between Being a Teacher or a Testifier

It is the difference between being a teacher or a testifier. Now the person who sees the works of God is a testifier. The person who knows the ways of God is a teacher. Moses could teach in ways that Israel could not teach. Now it is pretty easy to give a testimony. If you see God do something, you can stand up and give a testimony. But if that is all that happens, you are not going to be much of a teacher.

In John chapter 9, there is the story of a man who was born blind, and Jesus healed him. You remember that story? Nod your head. Hello? Okay now, Jesus healed him. The Pharisees got that man and began to interrogate him and to say, "Who healed you? What were His credentials?" as if they were to say, "Who ordained Him? And what seminary did He go to? What right does He have to do all of this? Is He a sinner or not?" Do you know what that man said? "I don't know whether he is a sinner or not—I don't know. But one thing I know: Once I was blind, and now I see." That's okay—that's okay. But twenty years from then, that wouldn't have been much of a testimony, would it? "I am still not sure whether He is a sinner or not. I don't know whether He is a blasphemer or not." No, later Jesus came and taught that man and disciplined that man, so he could be more than a testifier (John 9:1–38).

There are a lot of people who just want to stand up in a church and testify about how Jesus saved them when they were nine years old. Well, I am glad He did. And everybody ought to have a testimony. But are you not going to go any further than that? Are you never going to learn the ways of God, so that you cannot only tell what God has done, but who God is: something about the very nature of God?

Now most of us are not very good teachers. We may be testifiers. Do you know what makes a good counselor? By the way, we have some good counselors in our church. Not all of them are on the staff; some of them are lay counselors. Do you know what makes a good counselor? A person who has the ways of God in his or her heart. And, by the way, to be a good counselor does not mean that you solve a person's problems for them. To be a good counselor means you bring them to God—you bring them to God. You allow them to have an *I-Thou* relationship with Almighty God, where they

begin to learn the ways of God and the nature of God. And only those who know the ways of God make a good counselor.

D. It Is the Difference Between Peace and Panic

Now to know the ways of God rather than merely the works of God is the difference between peace and panic. At the Red Sea Moses was the only one who didn't panic. Everybody else panicked, because all they could see is what was happening. They did not know the ways of God. Somebody said, "If you can keep your head when all those 'round about you are losing theirs, it is a sign you don't understand the situation." Or it may be a sign that you know the ways of God. It is the difference between peace and panic. If all you see are the works of God, then, when the works of God don't work out just right, you push the panic button. You see, many times, things are not going to work out the way you think. Just about the time you think you have got it all figured out how God is going to work, He does things strange.

James was put in prison, and he was beheaded. Peter was put in prison, and an angel comes and springs him, and he walks out of prison. The doors open up, chains fall off. Well, who did both? Who allowed both things, anyway? God. Peter preaches on the Day of Pentecost. He gets 3,000 souls. Stephen testifies: he gets 3,000 stones. Did Peter love Jesus more than Stephen? Was Peter God's little darling, and Stephen not? Was James of less value than Simon Peter? I am telling you, my dear friend, if you try to get your theology from the works of God, you are going to be panicky most of the time. You need to know the ways of God.

Moses said, "Lord, show me your ways." Do you know the ways of God? Now what we need to do is know God in such a way—come weal or come woe; come thick or come thin; come good or come bad; come sun or come rain—"Though you slay me, yet will I trust you, Lord, because I know your ways."

E. It Is the Difference Between Intercession and Indifference

To know the ways of God is the difference between intercession and indifference. A man who knows the ways of God is a man who can intercede. Abraham was an intercessor. We will leave Moses for a moment. Moses, of course, interceded for Israel because he knew the ways of God. Abraham knew the ways of God. God said, "I am going to destroy Sodom." And Abraham protested, and he said, "Lord, this is not your way. Lord, you are not going to destroy the righteous with the wicked: that is not your way." Abraham had such an intimate relationship with God that he was able to pray and intercede.

There is a lot of foolish praying that goes on because people do not know the ways of God. And they are asking God to do things that He will not do. I did that on one occasion. I stained heaven with my prayers: something I wanted God to do. I explained

to God why He ought to do it. As I have told you before, I even shouted at Him. But God spoke to me, and He said, “Adrian, you are asking me to do something I am not going to do.” Now He did not speak audibly, but He spoke to me. But He said, “I know what I am doing: trust me.” I learned something of the ways of God that is so different from the works of God. Moses prayed, “Lord, show me your way. I want to know you intimately.”

II. How Can You Know the Ways of God?

Now, in this coming year, how can you know the ways of God? Are you ready? Let me tell you how to know the ways of God.

A. Not Through Human Reason and Human Ingenuity

May I tell you, first of all, how you will not know the ways of God. You will not know the ways of God through human reason and human ingenuity. Look, if you will, in chapter 33, verse 12: *“And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight”* (Exodus 33:12).

Now, there were some things that Moses did not know and God didn’t tell him. Go over to Isaiah chapter 55. I referenced this, this morning. Look at it again. In Isaiah chapter 55, verse 8, God says, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts,”*—now, watch this—*“neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD.”* Don’t ever make the mistake of thinking that God’s ways are like your ways, that God’s thoughts are like your thoughts. *“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8–9). So you are not going to know God’s ways through human ingenuity. Your thoughts are never going to reveal to you God’s ways. God’s ways are always mysterious.

Let me give you another scripture. Turn to Psalm 77 with me for just a moment. And if you want to know something about the mysterious ways of God, look, if you will, in Psalm 77 and verse 19—the psalmist speaking to God: *“Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known”* (Psalm 77:19). God walks on the water, but you will never see His footprints there after He has walked on the water. Look at it again—listen: *“Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.”*

What does that mean? It means God’s ways are always mysterious. God leaves no footprints on the sea of life. Now, there are no pathways in the trackless and traceless sea. God’s ways are mysterious. So if you are on the ocean, you are not going to find a path. The sailors of this day had to look up to the stars. How are you going to know the ways of God? Not by looking around, not by human ingenuity, not by reasoning, for God

says, “My ways are not your ways; my thoughts are not your thoughts.”

B. Through Intimate, Face-to-Face Dealing with God

You know the ways of God through intimate, face-to-face dealing with God. Look again in verse 11—we are in Exodus 33: “*And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face*” (Exodus 33:11). Go down to verse 14, and He says, “*My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest*” (Exodus 33:14). Look, if you will, in verse 19: “*And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy*” (Exodus 33:19).

All of these talk about an intimate relationship with God. That does not come by observation—of seeing God open the Red Sea. It does not come by interrogation or reasoning. It comes by an intimate relationship with God.

Over here is my associate pastor. I love him very much, and I respect him. When I asked him to be the associate pastor of the church, you know why? I knew his works. I knew what he did. I watched him. He has a fine mind. He has a work ethic. He is loyal. As far as I can tell, has a personal, intimate relationship with God. I knew his works. I will tell you something about Diane, his wife. She knows his ways—she knows his ways. She knows things about him that I don’t know and you don’t know. But she knows him intimately in a way that we don’t know him. Now, after working with him these years, I am beginning to learn something about his ways. And I am afraid to say it, but he is learning something about mine too—about ways.

How do you know the ways of God? There is no way that you are going to open a book and learn about the ways of God. There is no way that you are going to see what God does and learn the ways of God. You can see the works of God, but how wonderful when God says to you in answer to prayer, “My presence will go with you, and I will speak to you face to face!”

Conclusion

Again, I want to say that the purpose of all counseling and preaching is not to solve problems for people, but to bring them into the presence of God, so that they know God face to face. And when we learn to seek His face, and not His hand, we will know His ways, and we will find rest for our souls. That is my prayer for you for the coming year: that you will know the ways of God.

Knowing God Intimately

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 9, 1999

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 33:13–14

Outline

Introduction

- I. Knowing God Intimately Will Give You Serenity
- II. Knowing God Intimately Will Give You Stability
- III. Knowing God Intimately Will Give You Sufficiency
- IV. How Do You Know God Intimately?

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, take God's Word and find the Book of Exodus, please—Genesis, Exodus; it's the second book in the Bible—and find chapter 33. And when you find it, let me ask you a question. How many of you know Joyce Rogers, my wife, personally? Now, don't answer the question, but think about it. You may say, "Well, pastor, I know her. I've heard you talk about her. I have seen her. I've heard her sing. I have watched her from time to time in programs, but I wouldn't necessarily say, 'I know her personally.' Certainly, I don't know her intimately." Well, I want to tell you, I know her personally, and I know her intimately, because there's a difference in knowing about somebody and knowing somebody. There are people who hear me talk about God, and they know about God, but I wonder, how many people in this building could say, "I know God"—not just, "I have facts about God"—"I know God; I know Him personally; I know Him intimately?" I think it will be sad to meet in the Resurrection someone face to face that we have not already known heart to heart.

Now what I want to do is to help you to know not only about God—and you need to know about God—but to know God. Look, if you will, in Exodus chapter 33. Let's begin reading in verse 13. Here's a prayer of Moses. He says, "*Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way,*"—now, listen to this—"that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said,"—God said to Moses—"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:13–14).

Now it's one thing to know about God and to know His works. It's quite another thing

to know His ways. Look in verse 13: *“Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way.”* Would you underscore that phrase, *“Shew me now thy way.”* The way to know God intimately is to know the ways of God. I can tell you, I know the ways of Joyce Louise Gentry Rogers. I know her ways, and she knows my ways, because we have been living together this long. Moses said to God, “God, I want to know you. So show me your ways.”

Now, with that in mind, would you turn to Psalm 103, and look in verse 7—Psalm 103 and verse 7. In Psalm 103, verse 7, here is what God says about Moses’ prayer. We can find out whether or not that prayer was answered. He says, in verse 7, *“He made known...”*—that is, speaking of Jehovah—*“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel”* (Psalm 103:7). Do you see that? Now, what did Moses pray? He said, “God, I want to know you. Show me your way.” That was his prayer. And the Bible says, here in Psalm 103, verse 7, *“He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts”*—that is, his works—*“unto the children of Israel”* (Psalm 103:7). That is, Moses knew God in a way that the other people did not know God that way. Moses knew the ways of God. Israel knew the works of God. Now the study of theology shows you the works of God, but communion helps you to know the ways of God, to know God intimately, and to know God personally.

Does God have favorites? I don’t believe that God has favorites, but I do believe that God has intimates. Now you will never know, in my estimation, stability and victory, without knowing the Lord Jesus, and God the Father, and God the Holy Spirit, intimately. And God wants you to know Him intimately. As a matter of fact, salvation is spoken of as the most intimate relationship that beings can have together.

Now if you only know God’s works, but you don’t know God’s ways, that’s the difference between infatuation and true love. So many people don’t know intimacy. All they know is infatuation.

Now, when I first started paying attention to Joyce—that was many, many years ago—we were grade school children. And my desk sat right here. Her desk was one row over and about four desks up. So rather than paying attention to the teacher, I was sitting there paying attention to Joyce the whole time. I looked at Joyce. I thought she was the most beautiful thing I’d ever seen. I still do. There were just ways about her, and I would sit there and fix my eyes upon her; and I had a real case of puppy love, just sitting there looking at this creature. But I didn’t know her intimately. All I knew was that I liked what I saw. I liked the way she acted. I was taken away with her smile. I was impressed: the fact that she always had her homework done, and I never had mine done. And I was infatuated with this girl.

There’s nothing wrong with infatuation. And many times it leads to genuine romance. But the problem with so many people is they don’t know God intimately. All they see are

the works of God. They don't know the ways of God. And so their relationship with God is just infatuation. It is not real, genuine spiritual love.

And that's what happens so many times in marriage. A man falls in love with a dimple and marries the whole girl. He was just simply infatuated. And then later on, he wakes up and finds out that he's married to somebody that he really doesn't understand, or really doesn't know, and really doesn't want to live with. Have you ever seen people who seem to get divorced for trivial reasons? Do you know why they get divorced for trivial reasons? They got married for trivial reasons. And because they got married for trivial reasons, they separate the same way.

Now it's not enough to know God's works, God's style, God's acts. You need to know God intimately. Now, let me tell you three things that knowing God intimately will do for you.

I. Knowing God Intimately Will Give You Serenity

First of all, it will give you serenity. Go back again and look at this verse: *"And he said,"*—in verse 14—*"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest"* (Exodus 33:14). And the rest He's talking about now is not sitting on a rock and getting your strength back. The rest He's talking about is serenity.

Now, you see, Israel saw God's works, but they did not know God's ways. And, therefore, the people of Israel never had this serenity. They never had that rest. When God had brought the Jews through the Red Sea, God opened up that superhighway through the Red Sea, and the Jews went through the Red Sea, walking on dry ground. The Bible says, "dry shod." That means their feet didn't even get wet going through the Red Sea. They went wading through. They went through on dry ground. Well, well, good night! They saw the works of God. It's an amazing thing. I've seen the Cecil B. DeMille depiction of this—and, probably, depiction is weaker than the reality—walls of water on either side. Who would not want to follow a God like that? I mean, the God that could open up the Red Sea? And so they saw the works of God, and they said, "Count me in." But they did not know the ways of God; and, therefore, they had no real serenity.

Now, take your Bibles this time, and turn to Hebrews 3 for a moment. Just keep your bookmark there in Exodus 33, and turn to the Book of Hebrews. It's important that you turn to this, because you're going to find out the difference between the acts of God and the ways of God. If all you see is God's works, you're never going to have real rest. Hebrews chapter 3, and let's look, beginning in verse 7—God is speaking to people in New Testament times, and He's referring back to the Old Testament: *"Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:"*—God is saying, "If you'll listen to God today, you won't act like those people acted so long ago, who hardened their

heart against God back in the wilderness when the Jews were in the wilderness.” Notice again in verse 9—*“when your fathers tempted me,”*—that is, “tested me”—*“proved me”*—now, underscore this—*“and saw my works forty years”* (Hebrews 3:7–9). Forty years they saw what God did in the wilderness. Forty years they were in the wilderness, and all they could see were the works of God. Remember God made known His ways unto Moses; His acts, His works, unto the children of Israel. So for forty years, they are seeing what we would call today the acts of God. And they did this for forty years.

But notice in verse 10: *“Wherefore I was grieved with that generation,”*—they didn’t please God—*“and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways...”*—do you see that? They saw God’s works, but they kept on making mistakes over and over and over again—*“they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest”* (Hebrews 3:10–11). You will never have serenity, you will never have rest, if all you see are the works of God. If you see the acts of God, but you do not know God intimately, you only will be infatuated with God. You will never ever have rest. Why is that? Well, friend, if all you see is God’s works, you’re going to be hopelessly confused. Sometimes the works of God will please you, and sometimes the works of God will confuse you. And if you’re just seeing what God does, you’re going to be confused most of the time.

Now when the works of God pleased Israel, they praised Him. When the works of God did not please Israel, they murmured and they complained about God. The difference between knowing God’s ways and knowing God’s works is the difference between peace and panic. Now when the Jews came to the Red Sea, and before God opened up the Red Sea, Israel was in a panic. Moses was the only one there who had peace, because Moses knew God’s ways. The rest of them, they just simply had their eyes on the works of God. And at that time it looked like God had failed them. It looked like that God had led them into a cul-de-sac, and God had led them into a trap, and they were about to perish.

Now, are you going to get your theology from what God does? If you do, you’re never really going to have rest. You read in the New Testament where both Peter and James were put in prison by Herod—both of them godly men, both of them loved the Lord, both of them followed Him as disciples, or apostles. James is put in prison, and he is beheaded; and God has allowed it. Peter is put in prison, and Peter has an angel escort out of prison. An angel comes in, and there’s a jailbreak led by this angel, and Peter gets out of prison. Two men put in jail by the same person: one dies a martyr’s death; the other’s released. God is superintending both.

Now, what are you going to learn about the nature of God if you see just the acts of God—just the works of God? It would be confusing. If you saw God let Peter out of prison, you’d say, “Boy, that’s the God I want to follow.” But if you saw James get his

head cut off, you'd say, "What kind of God is this, who would allow one of His servants to be beheaded? Surely, God could deliver His servants." It's an amazing thing. Peter and Stephen, they were both filled with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, and 3,000 people got saved. You say, "Man, I want to be Spirit-filled. I'd like to be a preacher like Peter." I'd like to preach in one service and see 3,000 souls saved. I'd like to do that some day, Brother Bob—3,000 souls saved. "Here, I'm Simon Peter. And look what God has done! Oh, the wonderful works of God!"

Well, if you continue to read in the Book of Acts, a few chapters later there's a man named Stephen—the first deacon, one of the first deacons. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. He preached. They stoned him to death. He didn't get 3,000 souls; he got 3,000 stones. He loved God. What I'm trying to say is this, folks: If all you see is what God does, and you don't know God intimately—you don't know God personally—you're never going to have serenity; you are never going to have rest.

Now, look again at our scripture. Go back to Exodus chapter 33. Look at it—verse 14. And he says, "*My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest*" (Exodus 33:14)—"*I will give thee rest.*" If, however, you simply know the works of God, and you do not know the ways of God, you will never have the serenity—the peace—that a Christian ought to have.

II. Knowing God Intimately Will Give You Stability

Second thing: Not only will knowing God intimately give you serenity; it will give you stability—it will give you stability. There are a lot of people who've only seen God's works. They know about God, but they don't know God; and they are very unstable people. Now if all I have with Joyce is infatuation, then there's going to be a very unstable relationship in our marriage. And if all she is, is infatuated with me, we're not going to have that real stability. We're going to have a certain amount of fickleness.

Let's go back to the time when God opened up the Red Sea to let the Jews go through on dry ground. When God did that, folks—listen—when God opened up the Red Sea, and there was old Pharaoh behind them, the sea before them, mountains on every side, they were closed in. And then God, at the last moment, He opens up the Red Sea, and they go through. And then, when they turn around and look, and all the waters are piling in upon those Egyptians, who had been so cruel and had threatened them, they're over there on the other side, and they begin to sing, I believe, the first recorded song in all of Scripture—and it was a song of victory. They sang "The Song"—the Bible says—"of Moses and the Lamb"—"Moses and the Lamb."

I'm telling you that Moses was the man of the year—old Moses. You talk about following somebody by polls: his poll numbers were very high. They were singing his

song. Three days later—just three days later, just three days! Three days, folks!—they're out there in the wilderness, and they can't find any water. And they began to complain at Moses: "Hey, Moses, weren't there any graves over there in Egypt? I mean, if we're going to die, why did you lead us out here in this fiasco? Moses, can't you read a map? What is all of this?" Poll numbers went all the way down. In three days Moses had gone from hero to zero—in three days!

Why? Well, they were infatuated. I mean, three days into the honeymoon they wanted to go home to mama, because it wasn't exactly what they thought it ought to be. That's infatuation. All they saw, when they were shouting and leaping and dancing, were the works of God: "Look! We've got a God who can open up the Red Sea!" And when they got out there in the wilderness, and God was going to prove them—the Bible says God was going to test them—God knew exactly what He was going to do. Many times God will give the test first and the lesson afterward. And God was just testing them, and they failed the test miserably, because, you see, they were not stable. A person who doesn't know God intimately is not going to have serenity, and he's not going to have stability.

I've seen it happen in churches. You take a church sometimes, when God is blessing the church, and it seems like they have a week like we had in Celebrate Jesus: souls are saved; crowds are here; offerings are there. Or, just take a normal church: buildings, and budgets, and baptisms, and fellowship, and everything growing. "Oh," they say, "isn't this wonderful?" People want to join a church when the bloom is on it. But then, you let problems come, let persecution come, let them have difficulty with City Hall and not be able to build a building, or let the contractor do an overrun in the price, or let this thing happen, or let there be some problem, and the people leave; and they say, "Maybe we need a new pastor. Something is wrong here." They don't stay. They don't stick.

Why? Because, they don't know the ways of God. All they do is just say, "Well, when the sun is shining, and everything is going fine, and God is opening up Red Seas, just count me in." But get them out in the wilderness. God wants to put them through a little test. They have a little difficulty. Adversity comes. Problems come. They have no serenity. And, therefore, they have no stability. It happened here, and it happens to so many people. The people who stay by the stuff are the people who know God intimately—people who know God intimately. I've seen these people blow hot, blow cold—blow hot, blow cold. The problem with them is that all they know are the works of God.

I'll give you two examples of that in the Bible. In John chapter 2, John tells about—you remember—Jesus had turned water into wine. This was His first miracle that manifested His glory. And the Bible says that, because of the miracles that Jesus did—

the Bible says, in John chapter 2—“Many believed on Him”—on Jesus—“when they saw the miracles that He did” (John 2:23). But it goes on to say, “He did not believe in them.” The King James says, “[He] did not commit himself unto them” (John 2:24). But it’s the same word that’s used for belief in that passage. It’s just translated different ways, but it’s exactly the same word. What it literally says: “They believed in Him, but He didn’t believe in them.”

And then John explains why that is, and it says, “For He knew man”—Jesus—“He knew human nature, and needed not that any should testify what was in man” (John 2:24–25). You see, Jesus knew that these were miracle mongers. Jesus knew that He could get a crowd. Jesus knew that He could get followers by performing miracles. Who wouldn’t follow a miracle worker? So Jesus said, “They saw me change water into wine, so they say, ‘Count me in. I want to be a part.’ They are infatuated.” They didn’t know Jesus intimately. They knew about Him. They saw His works. They didn’t know His ways. They said, “We believe in you,” but He said, “Yeah, but I don’t believe in you.”

And then just follow it on through. Come up to John chapter 6, where Jesus feeds the 5,000, and the multitudes are following Him. They say, “Look! He’s a human cafeteria. This is wonderful—wonderful!” And the Bible says, “Many followed Him when they saw the works that He did” (John 6:2). And Jesus turned to them and talked about knowing Him intimately. And Jesus talked to them about eating His flesh and drinking His blood. And the Bible said they began to go away—just going away, going away, going away. The crowds are getting very small (John 6:66).

You know, the size of the crowd doesn’t always mean whether the preacher is right or wrong. Did you know that? Jesus sometimes preached the crowds away. And so the crowds began to go away. And Jesus turned to the twelve and He asked them a question—and I want to ask you. He said, “Will you also go away? Are you going to go away too?” (John 6:67). And thank God for old Peter. He sometimes—many times—put his foot in his mouth, but he got it right this time. He said, “Lord, where would we go? You alone have the words of life” (John 6:68).

Now, see, he had gone beyond infatuation. He had come to understand something about His Savior: not just simply seeing that Jesus could feed 5,000, not merely seeing that Jesus could turn water into wine, but here was something in Peter’s heart, who says, “Oh, Lord, I want to know you, not what you can do. It’s not your works, Lord; it’s your way. It is who you are. I want to know you intimately—intimately.”

Now the difference between panic and peace is knowing the ways of God. When you know the ways of God, it gives you stability. If you know the words of God, you’re going to be constantly confused if that’s all you see, because God’s works are not going to make sense to you many times. His ways and His works are as high above this earth as the heavens are. And then, not only is He going to give you that serenity; He’s going

to give you stability. When things come that you don't understand, when things seem to go upside down, you're going to stay to Him and cling to Him.

III. Knowing God Intimately Will Give You Sufficiency

Now, here's a third thing that knowing God intimately will give to you. Knowing God intimately will give you, first of all, serenity; secondly, stability; and thirdly—and this is so important—sufficiency—sufficiency. You will never ever have the deepest need of your heart and your life met until you know God intimately.

Now, let's go back to this chapter again, and go back to Exodus chapter 33, where we started, and look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2 of this chapter. What had happened is this: that Moses had gone up on Mount Sinai, and there on Mount Sinai he had gotten the Ten Commandments. And when he came down from Mount Sinai, he found that Aaron had led the people into idolatrous worship. Aaron had made a golden calf. The people had gotten drunk. They were having an orgy. They'd taken off their clothes. They were dancing naked around a golden calf. They were having a drunken brawl. And God is angry. And Moses begins to intercede. Chapter 33, verse 1: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:”*—now, what is this in verse 2?—*“and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: unto a land flowing with milk and honey:”*—now, watch this—*“for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way”* (Exodus 33:1–3).

Now, what is God saying? God said, “All right, I promised to give you a land. I promised the land of Canaan. Go ahead. Go into the land. I'm going to send a mighty angel with you. He's going to drive out these Canaanites. But,” He said, “I'm not going with you. If I went with you, I'd probably turn around and destroy you, the way you've been living. So just go on. You can have the land, but you won't have me.”

Now, notice, in verse 15, Moses' response to this. And in chapter 33 and verse 15, Moses said, *“If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence”* (Exodus 33:15). God had said, “You can go. I'll give you an angel escort. I will give you provision. You're going into the land. I will give you protection. I'll send an angel with you, but you'll not have my presence. But you will have provision, and you will have protection; but you won't have my presence.” Moses said, “Look, I don't want the provision, and I don't want the protection, without the presence.” Moses said, “God, if you're not going, I'm not going. Don't send us. Go with us.” Now Moses was wise enough to know that it would be hollow and it would be empty without Him. Did you know that there are many people who would settle for God's protection and God's provision? Many people. They don't

really care that much about God's presence.

I'll give you an example. The average Baptist loves the doctrine of eternal security, and it's a good doctrine. It's a Bible doctrine; it's not a Baptist doctrine. If we have any Baptist doctrine, we need to get rid of it. And Methodists need to get rid of Methodist doctrine. Presbyterians need to get rid of Presbyterian doctrine. We all need to believe just simply the Bible. I believe eternal security is a Bible doctrine.

There are a lot of folks who say, "Whew, I'm heaven-born. I'm heaven-bound. I'm going. Nothing can take me away from God. I've got protection, and I've got provision. Protection: the devil can't get me. Provision: I'm going to heaven." But how many of those same people who believe in eternal security want to know God intimately? They just simply say, "Oh yes, well, that's fine, God. You're going to carry me on to my heavenly Canaan. You're going to send an angel escort. You're going to get me there." But do they really long to know God, to have that intimate relationship with God? There are many people who are enjoying eternal security who are not walking in the Spirit and enjoying victory.

And that tells me something else. You may right now be having protection, and you may right now be having provision, but that doesn't mean you're right with God. Think about it. You say, "Well, I must be right with God. Look how He's blessing me. I must be right with God: the devil has not been able to get to me." Well, these folks had an angel escort them, and God said, "I'm going to give you the land, but my presence is not going with you." Does that bother you that you might have eternal security, that you might have provision, and you might have protection, and still be missing the best?

You see, you only have true sufficiency when you know God intimately. Don't ever mistake the provision and the protection for the presence. You see, even an unbeliever can have provision. God makes it to rain on the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). The people who don't believe in Jesus today living in the city of Memphis, they're breathing God's air. They have food. God makes it to rain on the just and the unjust.

Do you know what it would be to have provision and protection without having the presence? It would be like Joyce and I being married, and we don't get a divorce, we just have separate bedrooms, and I say, "All right, okay, I made a promise. I stood there at the marriage altar. Okay, we're married. I'm going to take care of you. I'm going to provide for you. That's your side of the house. This is my side of the house." Now, you know, some people say, "That's all I want from God. All I want from God is provision. All I want from God is protection."

But Moses wouldn't take that deal. Moses said, "Look, God, if you don't go, I'm not going to settle for any angel. I'm not going to settle for any blessing. I don't want the blessing without the Blessor. I don't want the land without the Lord. God, you are my serenity, you are my security, and, God, you are my sufficiency. I want you." I think

that's what the psalmist was saying in Psalm 73, verses 25 and 26. He said, *"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever"* (Psalm 73:25–26). Moses is saying, "Lord, I want you."

You know, there are people who have other things, but they don't have God. They live in sort of a prison house of prosperity. They're captive to their riches. Revelation chapter 2, verses 8 and 9, talks about a little church that everybody else said was poor but God said was rich. In Revelation chapter 3, he talks about a church that everybody else said was rich, and God said it was poor. Listen to Revelation 2, verses 8 and 9: *"And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty,"*—here was a little church that could hardly pay the light bill, but he says, parenthetically, in this passage—*"(but thou art rich)"*—"I know you're in poverty, but you're rich"—*"and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan"* (Revelation 2:8–9). Our Lord said to this little church, "Look, everybody else knows you're being browbeaten, and you're poor; but you're really rich." And then He says to another church over there, in Revelation chapter 3, verse 17, *"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked"* (Revelation 3:17).

Now, two churches. Here's a little church over here on the backside of town. They can hardly pay the mortgage. They can hardly pay the utilities. Everybody's talking down to and beating up on them. Jesus said, "You're rich." Over here on the other side of town is a church, and they've got all sorts of big chariots parked out front, and all the rich people are coming and going, and they say, "Look, we're rich and increased with goods; we don't need anything." The Lord says, "You don't know that you're poor and wretched and miserable and blind and naked." Now, look. What was the difference? What are true riches? Not provision, not protection, but the presence of God—the presence of God. You—if you don't have that—you don't have sufficiency. Your heart was made for God. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us for thyself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee."

And I've shared with you what Augustine said on another occasion. We call it Augustine's Proposition. He's the one we call sometimes St. Augustine. And here's what Augustine said—and I want you to listen to it—and I'm quoting this; listen to it very carefully: "Suppose that God proposes you a deal, and says, 'I will give you anything you want. You can possess the whole world. Nothing will be impossible for you. You will have infinite power. Nothing will be a sin, nothing forbidden. You will never die, never have pain, never have anything you do not want, and always have everything you do

want, except for just one thing: you will never see my face.” Then Augustine asked this: “Would you take that deal? If not, you have the pure love of God. For look what you just did: you gave up the world, and more—all possible worlds, all imagined worlds, all desired worlds—just for God.” And then Augustine went on to ask, “Did a chill arise in your heart when you heard the words, ‘You will never see my face’? That chill is the most precious thing in you: it is the pure love of God.” Isn’t that something? You see, Moses said, “Take Canaan. Take your angel. Take it all. I don’t want it without you. God, I want you. I want you.”

You know, Dr. Havner said this—Dr. Vance Havner, Baptist preacher, Bible teacher, and evangelist, who’s gone to heaven. He said, “I’m often amused and amazed at the way we equate Christianity with success, popularity, and prosperity. We may not admit it, but we use the same old gauge the world uses, except we employ religious language. It would appear that gain is godliness with us, in spite of Paul’s formula that godliness plus contentment equals prosperity.”

You know, sometimes we say, “Well, money—money will not satisfy.” Well, that’s not necessarily so. It all depends upon what we’re trying to satisfy. Often the problem is not that money doesn’t satisfy, but, to the carnal person, the tragedy is that it often does. I mean, he takes the lesser deal: “I’ll take the provision; I’ll take the protection; and I don’t have to have you, God.” That’s what some folks want. Some people would say, “Hey, Moses, that is not a bad deal.” But Moses said, “No, I want you, O God.” The Bible says that God spoke to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend. Moses wanted that personal relationship to God.

H. H. Farmer wrote this—and listen to it: “The terrible thing about having wrong values in life and pursuing wrong things is not that you are doomed to bitter disappointment, but that you are not; not that you do not achieve what you want, but that you do.” What he’s saying is the worst thing that could happen to you is not that you would go after money, and money wouldn’t satisfy you; the worst thing that could happen to you is that you would go after money, and money would satisfy you—that you would take the deal that God offered Moses: “I’ll send you on into Canaan. You can have the land, milk and honey, corn and oil, and wine and pomegranates and grapes, and flocks and herds, hills and valleys, iron and brass, rivers; you can have it all, but I’m not going with you.” Moses said, “No deal! No deal! God, if you don’t go, I am not going. I want you, Lord. I want you.” You see, what made Moses different? Everybody else saw the works of God. Moses prayed, and said, “God, show me your ways.”

That little, pretty thing sitting over there—my wife—I know more than her works; I know her ways. I know her intimately. And I want to know God intimately, and I hope you do.

IV. How Do You Know God Intimately?

Well now, as we wrap this up, how do you know God intimately? I mean, how do you do this? How do you get to know the ways of God? Well, not by human reasoning. Turn to Isaiah chapter 55, and look with me for a moment. If you think that perhaps you could just open the Bible and pry out things about God, and you think that knowing the ways of God comes, perhaps, by observation, look in Isaiah chapter 55, verses 8 and 9. God says, *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8–9). Now, what is God saying? God is saying that, “My ways are beyond human discernment.” You see, life is not a puzzle to be solved; it’s really a mystery to be lived. It’s easy to see the works of God.

As a matter of fact, that tornado over there in Oklahoma, do you know what the insurance people will call that? An act of God. That’s what the insurance term for that is: an act of God. What kind of a God is that? I mean, is that the kind of God you say, “Dear God, I just love you, and I praise you”? I mean, if all you see are these things, you’re going to be confused. Some people say, “Oh, the tornado didn’t hit our house. Praise God!” Well, what does that say to the people where the tornado hit their house? “Oh, God was good to us.” Well then, was God bad to those other people? Think about it. You see, God’s works are so mysterious, and God’s ways are so much higher than your ways. Do you know how to learn the ways of God?

Go back to our scripture again, Exodus chapter 33, and we’re almost finished. Let me show you how you know the ways of God. How did Moses get to know the ways of God? Look in Exodus 33 and verse 11: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”* (Exodus 33:11). Now, go down and look, if you will, in verse 14: *“And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”* (Exodus 33:14). Look, if you will, in verse 19: *“And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy”* (Exodus 33:19).

Now, what is God saying? God is saying, “Look, you want to know me? You’re not going to know me by merely studying about me. You are going to know me by communing with me face to face.” You see, you may know my works, but Joyce knows my ways. You may know Joyce’s works, but I know her ways. I know Joyce intimately.

Now many people are not living in blessing. And the reason they’re not living in blessing is because they’re not being obedient, and there can be no blessing without obedience. Well, many people are not being obedient because there’s no trust, because you can’t obey somebody you don’t trust. And, incidentally, that’s the reason why some of you are not tithing. You know why you don’t tithe? You just don’t trust God. I mean,

you really don't believe Malachi 3:10. I'll never be convinced for one minute that you believe Malachi 3:10 and fail to tithe. It says, *"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there not be room enough to receive it."* If you believe that, you'll tithe. You just don't believe it. You believe it intellectually, but you don't believe it.

You see, listen. There can be no blessing without obedience. There can be no obedience without trust. And there's no trust because there's no love. You see, you trust somebody when you love them. Now if a stranger comes up to me and says, "If I ask you to do something, will you do it?" what's the next thing I'll say? "Well, what is it?" Right? "What is it?" Now, suppose Joyce says to me, "If I ask you to do something, will you do it?" I'll say, "What is it?" Same question. But now, wait a minute—wait a minute. If she says, "Never mind what it is, just, if I ask you to do it, will you do it?" And she has that look on her face: "Will you do it?" You know what I'll say? "Okay, okay." I would.

That little girl sitting over there would never, never, no, never, never, never ask me to do anything that would harm or hurt me. I know she loves me that much, and I love her that much. So if she were to ask me, "If I were to ask you to do something, would you do it?" and she says, "Just trust me; just trust me," I'd say, "Okay." I'd say, "Okay."

You see, listen. There is no blessing, because there's no obedience. There is no obedience, because there's no trust. There is no trust, because there's no love. And there's no love, because there's no intimacy. If all you see are the works of God, then you don't have that intimacy. But when you know the ways of God, to know Him is to love Him; to love Him is to trust Him; to trust Him is to obey Him; and to obey Him is to be blessed. Now you cannot love a person until you know their ways, and you cannot know their ways until you spend time with that person. Moses spoke to God face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. We know the ways of God, not by observation, but by intimate relationship.

Conclusion

And, by the way, this is what counseling is all about. Dr. Putman sitting over here, he's heading up our counseling program—biblical counseling. And I'm so glad that God brought him here. But what is counseling all about? What does a counselor do? Is a counselor somebody that you go to and he solves your problems? No! No! What is the purpose of all true counseling? The purpose of all true counseling is to bring people into the presence of God.

You see, Israel knew the works of God, but they didn't know the ways of God. God was bringing these people into problems; I mean, God was engineering their problems. God brought them to a place where there was no water. God brought them there. That

was God's doing. He brought them to Mara. And He did that, the Bible says, to prove them. He wanted them to find out that, not only was He necessary; He was enough.

Do you know what a good counselor does? He just brings people to God. That doesn't mean he won't help them with their problems. But in helping them with their problems, if that's all he does, and he doesn't bring them to God, then the problem was of no use, it was of no good, because all of the contingencies and necessities of life are to bring us to God.

When you know God intimately, there is serenity. God gives you rest. There is stability. When problems come, you don't want to run home to Mama because you're only infatuated. And there is sufficiency. And you learn, no matter how bad the problem, that, not only is God necessary; God is enough.

How do you know God? Not by observation. His ways are above our ways. You know God by a face-to-face relationship. And, frankly, folks, that's what a quiet time is all about. You can't know somebody if you don't spend time with them. Does this make sense? I hope so. The first step is to bow before Him and surrender and receive Jesus Christ into your heart and into your life as your Lord and Savior. He comes into you first, and then begins to manifest Himself to you.

How to Practice the Presence of God

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 2, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 33:14

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Problems That Demand His Presence
 - A. Times of Disappointment
 - B. Times of Discouragement
 - C. Times of Desertion
 - D. Times of Desperation
- II. The Promise That Brings His Presence
- III. The Peace That Reveals His Presence
 - A. Four Promises
 1. When You Are Discouraged, His Presence Will See You Through
 2. In Times of Loneliness, His Presence Will Cheer You Up
 3. When You Are Worried, His Presence Will Calm You Down
 4. When You Are Tempted, His Presence Will Help You Out
 - B. What Do You Need to Do?
 1. You Need to Practice the Presence of God
 2. You Need to Pray Continually
 3. You Need to Praise Him

Conclusion

Introduction

Exodus chapter 33. Now we have said, often, that we live by promises, not by explanations. God is not obligated to explain anything to you for two reasons: number one—you couldn't understand it; number two—you might not agree with it, because of ignorance. We don't live by explanations. We stand on promises. And Peter has called them "*exceeding great and precious promises*" (2 Peter 1:4). I want to give a promise today that I believe is one of the most precious promises in the Word of God. It is the promise of God's presence. And I want to talk to you today about how to practice the presence of God.

Here's the promise, in verse 14: "*And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest*" (Exodus 33:14). Now, isn't that a great promise? "*My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.*"

I. The Problems That Demand His Presence

Now you have to understand this scripture in it's background, in it's setting. And I want you to see the problems that demand His presence.

Let me tell you what had happened. God had brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt into the land of Canaan. With mighty power and a high hand God led them. And God had given them protection; and God had given them provision; and God had given them sustenance. God had watched over them with power. And miracle was piled upon miracle. And God gave them a great and a mighty victory as they were going into the Promised Land. But then the people sinned grievously against God. They turned to idolatry. They made a golden calf and began to dance naked around the golden calf. Moses had been up on Sinai to give the Ten Commandments. He comes down, and he finds the people there dancing lasciviously and profanely around an idol. Moses is so grieved. He is so angry. He is so brokenhearted. The tablets of stone, on which the Ten Commandments are, fall to the ground and are broken. And Moses goes down and takes that golden calf, and burns it in the fire, and grinds it to powder, and mixes the powder with the water, and causes the people to drink that water. And their great delight has become their great despair and their great discomfort. And God had moved to judge those people for that idolatry.

And then Moses goes to God and he intercedes; and he says, "O God, O God, these people have sinned a great sin. God, please! O God, forgive them! Lord, if you won't forgive them, blot my name out too—out of the book which you've written." So God speaks back to Moses.

I want you to see the context in which the Lord spoke to Moses here, in chapter 33, verse 1: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swear unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it:"*—now, watch verse 2—*"and I will send an angel before thee"* (Exodus 33:1–2). God says, "You go, and I'm going to send an angel." And Moses said, "No, Lord, I don't want an angel; I want you." Go down to verse 11: *"And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face,"*—underscore the phrase *"face to face"*—*"as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle. And Moses said unto the LORD, See, thou sayest unto me, Bring up this people: and thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send with me. Yet thou hast said, I know thee by name, and thou hast also found grace in my sight."* Now, here's Moses' plea—listen to it: *"Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, show me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me,*

carry us not up hence.” “That is fine, Lord. Don’t send an angel. Lord, you’ve got to go. And, Lord, if you don’t go, I am not going.” “*For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth*” (Exodus 33:11–16). What would make Israel different? Not victory, not a wonderful land, but the manifested presence of God, the *Shekinah* glory of God.

Now I want us to learn some lessons here, friend, and learn them well. God’s people are to be different. Adrian is to be different. You’re to be different. Bellevue is to be different. The child of God is to be different. What is it that makes us different from the people of this world? Are the Christians’ houses better than their houses? Are our businesses bigger than their businesses? Do we have better physiques and better faces than the people of this world? No. What is it that made Israel different from all the nations of the world? The presence of God—the presence of God. What is it that differentiates even one Christian from another Christian? It is the manifested presence of God. What is the presence of God? It is the *Shekinah* glory of God, God with His people.

Now, learn a lesson. God said to Israel, “I’ll give you a promised land. You can go on. You can have it. I’ll send an angel. He’ll take care of you. You can go into the land that flows with milk and honey. Go ahead. I’ll give you victory over the Canaanites, and the parasites, and the termites, and all the... I’ll give you victory. Just go on. I’ll send an angel. He’ll escort you.”

Learn this: that you can have success without God, as far as the world is concerned. You can have provision. You can have protection. You can have leadership, and fail miserably, and call it success. You can have “success” without God. I’m speaking to some people today in this building—your business is doing fine; your kids are doing well in school; you’re healthy; you’ve got money in the bank. You say, “God is with me.” *Ain’t* necessarily so. You say, “Well, I’m sailing along. God is blessing me.” May not be so. You may have everything that your heart desires, except Him, the One that you should desire the most. You may not have the intelligence, the spiritual wisdom acumen, that Moses had, when Moses said, “God, I don’t want the land. I don’t want the milk. I don’t want the honey. I don’t want the hills that flow with oil and wine—without you. I don’t want the gift without the Giver.”

A man named MacDonald said on one occasion that, in whatever a man does without God, he will fail miserably, or succeed even more miserably. Think about it. Moses said, “God, I want your presence.” You see, the first answer that God gave was kind of a hollow answer, as far as Moses was concerned. It’s kind of like being married and having separate bedrooms. “I mean, God, I know you’re there, but I don’t want an angel. I want you.” Even the unsaved can have provision. God makes it to rain upon the

just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45). The unsaved people in this town can drive around and see the dogwoods, can't they? Whether saved or lost, God makes those flowers to bloom. But, oh, to have the presence of God!

A. Times of Disappointment

Now, listen to me. Moses was so disappointed he could hardly speak. Times of disappointment are going to come to you. As a matter of fact, it may be God's appointment. Moses is so disappointed when he comes down, he just drops the tablets of law. He had such great plans for the people. I mean, it was going to be wonderful; and now it's just all turned to ashes. His dreams have turned to dust.

Some of you are disappointed. Some of you have pinned your hopes upon a son or daughter, and they have disappointed you; and your dreams have turned to tears. Some of you have thought that you had many years to live, and you went to the doctor, and he said you've got some great malady that's destroying your body, and there's no medical cure. Some of you have seen a business that you invested everything in—you've seen it fail. Some of you have been disappointed in friends: "*Yea, mine own familiar friend*" (Psalm 41:9), "why, we sat down, we ate together, we drank together. And you've done this to me." Life is full of disappointments, and Moses needed not an angel; he needed the presence of God.

B. Times of Discouragement

I'm going to tell you something else, folks. Not only in time of disappointment do you need the presence of God, but in the time of discouragement. I mean, Moses thought, "How am I going to do this? I mean, didn't I...? Here I am. I've got to lead these people into the land of Canaan. We've got to fight all of these Canaanites. We've got this incredible program. And, Lord God, I can't do it without you." I may be speaking to somebody here today, you've got some great, great task—it seems impossible in front of you—some promised land to conquer, and it's filled with giants. You need the presence of God.

C. Times of Desertion

In times of desertion, you need the presence of God. Even Moses: brother Aaron, the people had deserted him; he's alone. And I'm talking to some of you today who are lonely. Some of you are lonely in your old age. Your children don't even write you. You go to the mailbox. They could call. Some of you are forgotten, misunderstood. You're all alone. You need the presence of God.

D. Times of Desperation

In times of desperation, you need the presence of God. You don't know where to turn. That's where Moses was. He didn't know where to turn. These are the problems

that require His presence.

II. The Promise That Brings His Presence

Now, let me talk to you about the promise that brings His presence. Look again at the promise. It's one of the sweetest promises in all of the Word of God—in God's Word, in Exodus chapter 33—and God says here, in verse 14—look at it—*“And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”* (Exodus 33:14).

Now, notice he says, *“My presence.”* Actually, the Hebrew language, which I know very little about, but it literally says this: “I myself.” He just emphasizes it. It's the very personal presence of God. Not that God says to Moses, “Now, Moses, I'll be up there watching you, peering down through the clouds.” No, He says, “I personally am going to be with you. I'm going to walk with you, and I'm going to talk with you.” Not an angel, not a plan, not protection—“I myself,” that very intimate presence of God. It is literally translated, “My face will go with you.”

Now, pay attention. “My face will go with you.” Look in verse 14. It says, “My presence shall go with you” (Exodus 33:14). Literally, that says, “My face will go with you.” Go back up to verse 11: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend”* (Exodus 33:11). Actually, he's talking about the intimacy of the Lord. Now, when you speak of the face of God, that literally means the smile of God, the pleasure of God. You see, when a person turns away his face from you, that means you don't have his countenance. He's not looking upon you with pleasure.

Let me give you the great benediction that Moses wrote, and you'll understand it. Put this in your margin—Numbers chapter 6, verse 24: *“The LORD bless thee, and keep thee: the LORD make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the LORD lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace”* (Numbers 6:24–26). Now what His face is, is the shining face of God: *“The LORD make his face to shine upon thee.”* It talks about the glory smile of the Lord. You ought to be able to look into the face of God and see God smiling upon you. It means His personal presence; it means His intimate presence; and it means His radiant presence.

I often use this illustration. I love to walk on the beach at sunset and watch that sun, that golden orb, go down into the azure sea. It's so beautiful. But the thing that happens, if there's a calm sea, is, when the sun begins to set, a golden path comes across the water to you—to you. And you're walking on the beach: it just follows you all the way along. Now somebody else walking over there: the path is not coming to me; it's coming to them. And somebody else walking down there: that golden path is not coming to me; it's coming to them. Each one it comes to—each one. That shining, shimmering path: it is so personal; it is so intimate. And that's why God is with every one of us, as if no one else existed. He says, “My face is going to be upon you.”

You see, God shows His disapproval by the turning away of His face. Put this verse in your margin—Psalm 27, verses 7 and 8: *“Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek”* (Psalm 27:7–8). That’s what God said to Moses: literally, “My face will go with you.” Moses said, “God, I don’t want to go without you. I want to know you face to face, friend to friend.”

Do you know what’s wrong in America today? We’re seeking God’s hand, and not God’s face. We’re wanting God to do something. We’re wanting God to send deliverance to America. “God, save us from the pornographers. God, save us from the drug dealers. God, save us from crime. God, save us from economic deprivation. God, save us from the disintegration of the family. God, save us. God, help us.” But what has God said in 2 Chronicles chapter 7 and verse 14? *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and”*—do what? Seek my what? My face—*“seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”* (2 Chronicles 7:14). All of us are seeking God’s hand. We’re saying, “God, do something.” God is saying, “Seek my face.”

III. The Peace That Reveals His Presence

What you need is the glory smile—the *Shekinah* smile—of God upon you. Now if you’ll do that, if you’ll seek God’s face, I want you to see the rest of the promise. Look in verse 14: *“And he said, My [face] shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest”* (Exodus 33:14).

Now here’s the peace that reveals His presence. I want to give you four beautiful thoughts. When there is the conscious presence of God in your life, when you have sought His face, God says He’ll give you rest. Now the rest that He’s going to give you is not idleness. It doesn’t mean that you won’t have to work anymore. Remember that, Brother Dale. It’s not idleness. He’s not talking about idleness. He’s not talking about rest from work. He’s talking about rest in work: rest from doubt, and fear, and anxiety, and all of these things.

A. Four Promises

I’ll give you four beautiful promises now.

1. When You Are Discouraged, His Presence Will See You Through

When you are discouraged, His presence will see you through. Moses was discouraged. He was perplexed. But God says, “I’ll see you through.”

I’ve been to so many funerals; I’ve been to so many hospitals; I’ve done so much counseling—when people are heartbroken. And, folks, in this congregation—a congregation of this size—you would not dare dream the number of heartaches, and tears, and disappointments. Recently, I sat down with a man whose body is diagnosed

with cancer, and anointed him with oil. I've been in my office with people seeing the life snatched from a teenage girl, instantaneously, in an automobile wreck. I've talked with those whose lives have been attacked by adultery, fornication, and unfaithfulness. I've talked with those whose children have disappointed them, and have failed to listen, and have done such foolish things. Do you know what all of these people have in common? They need the face of God. They need to see the smile of God. I don't know how people make it without the Lord. Psalm 116, verse 6: *"The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul;"*—this is what God said to Moses: "I'll give you rest"—*"for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living"* (Psalm 116:6–9). I'm telling you, in times of disappointment, friend, the dear Lord is there, and His presence will see you through.

2. In Times of Loneliness, His Presence Will Cheer You Up

And in times of loneliness, His presence will cheer you up. Everybody gets lonely. Listen to Psalm 139, verses 17 and following: *"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake,"*—listen to this—*"I am still with thee"* (Psalm 139:17–18). "I go to bed; I go to sleep. Lord, you're there watching over me when I awake. I can't count my many blessings. I can't name them one by one, because they're more than the sand of the sea."

Are you lonely today? Do you think that nobody knows about you and cares about you? Maybe there's been a divorce. Maybe there's been a death. Maybe there's been a desertion. Maybe you're old and forgotten, you think. Maybe you're having to travel and spend all your time in motels and airports, and maybe you're lonely because of your success. You're at the top, and nobody wants to be around you. They envy you a little bit, and fear you a little bit. Hebrews chapter 13, verse 5—our Lord has said, *"I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Hebrews 13:5).

When Joyce and I had a little baby to die, we left our little church in Fort Pierce to go to West Palm Beach. On a Sunday afternoon, that baby died. Our little church had met there to worship. I can see the yellow light as it was streaming out through the windows of that church. The windows were open. There was no air conditioning. And I heard that congregation singing this song as Joyce and I pulled out of our driveway of the little pastorium that was right next to the church. This is what they were singing:

*I've seen the lightning flashing, I've heard the thunder roll.
I've felt sin's breakers dashing, which almost conquered my soul.
I've heard the voice of my Savior, bidding me to still fight on.
He promised never to leave me, never to leave me alone!*

—LUDIE D. PICKETT

3. When You Are Worried, His Presence Will Calm You Down

In times of disappointment, He'll see you through. In times of loneliness, His presence will cheer you up. When you're worried, His presence will calm you down. Moses had things to worry about. I mean here, everything's going to pieces. God says to Moses, "Moses, I will be with you." Are you facing a problem—I mean, a big one? Moses was. Do you have some enemies—I mean, some real ones: financial enemies, physical enemies, health enemies?

One of my favorite stories is about David Livingstone. You know, David Livingstone was a man who took the gospel to the heart of Africa. He went there as a missionary, went alone—a brilliant man—went to the very heart of Africa. And he was one night in his tent alone by himself down in the jungle. He could hear the war drums beating. And word had come to him that the natives were going to kill him, disrupt his work. He's sitting there alone in his tent having his devotion, and he's writing in his diary. Now we would never have known what happened that night except we got hold of his diary. This is what he wrote on January 14, 1856: "Felt much turmoil of spirit in prospect of having all my plans for the welfare of this great region and the teeming population knocked on the head by savages tomorrow." That is, he was going to be knocked on the head. His plans were in his head. He said, "I had such plans to reach all of this place; and now I'm faced with that." But then he says, in his diary, "When I read that Jesus said, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore and teach all nations;'"—now, listen to this—"and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19–20). And then David Livingstone wrote in that little tent with the war drums beating out there, by himself—he wrote this: "It is the word of a gentleman of the most strict and sacred honor, so that's the end of it. I will not cross furtively tonight, as I intended. Should such a man as I flee? I shall take observations for latitude and longitude tonight, though they may be the last. I feel quite calm now. Thank God."

"Now, hey," you say, "I feel pretty calm now too." You're not in a tent, in a jungle, surrounded by savages who say they're going to do you in, in the morning. What was it—what was it—that gave David Livingstone—when he was so worried, what calmed him down? The word of a gentleman: "You go and make disciples; and, lo, I am with you."

4. When You Are Tempted, His Presence Will Help You Out

Friend, when you're tempted, His presence will help you out. "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able*" (1 Corinthians 10:13). When you're discouraged, His presence sees you through. When you are lonely, His presence cheers you up. When you're worried, His presence calms you down. And when you are tempted, His presence helps you out. I mean, he is there moment by moment. And what

we need to do is to stand upon His promise, where He says, “I will be with you face to face if you will seek my face.”

B. What Do You Need to Do?

Three things quickly, and I’m finished. What do you need to do?

1. You Need to Practice the Presence of God

Number one: You need to practice the presence of God. I mean, think about His presence. Someone wrote these words: “Lean thine arms upon the windowsill of heaven, and gaze into the face of thy God. And then, with the vision full in your heart, turn to meet the day.” You ought to do that every morning. Just look into the face of God, and all through the day, just stop—just stop—and practice the presence of God, saying, “Lord, you are here.” I love what the Murks sang today. And when they told me what they were going to sing, my heart was so full of joy: “He’s here, hallelujah!” And we need to understand that He’s here.

2. You Need to Pray Continually

And then, listen. Not only do you need just to practice His presence, but you need to pray. And let prayer be a day-long conversation with God—a day-long conversation with God. The Apostle Paul says you are to “*Pray without ceasing*” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Now there are times when you enter your closet and pray; but you are to be—all day long—you’re to be talking to Him. “*Pray without ceasing.*”

3. You Need to Praise Him

And then, last of all, when you look into the face of God, what can you do but praise Him? Just praise Him. Practice the presence; pray continually; and praise and praise and praise some more. Sometimes people say, “You know, I just don’t know how to pray. I run out of stuff to pray for.” Begin to praise, and you’ll have an ocean to swim in. Just say, “Lord, I praise you.” Do you know when God is especially near? When you praise Him. The Bible says God occupies the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). That’s why we have this choir, this orchestra. That’s why we sing, because when we praise Him, sweet incense goes to heaven, and His presence fills this place. Did you know that Satan is allergic to praise? I mean, you praise Jehovah, and Satan says, “I’m getting out of here. I don’t like the atmosphere. I don’t like the ambiance in this place.” Praise the Lord. God occupies the praises of His people.

Conclusion

Isn’t that a wonderful promise? God says, “My presence”—my face—“will go with you, and I will give you rest” (Exodus 33:14).

Hearing God

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 30, 1984

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 34:1–2

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Principle of Preparation
- II. The Principle of Isolation
- III. The Principle of Expectation
- IV. The Principle of Revelation
- V. The Principle of Adoration
- VI. The Principle of Intercession
- VII. The Principle of Observation
- VIII. The Principle of Transformation

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to the Old Testament, the book of Exodus chapter 34. We're going to be talking tonight about "Hearing God"—more about Jesus and His Word, knowing more about the Lord. I spoke this morning on "Cardboard Christians." We said that a false witness will perish, but a faithful witness is one who has first heard God and then speaks. We cannot speak for God until we've heard Him. After we've heard Him, we dare not be silent. Now the question is, how shall we hear the Lord? Exodus 34:1: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount."* (Exodus 34:1–2) That is, "Moses, do you want my presence to go with you?"

And, by the way, if you were to read the preceding chapter, they were getting ready to claim their Canaan. Let's just go back in chapter 33 and look: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it."* (Exodus 33:1) Verse 3: *"Unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way."* (Exodus 33:3)

Now God said, "There's the land of Canaan. It's a wonderful land. Go up and possess it. But I'm not going to go with you." Now Moses, you'll have to give Moses

credit for this. Moses wasn't about to take the Lord up on that proposition. Look, if you will, in verse 15 of this same chapter, and see what Moses said. And Moses makes it very clear that, if the Lord doesn't go with him, he does not want to go. And Moses said, *"If thy presence go not with me, carry us up not hence."* (Exodus 33:15)

Now, what did Moses say? Moses said, "Now, listen, Lord. I appreciate all this land, and all this milk, and all this honey, and everything; but, Lord, there's no deal. I am not going into that land; we're not going into this program; we're not going to do it without you." Of course, they couldn't have done it without the Lord. And the Lord was testing Moses here. And He said to Moses, "All right, go on; and I'm going to stay behind." Moses said, "No, siree. If you don't go, I don't go. I don't want the victory without the Victor. I don't want the blessings without the Blesser. I don't want the land without the Lord."

And I want to say the same thing. Folks, I'm not about to lead this church into a building program if we do it ourselves. I'm not about to. It's too big. It's too great. If God were to say to me, "You can stay here, and I'll be with you, Adrian, or you can go out there by yourself," I'd say, "Lord, I want to stay here," wouldn't you? I'll guarantee you, I would.

Now the Lord wanted to give them that land, and the Lord wanted to go with them, and the Lord wanted Moses to be determined that he would have the presence of the Lord as he went. And so Moses said, "Now, Lord, you're not going... we're not going. We're going to stay right here. If your presence doesn't go with us, we're not going to claim that Canaan."

Well now, in the next chapter, you're going to find the elements of having God's presence, of knowing the presence of God, hearing from God, letting God speak to you.

I. The Principle of Preparation

The very first thing that I want you to note is the principle of preparation—the principle of preparation. I just read these two verses, chapter 34, verses 1 and 2: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee"—or "cut thee"—"two tables"—or "tablets"—"of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest."* Now here's the key phrase: *"And be ready in the morning,"—"be ready in the morning"—"and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount."* (Exodus 34:1–2)

Now Moses needed to get alone with God. Moses needed the presence of the Lord. Moses needed that quiet time with the Lord. And the Lord said, "All right, Moses. You want my presence? Number one, prepare yourself. Be ready for me to do something." Now, very frankly, people, one major reason that we don't have the presence of the Lord, one major reason that we don't hear from God, is we do not get ready to hear

from God. We do not prepare ourselves to come into the presence of the Lord.

I was looking tonight at two very interesting passages of Scripture over in 2 Chronicles. And, believe me, they are well worth turning to. So I want you, if you will, to just put a bookmark there in Exodus 34, and turn to 2 Chronicles 12:14. You may already have these marked. But if you don't, it's well worth marking. Second Chronicles 12:14—this speaks of a wicked king. His name was King Rehoboam. And the Bible tells us that he was a vile king and an evil king. And here's why he was so vile, and here's why he was so evil. Second Chronicles 12:14: *“And he did evil, because”*—here's the reason—*“he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.”* Now, had he prepared his heart to seek the Lord, he would not have done evil. But *“he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.”* Now, turn to 2 Chronicles 19:3, and let me show you something in contradiction to this. This is speaking of good King Jehoshaphat. Rehoboam was an evil king. But now, notice what the Bible says about Jehoshaphat, in verse 3: *“Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.”* One king failed because he prepared not his heart to seek God. Another king succeeded simply because he prepared his heart to seek God.

Now God said to Moses, “Moses, you're going to seek me. You want my presence? Then, be ready.” Now most of us are just simply not ready to meet the Lord. I mean, most of us don't have a set time. Most of us do not prepare for a quiet time. We think it's going to happen to us. Now, friend, you do not wait until you have time to meet God. You make time. You prepare. You be ready. Are you going to be ready in the morning? How many of you are going to be ready in the morning to meet the Lord? I dare say that most of the people in this congregation, if it's an average congregation, will not be ready in the morning. You say, “Why don't I have a quiet time?” You're not ready for it. You don't plan for it. You're not expecting it. You must be ready. God said to Moses, “Moses, get ready—get ready. Prepare your heart to seek the Lord.”

II. The Principle of Isolation

There is the principle of preparation. Second principle: there's the principle of isolation. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.”* (Exodus 34:3) “Moses, I don't want anything to disturb you. I don't want anything to distract you. I don't want anything to detain you. I don't want anything to delay you. Be ready. Come before me. And, Moses, do it by yourself. Separate yourself from the people. Isolate yourself from the people.”

Now Moses was pastoring a church of three million people, and most of them were backslidden. And so he had to get away from the people. You say, “Oh, the people

needed him.” Indeed, the people needed him. I want to tell you that the best time any pastor ever spends for his people is when he is away from his people with the Lord Jesus on his knees. Now, listen. He was separated, not only from the people; he was separated for the people. And Moses did his best work for those children of Israel when he was alone with God. And there’s the principle of isolation. We need to be alone. I need that quiet time alone with God.

One of the wonderful things about this church—and to your everlasting credit and my eternal gratitude—the deacons, the leaders of this church, have said to their pastor, “We want to see to it that you have time to be alone with God in your study. We want you, when you come to stand in this pulpit, to be a man that has heard from God. And we do not want you to be so tied up going from one committee meeting to another committee meeting, and to one engagement to another engagement, that you do not have enough time to isolate yourself and be alone with God.”

And I want to tell you young preachers here, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, you see to it, you absolutely see to it, that you are alone with God, or your church will go down. You need that principle, not only of preparation; you need that principle of isolation.

But I want to tell you what is true about the pastor is true about the Sunday School teacher. And what is true about the Sunday School teacher is true about you parents. You Sunday School teachers, you want your class to prosper? Then you’d better get alone for that class, and intercede for that class, and to pray to God for that class. And, you parents, you think you know enough how to raise those children without God? You take all of your wisdom, and all of your cunning, and all of your planning, and all of your books, and all of your leadership, and you’re still going to fail, if you don’t know how to get on your face before God, alone with God, and pray.

You study the Bible, and you’ll find out that God met with men, in the Bible, when they got alone with God. Abraham, when he was alone with God, received the covenant from God. Daniel, when he was alone with God, received the vision. Paul, when he was alone with God in Arabia, understood the mysteries of the gospel. Simon Peter, when he was alone with God on the rooftop, heard that message about Cornelius and going to tell the gospel to the Gentiles. It was John, when he was alone and isolated on that island of Patmos, that he received the book of the Revelation. It was Moses, when he was alone with God on the mountain here in the wilderness, that he received the Ten Commandments and the law from God. It was Jesus who went alone into a solitary place and withdrew himself to pray, that He might have communion with God.

Do you have a quiet time? Do you have a place? Do you prepare yourself for that place? Do you isolate yourself and get into that place alone with God? Do you know one of the curses of the twentieth century is that we’re never alone? And even when we’re

alone, we've got a tape recorder, we've got a transistor radio, we've got something playing in our ear all the time. Boy, I'm glad little David didn't have a transistor radio. We might not have had a Twenty-third Psalm. I'm glad that he, alone on those hills with God, could hear God: to *"be still, and know that I am God."* (Psalm 46:10) And Jesus said, "When you pray, enter into your closet and shut the door." (Matthew 6:6)

It's one thing to pray when you drive an automobile. I got embarrassed this morning. I was driving to church praying, and I looked over, and someone was looking at me. I said, "Boy, I hope they're a church member, or they're going to think I'm crazy," because I was praying, talking to the Lord. And that's fine. It's fine to pray when you walk, and it's fine to pray when you work. And I pray in many ways. But there is nothing that will take the place of shutting out every distraction and getting alone with God. Well, you don't have to be watching the traffic. You don't have to be listening to anybody else. You are alone with God.

III. The Principle of Expectation

All right now, let me give you a third principle. The first principle is preparation: get ready—get ready. You must plan to have a quiet time. The second principle is the principle, dear friend, of isolation. The third principle is the principle of expectation. Notice in verse 4: *"And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone."* (Exodus 34:4)

Now, why did Moses take two tables of stone? He expected God to say something to him he wanted to write down. He wrote the Ten Commandments on those two tables of stone. Now if you expect God to speak to you, and you expect God to say something important to you, don't you think you'd better be prepared to record it? Don't you think that you'd better prepare yourself to hear from God? And every one of us, when we go into our quiet time, ought to take a Bible and a notebook, and wait for God to speak, and write what God says to us as we study the Word, and as God speaks to us out of the Word. It's just simply a matter of not only preparation but expectation. "God, I know you're going to say something to me this morning. I don't want to miss it." Now you say, "Well, I'll remember." Friend, the weakest ink is better than the strongest memory. Write it down. It will amaze you.

Many of the things that I preach I have in a file that I will go back and there will be things that God gave me in my quiet time years ago that I never would have remembered except God gave them to me, and I put them in a file, and they're there. And I have a file on every book in the Bible, starting with Genesis right on through Revelation. And in my quiet time, if God gives me something, I write it down. And when I'm finished, if I say, "Hey, that's good. That's from the Lord," I put it in that file. And

then, later on, when I come to preach on that passage of Scripture, it's there. Because, if it's important enough for God to speak to you, then you need to write it down, and you need to keep it and file it away, and go back over those things. There will be a tremendous blessing to you.

Moses figured that God was going to say something. And if God was going to say something, then he was going to take something to record what God said. You ought to be glad that you don't have to write yours on a table of stone. You ought to be glad that God's given you a felt tip and a legal pad. But write it! Write it down!

IV. The Principle of Revelation

Now after that preparation, isolation, expectation comes revelation. Here was a man who meant business for God. Here was a man who got alone with the Lord. And so God began to reveal Himself to Moses. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *"And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed,"*—now God is revealing Himself to Moses. And notice what the Lord says to Moses—*"The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation."* (Exodus 34:5–7)

What a revelation Moses received of the character and the nature of God! You say, "Well, I know all of those things." You know why you know those things? Because God revealed them to Moses, and Moses wrote them down. How do you know that God is good and longsuffering and gracious and merciful? How do you know that God is also just? And how do you know that God punishes sin? And how do you know that God will not let one half of one scintilla of an iota of sin go unpunished, and will not at all acquit the wicked? How do you know all of that? Because God revealed it. And the only thing, dear friend, that you're going to know about God is what God reveals to you. And when you prepare yourself to seek God, you say, "I will seek God." When you isolate yourself to seek God, when you expect God to speak to you, then God is going to come, and God is going to reveal Himself to you.

Now, listen. When you get a thought from God out of the Word of God, now you say, "Well, God doesn't speak to me like He spoke to Moses." No, you have something better. You have the Bible. Better, I say, better. You have the Word of God. And when God speaks to you out of that Bible, let me tell you what to do. Let me tell you how to get something out of a chapter. Let me tell you how to get something out of a verse. First of all, just read it through. Just read it. Just read right on down through it. And, after you read it through, think it over. Just say, "Spirit of God, open mine eyes, that I may

behold wondrous things in thy law. Speak to me, Lord.” Now, after you think it through, pray it in. And, by the way, one of the best ways to pray is, when you see a verse, when you see a truth, talk to God about it. That’s the way to have a conversation with God. The Bible says, *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart.”* (Proverbs 3:5) You say, “Lord God, you’re telling me to trust you with all of my heart. Lord, I trust you with all of my heart. Thank you, Lord. I trust you.” “Lean not unto your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5) “Lord, I’ve been leaning to my own understanding. I’ve been trying to figure this problem out. Lord, I’m not going to try to figure this out anymore. God, I lay my intellectual pride in the dust. Now, Lord, what way do you have for me?” “In all your ways acknowledge Him.” (Proverbs 3:5) “Lord, I do acknowledge you right now, Lord, in all of my ways. I give you my family. I give you my children. I give you this. I give you that.” And as God speaks to you, you speak to God. And you’re having a conversation with God. And, you see, listen. You read it through, and then you think it over, and then you pray it in.

What a joy to pray to God and talk with God right out of this Bible! He speaks to you, and you speak to Him. Many times I’ll come to a verse, and I’ll say, “Lord, I don’t have the foggiest as to what that means. What does that mean, Lord? Help me to understand it.” It may not be that I’ll understand it then. It may be that later I’ll understand it. But I pray about it. Pray it in.

Now, after you think it over, after you pray it in, then write it down. Make notes. Just write it down. Maybe no one else will ever read it, but you will read it. It will bless you as you go back over it. Now, after you write it down, here’s something very important. You live it out. Try to get a thought for every day. And you’re going to put that thought into practice that day. It doesn’t really become yours until you put it in practice and you start to live it out. If the Bible says, *“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths,”* (Proverbs 3:5–6) then you say, “Lord, that’s what I’m going to be doing. All day long I’m going to be acknowledging you. All day long I’m going to be trusting you. And, Lord, I’m counting on you to direct my paths.” And you go into the day with that thought in your mind, claiming the Word of God.

One last thing: Pass it on to somebody else.

When you see somebody—when I’m with Brother Dale, I say to Dale, “Dale, God gave me a nugget in the Word today. I want to share it with you. Dale, I was having problems, and there were things I couldn’t understand, and things were up against me, and God spoke to me out of the Word, and He said, “Adrian, trust me with all your heart. Don’t lean unto your own understanding. And, Adrian, I will direct your paths.” It literally means, “Adrian, I’ll bulldoze a way for you, and I’ll clear out the obstacles.” “Dale, I want to tell you how much God blessed me.” And Dale will say, “Thank you, preacher. That’s

just what I needed today.”

You know, sometimes people ask me the little question. They say, “Pastor, how do you remember so many little stories?” Do you know how I remember? I tell them. I tell them. You want to keep the Bible? Start giving it away. And the more you give away, the more you’ll keep. You share, and it comes right back on you. Give, and it shall be given unto you. And I’m not just talking now about little stories. I’m talking about the Word of God. And one of the greatest blessings I have is to be a pastor, and to preach, because the more I share, the more I study, the more I give, the more I get.

V. The Principle of Adoration

Now, here it is. You want to hear from God? First of all, preparation: be ready. Secondly, isolation: get alone with God. Thirdly, expectation: expect God to give you something. Take a Bible, take a pad, as Moses took those tablets. Next, revelation: God is going to speak to you. When God speaks to you, you read it through. You think it over. You pray it in. You write it down. You live it out. You pass it on. And you’re going to find out it will be yours, as God reveals Himself to you. Now, the next thing—the next thing: not only revelation, but you’re going to go to something very wonderful. Now you’re truly ready to worship: Adoration. Look in verse 8. God revealed Himself to Moses, and notice what Moses did: *“And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.”* (Exodus 34:8) You must learn how to worship God in your quiet time.

I find, in my quiet time, that it’s better to get into the Word first, to read first, and before I start speaking to God, let God speak to me. And as I study, and as God begins to speak to me, and I get this truth from the Word of God, then I just have to take off my glasses, and close the Bible, get on my knees, and say, “Glory, praise the Lord,” and worship the Lord. And I do that in my study. I lift my hands to God, and I look into the face of God, and I give Him praise, and I worship Him, and I say, “Thank you, Jesus. I love you, Lord. You’re wonderful. I bless your holy name.” And I would bow my head and sometimes get on my face before God, sometimes stand up, because I can’t sit down, and praise the Lord and worship Him. You see, it’s when you worship God that you meet with God. And that’s the purpose of God revealing Himself to you: that you might do as Moses did here: *“And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped [God].”* There’s this adoration of God.

Oh, have you learned how to praise the Lord? Sometimes get a hymnal and read a hymn to God, some of the hymns of praise. If you can sing, sing it to the Lord. Worship Him in music. Worship Him in praise. Sometimes get a psalm and just read it back to the Lord, and worship the Lord. *“Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.”* (1 Chronicles 16:29; Psalm 29:2; Psalm 96:9)

VI. The Principle of Intercession

After you've done that, what's the next step in your quiet time? After adoration, it's time for intercession. Look in verse 9. He worshiped the Lord, and then, in verse 9, *"And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O LORD, let my LORD, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance."* (Exodus 34:9) What is Moses doing now? Moses, who's met with the Lord, Moses, who's heard from the Lord, who's had a revelation from God, who has recorded that revelation from God, who has worshiped the Lord, is now ready to intercede. Intercession is next.

Do you have a prayer list? Do you have people that you pray for? I have people that I pray for. I pray for you deacons. I intercede for you. By the way, Joyce and I started praying for you, a deacon family at a time, every morning together. I pray for my staff. It's my responsibility to pray for these. I pray for my children. I pray for my pastor friends. I pray for government leaders. I pray for spiritual leaders like Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell and others like that. I pray for these people, and I intercede for them. I pray that God will bless this church and keep the wicked one away from it, and that God will lead us and help us as we claim our Canaan. That's what Moses was doing here. And God has said to Moses, "Moses, here's a plan for you." Moses said, "Lord, we're not going without you. You've got to be with us. And so, Lord, these are stiffnecked people. Pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us, Lord, for thine inheritance." How fortunate, how blessed, they were to have Moses to intercede for them!

VII. The Principle of Observation

There was intercession. Then, finally, look, if you will, in verse 11—almost finally—don't get too excited. Verse 11. Finally, but not immediately, let me put it that way. Verse 11. After intercession, observation. Look. Observe to do that. Well, verses 10 and 11: *"And he said, Behold, I make a covenant: before all thy people I will do marvels, such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation: and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the LORD: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee."* Now what it means is a terrifying thing. These heathen are going to stand in awe. But now, notice the qualification: *"Observe thou that which I command thee this day: behold, I will drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite."* (Exodus 34:10–11) And I almost feel like saying, "and the Kudzuite," because we've got so much of that out there in the property. "I'll drive it out. I'll give you victory if you will observe to do."

Now here, friend, is really, really, where the rubber meets the road. If God reveals something to you, and you don't obey Him, it would be better that you'd not heard Him. Now God spoke to Moses. God revealed Himself to Moses. And observation is so

important. “*Observe thou*”—and the word *observe* here means “to keep”—“*that which I command thee this day*”—“to obey it.”

Now some people complain that Jesus is not real to them. Look in John 14:21. Just keep your hand over there in Exodus, but turn to John 14:21. Jesus said, “*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him,*”—are you ready?—“*and will manifest myself to him.*” “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he’s the one that loves me. And when you have my commandments and you keep them”—not just hear them, but when you keep them—“then I’ll manifest myself to you.”

Every now and then, I say something profound. And you wouldn’t know it unless I told you ahead of time, so this is profound, okay? Not profound because I thought it up; it’s profound coming out of the Word of God. Bible study will give you a knowledge about God; obedience will give you a knowledge of God. That’s profound. Bible study will give you information, knowledge about God. It is obedience that gives you knowledge of God. Jesus said, “He that hears my word,”—that’s knowledge about God—“he that hath my commandments,”—that’s knowledge about God—“and keepeth them, he it is that loves me, and I will manifest myself to that man. I will show myself to that man, the man who observes to do what I show him to do.” God gave Moses commandments, and then God says, “Now, Moses, you observe these things.” One of the reasons, folks, that God doesn’t speak, or that He quit speaking after He has spoken, is that we don’t obey Him. I mean, why should God show us any more if we’ve not done what He’s already told us? Why should God reveal Himself more—to Moses or anybody else—to a person who will not obey and do what God says to do? And so there must be observation.

VIII. The Principle of Transformation

Now the last thing is transformation. Go back to Exodus 34 and look in verse 29: “*And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses [knew] not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.*” (Exodus 34:29) Moses comes down from the mount with a glowing face. He has been transformed because he’s been alone with the Lord. The glory was so great that Moses had to keep a veil on his face for people to look into his face, or to keep people from being blinded by the glory of the Lord that was on Moses’ face.

You say, “Pastor, that was all Old Testament. That was all something for them in that day.” Well, I want you to turn for our last scripture to 2 Corinthians 3—2 Corinthians 3—and here is the New Testament commentary on what happened to Moses, lest you think that I’m trying to force some Old Testament episode on you. Second Corinthians

3, beginning in verse 5: *“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament;”—now Moses was in the Old Testament—“not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious...”*—that’s what happened; that’s what we’ve just been studying about: the ministration of death—*“written and engraven in stones,”*—that’s the old law, the Ten Commandments—*“was glorious,”*—and it was—*“so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?”* (2 Corinthians 3:5–8)

Do you know what he’s saying? Listen, folks. We don’t have to stand in line behind Moses. Moses has to stand in line behind us. Don’t think that Moses had a head start. What Paul is saying here is that Moses didn’t know what we can know. That was the Old Testament. This is the New Testament. He said, “If that was glorious, we’ve got something even more glorious.” There’s an extended passage, but turn over to the climax, verses 17 and 18: *“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”* Literally, it says, “Where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty.” *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 3:17–18)

Conclusion

Now, do you know what that says to me? It says that Moses went up into the mountain, and Moses saw God, and Moses was transformed. And that was the Old Testament. But God’s Holy Spirit is alive and well on the earth today. And we, with an open face, can look into the face of Jesus Christ and be changed from glory unto glory. Transformation by a quiet time with the Lord: that’s the way to hear from the Lord.

The Life That Glows

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 23, 1980

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 34:29–35

Outline

Introduction

I. Determination

II. Preparation

III. Separation

IV. Expectation

V. Humiliation

VI. Adoration

VII. Intercession

VIII. Continuation

Conclusion

Introduction

Exodus chapter 34. I'm going to preach to me tonight and let you listen, because I have a message tonight that I need. And I want to tell you that I've searched my heart, and I've thought about the message I'm preaching tonight, and I am talking to me. But I'm talking to you about "The Life That Glows."

Exodus chapter 34, verse 29: *"And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not"—that is, "he knew not"—"that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him. And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him. And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face. But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him."* (Exodus 34:29–35)

We, as Christians, are to be growing Christians. We, as Christians, are to be going Christians. And we, as Christians, should be glowing Christians. There ought to be a glow. There ought to be a radiance. There ought to be a shine about us, not in a

physical way, but in a spiritual way; not in a material way, but in a supernatural way that this story so well illustrates.

You see, Moses had seen the Lord. He'd not seen all of the Lord, but he'd had a vision of the Lord. God had allowed His glory to pass by. And God had hidden Moses in the cleft of the rock. And Moses had seen the Lord. And Moses had communed with the Lord. And the face of Moses shone. And that's what I want in my life. I want something about my life, that, when I speak, there will be such a radiance and such a glow that the people will know that what I saw is from God and not merely my opinion.

And, you see, when Moses spoke, and when Moses came down from the mountain, and when Moses had a word from God, they knew that the message was from God because of the holy glow that was upon Moses. But, you know, a strange thing happened to Moses. Moses, when he would go and speak with the people, because of the radiance of God that was on his face, he'd frighten the people, really. He put a veil over his face. And he would speak to the people, wearing a veil over his face, because the people could not bear, really, even to look full into the face of the man of God. But when Moses would go back to talk with the Lord, he'd take the veil off, and he'd look into the face of God, and talk with God face to face. But do you know what happened? After a while, Moses lost the glow. After a while, Moses lost that communion that he had with God. And do you know what he did? He continued to wear the veil. And, for all the people knew, he still had the glow; but he was wearing a veil, and it wasn't real.

I think that's one of the saddest things in all of the Bible: that he continued to live the life outwardly, but he had lost the radiance inwardly. I wonder if I'm talking to some of you here tonight who are doing exactly that. I wonder, Brother Dale; I wonder, Brother Lane; I wonder, Brother Tom; I wonder, Brother Adrian; I wonder, Brother Bob Sorrell; if we ministers sometimes are not guilty of wearing the veil when the glow is gone. I wonder if there are not ministers who have learned how to perform, who stand up and sing, who stand up and pray, who stand up and preach, and they wear such a veil that the people really do not know that on the inside there's no glow. God forbid that that should happen in my life! Oh, God forbid that that should happen in your life, Sunday school teacher. God forbid, Mr. Deacon, that you're wearing a veil, but beneath it there's no glow. You're fooling some people, but you're not fooling the Lord. Rather than ministering life, you're ministering death.

And I want to talk to you about how to have a life that glows, how to have the radiance of the Lord, how to be a growing Christian, how to be a going Christian, but, above all, how to be a glowing Christian. First of all, there must be determination. And I want to give you eight steps. So, if you want to, jot them down.

I. Determination

Step number one is determination. Just go back, if you will, please, to Exodus chapter 33 and get the scripture that comes prior to what we've already read: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I sware unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: and I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite: unto a land flowing with milk and honey: for I will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people: lest I consume thee in the way. And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments."* (Exodus 33:1–4)

Now it's strange. At first thought, you'd think that they would rejoice, for God says, "I'm going to give you what I promised. I'm going to give you a land that flows with milk and honey. Furthermore, I'm going to send my angel, my mighty angel, and he'll go before you. And this angel is going to drive out all of your enemies: the Canaanite, the Jebusite, the Hivite—all of them." He said, "I'm going to drive them out. And you will possess the land that I promised to give you." And the people mourned. Why did the people mourn? Thank God, they made so many mistakes, but at this point they did not make a mistake. They realized they needed more than the land. They realized they needed more than success. They realized they needed more than victory. They knew they needed God.

Do you know what's wrong with many of us? It is that we're willing to take second best. You know, that could happen in this church. God's blessing our church. We're having souls saved. We're growing in Sunday School attendance. Our buildings are becoming beautiful, and we're just thanking God for what He's doing for us. But, dear friend, wouldn't it be a shame if we had all of these things, and did not have the glow, did not have the presence?

Do you know what Moses said? You see, God says, in verse 2, "I'm going to send my angel." But do you know what Moses said? Look in verse 15, and you'll see what Moses was upset about. In chapter 33 and verse 15, Moses says, *"And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."* (Exodus 33:15) He said, "I don't want any angel; I want you, God. I want reality. I want the presence of the Lord."

Are you content to have success without Jesus? Are you content to have the gift without the Giver? Are you content, dear friend, to have the blessing without the Blessor? Are you content to have the victory without the Victor? Are you? Or is there in your heart a determination that says, "I want the presence of God in my life—for God to be real to me?"

Moses had a determination. Do you have it? Or have you been satisfied with

secondary things? Your life's going along pretty good. You've got money in the bank. Your children are not rebelling. You're healthy. You've got a Sunday School class. God is driving your enemies out from in front of you. But you don't have the presence. Are you satisfied with second best? Moses wasn't. Moses said, "I don't want any old angel; I want you. And if you don't go with me, I'm not going."

II. Preparation

Number one: a determination. Number two: dear friend, there must be a preparation. Notice here now in chapter 34. Here we're talking about how Moses prepared himself to meet the Lord. In chapter 34, beginning in verses 1 and 2: *"And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest. And be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me in the top of the mount."* (Exodus 34:1–2)

Now, you want to meet with God? There must be a determination to meet with God. But there must also be a preparation to meet with God. Notice again, especially verse 2: *"And be ready in the morning."* That's when you're going to meet God: in the morning. *"Early will I seek thee,"* (Psalm 63:1) the Bible says. *"In the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up."* (Psalm 5:3) Have you learned to prepare yourself to meet God in the morning? You know, the reason that some of us never meet God is we never prepare ourselves to meet God.

If you were going to have an appointment with the President of the United States, wouldn't you get ready? I had the privilege of going into the Oval Office and talking with the President of the United States. And I've had the presence of going and sitting down and praying with Jimmy Carter. And I've had the privilege of going and sitting down and praying with Ronald Reagan face to face and talking. And I tell you, I realize that these men are so important, and I'm so insignificant that I realize what a tremendous honor it was for me to have that time to sit down and talk face to face with these men who are great men and the leaders of our nation. And I thought to myself, "I'd better be prepared: I'd better be prepared intellectually, and I'd better be prepared spiritually, and I'd better be prepared physically. And I'd better be on time, and just get myself ready, because I'm going to meet with someone important." How much more the King of kings?

How thoughtlessly sometimes we wander or amble into our meeting with Him! What a lack of preparation there is in our lives so many times when we do not prepare ourselves to meet God! And the thing that's wrong with many of us—and remember, I'm talking to me tonight—in our quiet time is that we do not prepare ourselves to meet with God. Notice again in verse 2: *"And be ready in the morning, and come up in the*

morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself there to me.” (Exodus 34:2)

Do you get yourself ready to present yourself to the Lord? Do you spend as much time getting ready spiritually to come to church as you do putting on your finery and fixing your hair and your makeup? Are you ready when you come to meet with the Lord?

Just keep your Bibles there in Exodus chapter 34, and I want you to turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 12. I want you to see something very interesting. Second Chronicles chapter 12 and verse 14. Here I want you to see how Rehoboam failed the Lord and found the judgment of God upon his life. The Bible speaks of the king of Israel, and it says, *“And he did evil”—why? Well, look at it—“because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD”—“because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.”* (2 Chronicles 12:14)

If you’re going to seek the Lord, you have to prepare your heart. In distinction with this verse, turn to 2 Chronicles 19, verse 3, and see what happened to good King Jehoshaphat. God says to Jehoshaphat, *“Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land,”*—that is, the places of idolatry—*“and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.”* (2 Chronicles 19:3)

Rehoboam did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord. Jehoshaphat prepared his heart to seek the Lord. God said to Moses, *“When you come up to meet me, be ready.”* Oh, how we ought to prepare ourselves to have an encounter with God! One reason that some of us never have an encounter with God, one reason that some of us never have a transforming vision, is that there’s no determination. We’re satisfied with second best. Others never have that transforming vision, because there is no preparation.

III. Separation

Now, go back, if you will, please, to Exodus chapter 34, and I want you to see the third thing that is necessary if you’re to have a transforming vision of God. Not only must there be determination, not only must there be preparation; there must be separation. Look, if you will, in 34, verse 3: *“And no man shall come up with thee, neither let any man be seen throughout all the mount; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mount.”* (Exodus 34:3) That is, “Moses, I want you to have a quiet time with me, and I want you to be alone. I want there to be a determination. I want there to be a preparation. And I want there to be a separation.”

Do you have a quiet time where you get alone with God—just you and the Lord? Moses knew that he had to separate himself from the people. He had to get away from them. He was pastoring a congregation of three million backsliders, and he had to get away from them. And God said, *“Just cut yourself out now. And, Moses, you get alone with me.”* But listen. He had to separate himself from the people in order to separate

himself for the people.

Do you know what Moses did when he got away from them? He prayed for them. And did you know that my greatest ministry for you may not be when I'm standing in this pulpit before you but when I am away from you standing before God on your behalf? You see, Moses separated himself from the people that he might separate himself for the people—that he might intercede. But, you see, there needs to be in my life, and there needs to be in your life, that time when you get alone with just you and the Lord. And not just the preachers. You Sunday School teachers, the power that you're going to have in public is going to be commensurate with the time you spend alone with God in private. And, you parents, the success that you're going to have in rearing your children and bringing your children up to know and serve the Lord God Almighty is going to be in direct proportion, not only to the time that you spend with them, but the time that you spend away from them and with God. And when you're with them, you should be speaking to them about God. And when you're away from them, you should be speaking to God about them.

Oh, how we need to learn how to separate ourselves for the Lord! Jesus taught the importance of getting away and getting quiet when Jesus said, "*When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and...shut the door.*" (Matthew 6:6) Get alone and be with God.

Moses went up on the mountaintop to be alone with God. Jesus told us to go into a closet and shut the door and be alone with God. And as you study the Bible, you're going to find out that those men of God that have been blessed of God and used of God were men who knew how to be alone with God.

Abraham was alone when he met God, and God gave him that marvelous covenant. Daniel was alone when he met with God, and God showed him the history of this world pre-written. Paul was alone with God in Arabia when God spoke to him and revealed to him the marvelous gospel truths that he put in the epistles. Peter was alone with God on the rooftop when God spoke to him and gave him the vision that He gave to him. Moses was alone with God on the backside of a desert when he saw that burning bush. And Jesus Christ Himself, the very Son of God, would withdraw Himself from His ministry and would withdraw Himself from His preaching and from His teaching and from His healing, and Jesus, the Son of God, would withdraw Himself and be alone with God the Father only. How we need to be alone to listen to the Lord!

We don't like to be alone with God, because we're on unfamiliar territory. You know, when we travel in the Holy Land, something that kind of breaks my heart—it's the sign of "progress"—the little shepherd boys over there, some of them don't have their flutes anymore. Do you know what they have? They have a transistor radio stuck up to their ear. That's kind of sad, isn't it? A little shepherd boy listening to rock music or transistor radio. I wonder if there would have been a Twenty-third Psalm if little David had had a

transistor radio. You see, rather than just simply being alone with God and listening to God.

IV. Expectation

There must be determination to have a vision of God. There must be preparation to have a vision of God. There must be separation to have a vision of God. And there must be expectation to have a vision of God. Look in verse 4: “*And he hewed...*”—this is Exodus 34, verse 4—“*And he hewed two tables of stone like unto the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up unto mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand the two tables of stone.*” (Exodus 34:4)

Now, what did he take these two tables of stone for? Well, he was expecting a message from God. He took the tablets so that the message might be written on those tablets. That is, when he went up to meet the Lord, he didn't go up empty-handed. He went up expecting something. He expected God to meet with him.

Someone says, “When we pray for rain, we ought to bring an umbrella.” And when we meet with God, you ought to meet with God with a Bible and with a notebook to be ready for God to speak to you. In your quiet time, when you make that determination that you're going to meet with God, when you make that preparation and you prepare your heart to seek the Lord, when you make that separation and you get alone—it's just you and the Lord—then, dear friend, do you come with an expectation? Are you expecting God to say something? Well, if you're expecting God to say something worthwhile, don't you think you ought to bring a notebook?

Now the reason that some of you bring notebooks here to church and take notes is you expect me to say something worthwhile. The reason the rest of you don't is you don't expect me to say anything worthwhile. You don't care whether you remember it or not. Because, if you cared, you'd jot it down, see? But you don't really care. You're just here. You know, it's the thing to do. But there are other people, they say, “You know, what he says is important. I'm going to go hear my pastor preach. And my pastor has prayed and labored over the message. And so, what he says is so important I'm going to jot it down, because I don't want to forget it.” You say, “I'll remember it.” No, you won't. Most of you don't remember what I preached this morning. Let me tell you, the weakest ink is better than the greatest memory. You just jot it down, so you will remember it and keep it. It will go into your head. It will get it into your head. You wouldn't go sit in a college class and sit there with no materials in your hand, would you? No! You'd come prepared, because you'd say, “I want to get his material—because if it's worth going to class for, if it's worth paying tuition for, it's worth writing down; because I want to memorize it and get it into my heart.”

How much more when you go to meet with the Lord? Are you expecting God to say

something to you? Moses, when he went to meet with the Lord, was expecting God to say something, and he brought some tablets for God to write it down on. There is a sense of expectation. Now, if you're not expecting God to say anything to you, most likely He's not going to. We need to learn how in our quiet time to meet God in the Word and begin to listen to the Lord.

Let me tell you how to make the Scripture live. You just take your notepad there in your hand, and as you're reading the Bible, do this. First of all, read it through. And then, after you read it through, think it over. Begin to think. Ask yourself questions like this: Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? Is there a command to obey? Is there a blessing to enjoy? Read it through, think it over, write it down, pray it in, live it out, and pass it on—and you'll have it! And if you'll just go through this little form, you see—just read it through, think it over, write it down, pray it in, live it out, pass it on, share it. You know, when we meet one another, what we ought to be saying to one another is, “Say, guess what the Lord showed me in the Word today.”

I have a friend, Pat Zondervan. You know, Zondervan Publishers. Pat writes me many times in the year. And in every letter that he's ever written me, he says, “Adrian, this morning I saw in my Bible thus-and-such. And I thought, ‘My, how interesting,’ or ‘My, how true,’ or so forth.” He gives me a nugget from the Word that he's found in the morning as he's been meeting the Lord. He passes it on.

Sometimes my wife says to me, “How do you remember all these little stories that you tell?” Sometimes people say, “How do you remember little jokes?” How do you remember a joke? Tell it! How do you remember a scripture? Share it! Preachers have a leg up when it comes to remembering the Bible, because they preach it. And, you know, one of the ways that I can remember the Bible is to tell you about the Bible. And, when I'm telling you, it comes back to me. The more of it I give away, the more of it sticks to me. So, when you read it through, write it down, pray it in, live it out, then pass it on.

But I want to say that, when you come to God, come to God with a notebook. Come to God in that quiet time, expecting to God to say something. If you don't expect God to say something, then don't bring anything with you to write it down. But if you're expecting God to say something, you're expecting to hear the Lord, you're expecting God to speak to you out of His Word, you want to have a vision of the Lord that's going to transform your life, then it ought to be worth writing down.

V. Humiliation

All right now, not only is there expectation, but there's also humiliation. Begin to read here in verse 5: *“And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and*

proclaimed, The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth" (Exodus 34:5–8) Moses humbled himself before the Lord. Here is Moses down with his face to the earth because he's having an encounter with Lord God Almighty.

Do you know why Moses was able to receive things from God that you and I have not been able to receive? The Bible says he was the meekest man that ever lived. (Numbers 12:3) That's what the Bible says. He was the meekest man that ever lived. And do you know what the word *meeke* means? It doesn't mean "weak." If you know anything about Moses, he wasn't a weakling. But he was meek. *Meeke* means "teachable"—"teachable." There are some of us that are not teachable. We're not humble. "God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and God hath revealed them unto babes." (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21)

Now, when we humble our hearts, the Bible says we are to "*receive with meekness the engrafted word*" (James 1:21)—that is, with teachableness, with an open heart. You see, it is not that God does not speak. So often it is that we do not hear. We do not know how to humiliate ourselves or to humble ourselves in the face of God. And so there must be this humiliation. There must be this humbling. There must be this listening to God.

VI. Adoration

Here's Moses as he bows himself down. And so, the next step in a transforming vision to get the life that glows is humiliation. And then, right next to it, and right along with it, is adoration. Look, if you will again, in verse 8: "*And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped*"—"worshipped." (Exodus 34:8) This is what it's all about. You do not meet with God primarily to get your prayers answered. You do not meet with God primarily to get information. You do not meet with God primarily, even, to intercede, as important as that is. You meet with God just to worship.

Do you know how to worship? Do you know how to praise God, just to let your heart overflow? Do you know how to make love to God? Do you? To worship the Lord. You see, this is what it's all about. God "*seeketh such to worship him.*" (John 4:23) The great, yearning heart of God wants people to worship Him. God doesn't want you as a servant, primarily. Listen. If God wanted servants, He could get angels who'd do a lot better of a job than we would. They'd always do just exactly what He told them to do at His beck and call. God doesn't want your money, primarily. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. (Psalm 50:10) He wants your worship. "God is a spirit, and they that

worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” (John 4:23)

Do you know what God is seeking tonight? Do you know what God is saying as He looks down from heaven? “Worship me! Worship me!” There’s something about the nature of God that desires your worship. And there’s nothing that will put a glow in your life like worshipping the Lord—not asking God for anything, just praising God. And if you have difficulty spending time alone with God, it might be that you’ve gone to God with a *gimme* list rather than just going to worship the Lord.

Brother Lane, sometimes when I worship the Lord, I get my hymnal out and read hymns to the Lord, and say, “Lord, this is the way I feel.” Sometimes when I worship the Lord, I’ll get the hymnal out of God’s Word, the Psalms, and say, “Lord, I just want to worship you and praise you in your own words”—and just praise the Lord and talk not about God; not ask God for things, but just say, “My God, I love you”; “I praise you”; “I worship you.”

VII. Intercession

Here’s the way to have a transforming vision. There must be this humiliation. There must be this adoration. And then, you’re ready for the intercession. Notice in verse 9 now: *“And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O LORD, let my LORD, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.”* (Exodus 34:9)

Moses knew how to intercede for his people. He knew how to pray for forgiveness. He knew how to get the things that he needed from God. But, dear friend, he did not try to intercede until he worshiped. And he did not try to worship until he humbled himself. And he did not humble himself until he came with expectation. And he did not come with expectation until there was separation. And he did not come with separation until there was preparation. And he did not come with preparation until there was determination. He says, “O God, I’ll not go without you.” That kind of a man is the man who can intercede. That’s the kind of man I want praying for me when I have a need in my life: the man who knows how to intercede. Oh, God knows that we have a world that’s in need of intercession. And, oh, that God would teach us, and God would teach me, to intercede!

VIII. Continuation

I must leave that point. And go, if you will, to chapter 34 and verse 28, if you will: *“And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights.”* (Exodus 34:28) Continuation—continuation. It’s not just that he did this and said, “Now, what’s new?” Forty days and forty nights Moses was alone with the Lord.

I don't know how long you need to be alone with the Lord. But I'll tell you, it didn't take Moses forty days and forty nights to write down the Ten Commandments. He wasn't up there just getting the Ten Commandments that much time. He was up there being alone with God, continuing. You see, there are times when you need to take a day off from work—maybe a week off. There are times when you need to take hours in the day and just be alone with God over a continual period of time. There are times when we need to pray all night.

One of the greatest preachers who ever lived, in my estimation, was Charles Finney. Did you ever hear of Charles Finney? How many of you have heard of Charles Finney? All right, the rest of you, your education's lacking. Charles Finney was one of the greatest revivalists—not evangelists, revivalists—that America has ever known. And Finney said, "I have prayed all night, not because God was reluctant to hear me, but because I had to get my heart ready to receive what God had to say." Sometimes it takes that much time—just to pray all night. There is this spirit of continuation.

Conclusion

Now you say, "Brother Rogers, do you really think what happened to Moses over here in the Old Testament is applicable to us in the New?" I'm glad you asked that question. Would you turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 3 for a moment—and this is by conclusion. I'm almost finished. Turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 3, just keeping the story that we have in our hearts and in our minds before us—remembering that Moses went up to meet the Lord, and when he did, his face shone when he came back down from the mountain. Now, in 2 Corinthians chapter 3, begin reading in verse 7: "*But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious...*"—what was "*the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones*"? The Ten Commandments—"*the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?*" (2 Corinthians 3:7–8)—more glorious! Now what God is saying is, "If these things happened to Moses in the Old Testament, and he was dealing with the law, how much more glorious is our privilege to meet with our Lord in these days of grace?"

You know one thing that amazes me? Can I talk about tithing for just a second? Thank you. All right, one of the things that amazes me is, when you talk to a New Testament Christian about tithing, you know what some of them will say to you? They'll say, "Well now, tithing, that was for the Jews under the law. We're under grace." Friend, *anybody who'd let a Jew do more under law than he does under grace is a disgrace to grace*. Just say *amen*. It won't hurt. Now that was a pretty good statement. Listen. Anybody who'd let a Jew do more under law than he'd do under grace is a disgrace to

grace. What God is saying: “If what Moses saw was glorious, how much more than what we see...”

And now I want you to continue to read here in 2 Corinthians chapter 3. Read verses 17 and 18, and you’re going to see what I’ve been aiming at the whole time—2 Corinthians 3, verses 17 and 18: *“Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with an open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 3:17–18) Now if you’ll read this whole chapter, you’ll see that God is contrasting our quiet time with what Moses had upon the mountain. And He’s saying, “As Moses was transformed when he beheld the Lord, how much more shall those of us who have the gift of the Holy Spirit be changed from glory to glory?”

Dear friend, do you want the glow? Do you want the glow? Do you want that radiance? Do you want, in the spiritual realm, to happen to you what happened to Moses in the material realm? Do you want the life that glows? All right, we’ve had the formula for it. And I’ve been preaching to Adrian Rogers tonight, but I hope that you were listening.

Hearts and Hands for the Harvest

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 12, 1995

Main Scripture Text: Exodus 35:4–29

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Plan Was God-given
 - II. The Provision Was God-foreseen
 - III. The Program Was God-designed
 - A. What Kind of Offering Was It to Be?
 1. A Willing Offering
 2. A Wide Offering
 3. A Wise Offering
 - a. God Knows What the Need Is
 - b. God Is Pleased to Let Us Know What Part He Wants to Do Through Us
 - c. God Will Enable Us to Be Sufficient to Do Anything He Leads Us to Do
 - d. That Kind of Giving Requires the Power and the Presence of God
 - e. God Gets the Glory
 4. A Worthy Offering
 - IV. The Performance Was God-blessed
- Conclusion

Introduction

As I think about this church today, my heart is so filled with joy and thanksgiving to God, because Bellevue is a healthy, a happy, and a growing congregation. God has blessed us since we moved out here to these facilities, as we prayed, “God, help us to claim our Canaan,” and He did. We have this marvelously beautiful campus, this spacious building, and it represents the blood, sweat, tears, prayers, and faith of God’s people. This past year, we’ve seen the interchange opened off of Interstate 40, so we can get in and out. We have a prayer ministry now that is saturating the life of this church with prayer. I have men every day of the week who are fasting and praying for me. Each day a man says, “I will pray for the pastor on Monday,” another says, “I will pray for the pastor on Tuesday,” another on Wednesday, and so forth. And there’s a calendar of men who are just praying for me. Sometimes I feel like I’m just flying with a tailwind, and I know that it is because of the prayers of God’s people. And prayer is going up constantly to God from this congregation like incense went up to the Temple.

It's not that we're praying all that we ought to, but, thank God, we are praying.

And God has blessed and anointed this ministry with a worldwide radio and television ministry that is incredible. We are, to more than fifty foreign countries, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are on more than 400 television broadcast outlets and stations, on more than 14,000 cable systems across America, approaching more than 300 radio stations daily, preaching and teaching Jesus Christ. And my heart just explodes with joy as I think about all of that: how God is using this congregation and the ministry of Love Worth Finding to impact, literally, the lives of millions.

And, this past year, we moved in the Grace—Giving Recreation A Christian Emphasis—Building, a marvelously wonderful ministry that can impact the lives of many young Greg Addisons, like you just heard. And, by the way, the young man who just spoke to you is a lawyer—and one of the best lawyers in America, in my estimation. And I don't want to let the secret out of the bag, but he told me the other day that God's called him into the ministry. So I praise God for that and for how God has taken our young people through the Grace Building and other ministries like this. It's wonderful.

I think about the lay involvement. No church like Bellevue Baptist Church can operate without great lay involvement: with the ushers, the teachers, the musicians, the counselors, the coaches, and those who are working on hands-on missions. I praise God for that.

I praise God for what is happening in the great pageants that this church is putting on. Soon we're going to see The Singing Christmas Tree, and literally thousands and thousands and thousands... How many people have professed faith since we've been putting on the Tree? Do you know, Brother Jim? Twenty-eight thousand people—twenty-eight thousand people—have checked their card and said, "Yes, I prayed to receive Christ as my personal Savior and Lord," just in the presentation of the Tree. And then there is the Memphis Passion Play, and Celebrate America. I was just talking to someone down in Florida yesterday, and they said, "We're using Bellevue's Celebrate America in our chapel. We're going to show the videotape of that this coming Fourth of July." I think of the wonderful church-wide fellowship picnics that we're beginning to have now on the front lawns. The Fourth of July celebration is the sweetest, most wonderful Fourth of July thing, where people come as families. We have fireworks. We have fellowship. We have the preaching of the Word of God.

And as young Greg Addison said, "Bellevue Baptist Church is a more than a church; it is a way of life." We don't say that in a sense of cockiness or a sense of having arrived, but, folks, we would sin against God if we did not say, "Thank you, Lord," for what He has done. It is God's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. And how we bless God for that, and how we praise God for that!

Last Sunday night, I was up welcoming new members. We have what we call a

Discovery Class for new members on Sunday night. It meets for about three hours, and we have a little lunch and round tables, and I get to know the new members a little bit more. And I met a young couple, a little fine married couple—it didn't look like they'd been married very long to me—and they said, "Let me tell you about Bellevue Baptist Church." They said, "We came to Bellevue Baptist Church because we just wanted to visit, but we were looking for a small church—we were looking for a small church." And do you know what they said to me? They said, "We were looking for a small church, and when we came to Bellevue, we found everything we were looking for." Isn't that wonderful? You know what they found? They found a Sunday School class: a fellowship, and a place where people were together, loving one another and caring for one another. Indeed, Bellevue is a way of life.

Now, what are we going to do with all of the blessings that God has given us? Somebody has said that there are three kinds of folks in the world. There are risk-takers, caretakers, and undertakers. Now the risk-takers are those who just believe God and move out. The caretakers are those who've said, "Well, God's blessed enough, and we are just going to become keepers of the status quo." But those caretakers soon become undertakers. And we dare not—and by God's grace, we will not—get off of the cutting edge, reaching people for the Lord Jesus Christ. And so ours is a ministry of vision. First of all, we've got to have a vision. And then, we've got to have faith to believe that the vision is possible. And then, thirdly, we must obey.

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

—JOHN H. SAMMIS

Now, having said that, I want you to look in the Bible at a building program that was in God's Word. And I think that we can learn something from a building program and a building offering in the Old Testament that can apply to us today. So look, if you will, in Exodus chapter 35, and I begin reading in verse 4: "*And Moses spoke unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, This is the thing which the LORD commanded, saying, Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord*" (Exodus 35:4–5).

I. The Plan Was God-given

Now, let me say, concerning what we're doing here and this year's Love Offering, as it was in that day, I would want to say that in a very real way it is in our day: that the plan was God-given. The plan was God-given. Let me say that again. The plan was God-given. Now I am not inferring here that we have divine inspiration, as Moses did. No, no. But I am saying this much: that we do not bring a program, a plan, to Bellevue Baptist Church—our leadership, our staff, our deacons, our planning committee—we don't bring

a plan to this church that has not been soaked and saturated in prayer. And how do we decide what we're going to do? Does the plan come from the top down, or does it come from the congregation up? It's like the dew; it comes up and down, and it distills when conditions are right. And as we love one another, and communicate with one another, and pray with one another, and seek God's face, we believe that God has said, "This is the way; walk ye in it."

Now the reason that we need more space in the babies' building is, very frankly, we have run out of space. Why have we run out of space? Because God has blessed us. Now the problem is a problem that God caused. The problem is a problem that has come from the blessings of God. Now, would God have given us a problem, and have caused it—a wonderful, beautiful, godly problem—and then not give us the answer or the solution? Well, listen. If the problem has come from God's blessing, then God's further blessing is going to answer the problem, amen? You see, God said, "This is an offering I want you to take," and that we just are limited by our unbelief.

I heard of a fisherman who was a strange fisherman. He kept the little fish and threw the big ones back. He kept throwing the big ones back. And somebody said, "Why do you keep the little ones and throw the big ones back?" He said, "Well, anything over eighteen inches I have to throw back. I only have an eighteen-inch frying pan." Well, friend, what we need to do is get a bigger frying pan.

And we're not going to fail to reach these parents for Christ, because, not only is it the babies that we are taking care of, but we are telling Mom and Dad about Jesus Christ. And so the very first thing I want you to see is that the plan—the plan—I believe, was God-given. I really believe that. I believe from my heart that we are in the will of God, and we're doing what God wants us to do.

II. The Provision Was God-foreseen

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see: The provision was God-foreseen. Look, if you will, in verses 5 through 9: "*Take ye from among you an offering unto the LORD; whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the LORD; gold, and silver, and brass. And blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, and goats' hair, and rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and shittim wood, and oil for the light, and spices for anointing oil, and for the sweet incense. And onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and for the breastplate. And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded*" (Exodus 35:5–10).

Now, wait a minute. Who is He talking to? Why, He's talking to a group of former slaves. They have just come out of Egypt. They're out there in the desert. Did you see the shopping list? Did you see the things that He said to bring? Well, where were they going to get that?

By the way, that reminds me of Christmas shopping. Where are you going to get the money that you need? I need some money for Christmas shopping. I've got a big Christmas list. As a matter of fact, I need several hundred dollars. Some of you have got a hundred dollars. Would you just come up here and give it to me? Anybody? Would you? Oh, thank you. Well, thank you. Thank you very much. All right, see how easy that was! Why didn't I think of this before? Now, look at that, Bob. That's one, two, three big ones. No, that's mine.

All right now, it's amazing how quickly people act like that. And I know, before I go on, I've got to get your attention again, because some of you are wondering about what just happened up here. You say, "Now, why were there three people up there sitting on the front row so willing, so quick, to give me a hundred dollars apiece?" I'll tell you why. It's very simple. I already gave it to them. I came out here this morning with three nice, crisp hundred-dollar bills, and I said, "Here's a hundred dollars for you; and here's a hundred dollars for you; and here's a hundred dollars for you; and when I ask for it, I want you to come and give it to me, okay?"

Now, you know, every one of them that came up here came up here with a smile on their face, grinning. They could hardly wait for me to ask them to come up here and give me that hundred-dollar bill. Do you know why? They were giving to me that which I had first given to them. It was already mine. It was already mine, and I was only asking for them to give to me that which I had first given to them. Is that not right? Now, folks, let me tell you something. Everything that we have to give to God is what God has already given to us. *"The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof"* (Psalm 24:1).

Sometimes we ask a person, "Well, if a man made 500 dollars, how much of it belongs to God?" And somebody says, "Well, fifty dollars." No, it all belongs to God—it all belongs to God. It always has; it always will. It is all God's. And God never asks anything of us that He's not already given us. And how did these people have all of that stuff to make that tabernacle with there in the wilderness? Well, God had helped them to spoil the Egyptians, and the Egyptians had loaded it onto them when they left Egypt. And they left Egypt by a miracle. And everything that they had in their possession was that which God had already given to them. Romans chapter 11 and verse 36 says, *"For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things"* (Romans 11:36)—of Him, through Him, to Him. That one hundred dollars was from me. They gave it back to me, but it came through them again. And so we need to ask ourselves, "Lord, Lord, what do you want that I have that you gave to me? What part of it do you want?"

I made a mistake one time—well, it's not the only mistake I ever made—but I talked to a man who had some money about giving some money to this church. I felt a little nervous about it, but I went and asked him. Do you know what he said to me? Now he said, "Preacher, don't worry about that. God will provide." He didn't tell me anything I

didn't know. I mean, I already knew that. But what I knew was that God had already provided, and it was in his pocket. But I just stopped. I'm not a beggar. As a matter of fact, that went against my will to do what I was doing. I said, "I'm not going to do that anymore." That's wrong for him to tell me, "God will provide," very piously.

There was a man who was in a meeting, a ladies' meeting. And one of the ladies said, "Let's stand and pray. "Professor, will you lead us in a prayer that God will give us this mission money." He said, "No, I won't do it, because He's already given it to us: the money's in this room. Rather than have a prayer, we're going to take an offering." They didn't have a prayer. They took an offering, and they got more than enough for the thing they were going to pray for.

You know what's wrong with us so many times? We're asking God to give us what He's already given us—I mean, what God had asked those people for in that offering, He had already given to them. "And of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14).

The plan—the plan—was God-given. The provision was God-foreseen. Do you think God would have put those people out there in the wilderness to build that tabernacle out there in the wilderness and tell them to take an offering when God knew that they did not have it to get? *Where* God guides, *God* provides.

III. The Program Was God-designed

Now, here's a third thing I want you to see. The plan: it was God-given. The provision: it was God-foreseen. God already knew that they had it. God knew that they had it. We've got enough silver and gold and diamonds that we wear to build that building. Isn't that true? I mean, if we just took it, and translated it into cash, and said, "Lord, here's what we want for your glory." Now, here's the third thing: The program was God-designed—the program was God-designed. Now the provision was God-foreseen, and the program was God-designed.

A. What Kind of Offering Was It to Be?

Now, what kind of an offering was it to be?

1. A Willing Offering

Well, first of all, it was to be a willing offering. Look, if you will, in verse 5: "*Whosoever is of a willing heart...*" (Exodus 35:5). Look, in verse 21: "*And they came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing...*" Look, if you will, in verse 22: "*And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing hearted...*" (Exodus 35:21–22). Now, what this is, is a willing offering. It was not marked by pressure. We don't pressurize people around here to give; we just don't do it. I've told you before: *What you do not* give willingly, *lovingly, joyfully*, God *neither*

needs *nor* wants. The same thing is true in the New Testament, in 2 Corinthians chapter 9, verse 7: “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Don't give of necessity: because there's a need. Don't give grudgingly: “we don't want to,” but somebody pressured you. Give hilariously. That's what the word *cheerfully* means. It's a Greek word, *hilaros*. Give hilariously. If you give till it hurts, it will just keep on hurting. If you give out of emotional pressure, later on, somebody, after the emotional pressure is over, you'll resent what you gave. You give of a willing heart.

Now if there's anybody here who thinks, “Boy, I came to Bellevue Baptist Church, and that man put pressure on me,” that's a lie. I'm not doing it. God can put all the pressure on you He wants to, but I'm not. If anybody comes around here and twists your arm, they're not doing it under the pastor's direction—not at all! If you don't want to give, don't give. Don't stand in the way of those who do, okay? Don't let the rest of us not get a blessing because you don't want to do anything.

You know, I talked about going to see that man. The pastor went to see a man one time. The man had all of the marks of affluence. He had a wonderful business. It was very obvious by the house that he lived in, the automobile he drove, the resources he had, that this man could make a significant offering. The pastor went to him and talked to him about it. He said, “Well now, Pastor, there are some things maybe you don't understand.” He said, “Pastor, do you know that I have an invalid mother who has absolutely no resources at all, who is in a nursing home needing expensive care? You didn't know that, did you, pastor?” He said, “Well, no, I didn't.” He said, “Do you also know that I have a brother who died and left a widow with four little children—absolutely no source of income whatsoever and four little children to raise? You didn't know that, did you, pastor?” He said, “No, no, I didn't know.” He said, “Pastor, did you know that I have a son on the mission field, who lives in a third-world country, impoverished, and my son himself is living below the national poverty level in that country? You didn't know that, did you, pastor?” He said, “No, I didn't.” He said, “Now, pastor, I want to ask you a question. If I have not given to any of them one red cent, what makes you think I'll give you anything?” There are some people who are not going to give to anybody. And you can find reasons for not giving.

Hey, folks, God wants a willing offering. God loves a cheerful giver. And God says over and over again, in this offering, He wants a willing offering—a willing offering—those whose hearts made them willing. There are some people who are not going to give to anybody, and you can find reasons for not giving. Hey, folks, God wants a willing offering. God loves a cheerful giver. Stewardship does not begin with giving; it begins with loving: if you love children, if you love your church, if you love your Lord, if you want to do it. You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.

2. A Wide Offering

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see: not only was it a willing offering; it was to be a wide offering—a wide offering. Now we're going to have to go very fast here, but I want you to see that everybody was to be included. Look in chapter 35, verse 4: *“unto all the congregation”*; verse 5: *“whosoever is of a willing heart”*; verse 21: *“every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made willing”*; verse 22: *“both men and women”*; verse 23: *“every man”*; verse 24: *“Every one”*: again: *“every man”*; verse 25: *“And all the women”*; verse 26: *“And all the women”*; verse 27: *“And the rulers”*; verse 29: *“every man and woman, whose heart made them willing”* (Exodus 35:4–5, 21–27, 29). Do you get the idea? It was to be not only a willing offering; it was to be a wide offering. It was for everybody. Everybody was to give something to this offering. Everybody can give something to the Love Offering if he is of a willing heart.

Now you ask for many things. And some He asked for gold. But some didn't have gold, so give some silver. Well, some didn't have silver or gold; then give some brass. Some didn't have that; then give some wood. Don't have any wood? Then weave some linen. Don't have any linen? Then give some spices. Don't have any spices? Bring some sheepskin. Don't have any of that? Bring some oil for the lamps. Bring something. Have a part. Let it be a wide offering. Everybody can do something. You see, folks, not equal gifts; it's equal sacrifice. What is a sacrifice for one would be easy for another, and what is easy for another would be a sacrifice for someone else; but each one have a part.

I was reading something several weeks ago that really blessed me. Back in World War II, the Nazis had captured some French and put these French in a Nazi German munitions factory to make bombs. And so they took these folks that were prisoners of war, put them in the munitions factory, and they were making bombs that would be dropped on their homeland, in France. But what happened was, when the bombs would fall on France, they would not detonate; they did not explode. There was something in the mechanism that didn't work. Of course, these French had very cleverly sabotaged the bombs. They knew they were going to fall on their own homeland. And when the French, in France, wanted to find out why the bombs were not detonating, they took one of the bombs apart, and then began to take others apart, and they found these bombs had little notes, little pieces of paper in them. And this is what it said: *“We are doing the best we can with what we've got, where we are, every chance we get.”* Boy, I love that. Here they were, prisoners of war, but listen to it again: *“We are doing the best we can with what we've got, where we are, every chance we get.”* What would happen to this congregation if we did that? I mean, just, you see, folks, if we would just take as much as there is and do it for the glory of our Lord.

3. A Wise Offering

It was a willing offering. It was a wide offering. I want to say something else about this offering. It was a wise offering. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *“And every wise hearted among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded”* (Exodus 35:10). Now the word *wise hearted* here means “those who are cunning, those who are skilled, those who have the ability to fabricate with their hands.” But in my heart, as I looked at that, I said, “Yes, we need people to use their talents for the Lord.” But that indicates that there are people who are sensitive to what God is saying. Let me give you some propositions. I’ve given you these before, and they make a lot of sense to me, when we’re talking about a wise offering.

a. God Knows What the Need Is

First of all, does God know what the need is? Answer: Yes, God knows what the need is, and He knows how much of that need He wants to make available through me. Anybody here who would disagree with that? Not a soul. God knows what the need is. He knows how much of that need He wants to make available to me.

b. God Is Pleased to Let Us Know What Part He Wants to Do Through Us

Number two: God is pleased to let me know what part He wants to do through me—if I’ll only listen. Is there anybody here who would disagree with that—that God will not reveal His will to us if we seek His will and listen? The Bible says, in Proverbs 16, verse 3, *“Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established”* (Proverbs 16:3). You say, “Lord, I want to do your will.” God says, “All right, here it is.”

c. God Will Enable Us to Be Sufficient to Do Anything He Leads Us to Do

All right, number three: God will enable me to be sufficient to do anything He leads me to do. Anybody disagree with that—that God would not enable you to do what He told you to do? Of course not! God knows what the need is, what part He wants to reveal and do through me. God will reveal to me, if I’ll seek His will, what that part is; and God will enable me to do it, if He has led me to do it. Now if God then enables me to do it, and leads me to do it, then I’m not giving from my resources; I am giving from God’s resources. I don’t have to be limited by my own abilities or my own imagination.

d. That Kind of Giving Requires the Power and the Presence of God

Number four: That kind of giving—that kind of giving—requires the power and the presence of God. Now anybody—we can take an offering—anybody can reach in their pocket and say, “Aha, look at that. I’ve got 300 dollars. There it is.” You don’t have to have God to do that. All you’ve got to have is 300 dollars—that’s all, just 300 dollars. Say, “I’ve got it. I’ll give it.” But when you give the way I’m talking about, you have to have God. You have to say, “God, you know what the need is, and what part you want; give through me. Lord, you are able to reveal that to me. Lord, if you reveal that to me, you’re going to enable me to do it. Then, Lord, I’m going to have to depend upon your

power and your presence.

e. God Gets the Glory

And then, the last and the final thing about this is, then, God gets the glory; then, God gets the glory. If I just reach in and whip out 300 dollars, or 10,000 dollars, or whatever it is, and I do it of my own wit, ingenuity, will, and so forth, who gets the glory? I do. But when I go to God, and I say, “O God, what do you want me to do?” and I give what God tells me to give, and what God enables me to give, then God gets the glory.

4. A Worthy Offering

Now it is to be, my beloved friend, it is to be a willing offering. It is to be a wide offering. It is to be a wise offering. And it is to be a worthy offering. Who are we giving to? Well, you’re not giving to Adrian. You’re not giving to Bellevue. Look in verse 5—the Bible says, “*Let him bring it, an offering of the LORD*” (Exodus 35:5). Look, if you will, in verse 21. It’s called “*the LORD’s offering*”; the last part of verse 22: “*unto the LORD*”; the middle part of verse 29: “*willing offering unto the LORD*” (Exodus 35:21–22, 29)—“*unto the LORD.*” We’re coming, bringing an offering to God—to Jesus—and it ought to be worthy of our God, the One who’s redeemed us, the One that we sang about. You see, not only is God the source of our offering; God is the object of our offering. What a joy, what a privilege, to bring the offering to Him! Even if the building was not built, just the joy of bringing Him an offering.

Put this in your margin—1 Chronicles chapter 29, verses 10 to 14. David took an offering, and then David said, “*Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O LORD is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all.*” Listen to this now: “*Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee*” (1 Chronicles 29:10–14). A worthy offering. Worthy is our Lord.

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died;
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

...

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

—ISAAC WATTS

It needs to be a worthy offering.

IV. The Performance Was God-blessed

Now, here's the final thing. Look. The plan was God-given. The provision was God-foreseen. The program was God-designed. What kind of an offering was it to be? And then, friend, the performance was God-blessed.

There's a passage in the Scripture that I want to see fulfilled one day before I go to heaven. It's in Exodus chapter 36, right after this chapter we've been in. And look in verse 5: *"And they spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the LORD commanded to make."* The offering was too big. *"And Moses gave commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much"* (Exodus 36:5–7). Wouldn't that be wonderful to say, "Hey, folks, it's running over. No more room. Stop giving!" That's how God blessed these people in this offering so long ago.

Now, what happened? The performance was God-blessed. Well, first of all, the tabernacle was built, and God's name was glorified. And, as a result, souls were saved. I believe that is going to happen in our program. But, secondly, those who gave, how many thousands of years ago, you know, they're up in heaven now, and they're still rejoicing. I mean, if they'd kept it, had they not given it, do you think they could be rejoicing over it right now? The poet said, "All that we can hold in our cold, dead hands is what we've given away." They're rejoicing right now, and on earth... They gave so long ago, but on earth—but on earth—it's still being talked about in Memphis, Tennessee. Isn't that wonderful? Because they obeyed the Lord.

A tree nursery had this sign on the wall: "When is the best time to plant a tree?" The answer: "Twenty-five years ago." Next question: "When is the next best time to plant a tree?" Answer: "Today"—"Today." Thank God, twenty-five years ago there was a

Sunday School for Greg Addison. Thank God that somebody planted a tree then, and we're picking the fruit. There are people coming after us, and we're going to be gone in a little while, but we want to harvest the fruit today and make it possible for people to harvest later on.

Conclusion

Now there's a wonderful, wonderful verse in the New Testament, talking about an offering, and it says this: "*They...first gave their own selves to the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 8:5). I want you to understand this: If you don't know Jesus Christ, if you've never been saved, we're not bringing you down here to say, "Give us some of your money." God forbid! God forbid! Listen. God wants you, not what you have. God wants to love you. God wants to save you. God wants to bless you. God doesn't need anything; He owns it all. God wants to save you. If I had a thousand lives, I'd give Jesus every one of them. I'm so glad that He saved me. And the wisest thing you can do today is to give your heart to Jesus. And don't wait until you're better. Don't try to say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, when I get it all straightened out, when I get the sin out of my life, when I get my life all straightened out, then I'm going to come to Jesus."

Oh, what if you were in a dark room, and you wanted light in that room, and you said, "Well, I'm going to wait until all the darkness is gone before I let the light in?" You'd never ever get the light in. "I'll wait till all the darkness is gone before I open the doors and windows to let the light in." No!

Listen. Open up your heart right now to Jesus, and He'll pull back the curtains and pin them with a star of hope, and He'll do for you what He did for me when I was a teenage boy. He will flood your life with light. Jesus saved me as a teenager, and I'm more excited this moment—and I mean this from my heart—far more excited now about Jesus than I was then. And it is true: every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. And if you'd just pray a prayer like this and say, "Lord Jesus, I'm a sinner; I'm lost; I need to be saved; I believe you're the Son of God; I believe you paid my sin debt with your blood on the cross; I believe that God raised you from the dead; and now I receive you as my Lord and Master; save me, Lord Jesus, and I will follow you all the days of my life, until you receive me into heaven"—say it, and mean it—and I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you.