

(Covenant Series) 6. the Everlasting Covenant of God - Part 6

by Al Whittinghill

To know God is to have eternal life, and we must see Him from an eternal perspective, not a man-centered one.

Duration: 1:03:56

Scripture: Genesis 1:26, John 10:18, Romans 5:12, Ephesians 1:4-5, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, 1 Peter 1:19-20

Topics: "Covenant Series"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the concept of the Trinity in unity, highlighting the three persons of God acting as one. The sermon discusses how God had already planned for the provision of forgiveness even before Adam sinned. The preacher shares a personal experience of being in awe of God's power and might, realizing that God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The sermon encourages the audience to learn about each member of the Godhead and not be swayed by man's theology, but to be rooted in God for eternity.

Transcript

Let's do something a little unusual tonight, and let's just, we've never done this before, but I think the Lord would have us just to sense that we're part of one another. Let's just take the hand of the one beside us, and if you can't reach across the aisle, that's okay, but let's just, let's just go to the Lord and ask Him to give His body truth. His body, His people, truth.

Father, tonight we come before You in the name of the Lord Jesus and ask You to teach us the things that are on Your heart. Surely this is a day of restoration. Lord, we look in the past and we see the mighty recovery in the church in Luther's day of the truth of the Son of God.

And Jesus has been preached in power through the great evangelists of the past. And in this last few years, we've seen a recovery again of the glorious truths of the Holy Spirit, as people have been revived and renewed, and now knowing the third person of the Godhead in glorious purity and power. But tonight we know that the first person of the Godhead is longing to be known as well, our blessed Heavenly Father.

We pray that we'll get in on what You're teaching in these days, the fatherhood of God, and that we will realize who You are and let our hearts be opened to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Thank You, Holy Spirit, for leading us to Jesus who teaches us about the Father. We now commit this night to

You and ask for truth beyond us to bring us to where You want us to be.

In the name of the Lord Jesus, bless Your body. Amen. Amen.

Well, the crucial need of the hour is to know God as He really is. Who could deny that? And what is God really like? Who is God? Well, in John 17.3, the Lord Jesus said, This is life eternal, that we might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You've sent. So really, to have eternal life is to know Jesus and to know the Father.

In Daniel 11.32 it said, The people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. It takes a knowing Christian to be a real growing Christian, and only a knowing Christian will always be the one that's going. So we live in a day when everyone is claiming to have their own particular brand or insights into the truth.

Have you noticed where everyone says our group's got it, special insight into the Bible? But you see, a little knowledge of God is worth tons of knowledge about God. And many people have notebooks and cassettes and libraries full of knowledge about God who really, in practical reality, know very little of God. And if we look at the church in our day, we see that we do know a great deal about God in His present work and in His present power, but failure to know the character of God and the person of God will leave us with a distorted opinion of Him.

We won't be able to walk as He would have us walk. I want to show you an example of that in Luke chapter 5. We see a precious leper who comes to the Lord Jesus. Luke chapter 5, verse 12, and we see that he is quite like us, who we come to the Lord in our day many times in our awareness of the fact that there are still things that are not yet dealt with in our own lives, as we saw earlier, a little in the evening earlier.

Verse 12, It came to pass when he, Jesus, was in a certain city. Behold, a man was full of leprosy. That's about as bad as you can get.

And he saw Jesus. He fell on his face and he besought him, saying, Lord, if you will, if you choose to, you can make me clean. There you have a man who knew God's power, but he didn't know God's grace.

Do you see that? He knew that God could make him well, but he only lacked the assurance that he would. And I think he's like us in many cases. We see things in our life that we know God, you could do this.

And the question tonight is, will you? You see, we know his power, we know his ability, but so often we don't know his grace and his person. And the Lord's answer immediately, he put forth his hand and touched him and says, I can almost hear, Oh, I will be now clean. Just an anxiousness in the Lord in a good sense to cleanse this man.

And immediately the leprosy departed from him. Well, Jesus knew about all of my sin and all of my failure and all of my present day patheticness when he initiated opening my heart years ago to respond to his call and he still did it. Isn't that amazing? Knowing all that's happened that he would still do it without backing up in that moment.

He opened your heart and he still called you when he knew all the patheticness and all the failure that would happen there. Well, surely the heart of God in our day is grieved as men attempt to understand God in terms only of their own experience. Everyone's got their cubbyhole of the truth.

And they say, if it doesn't match this criteria, if it's not in our group or if it's not this, then we can't receive it. And I believe that this is grieving God's heart. Very naturally men are locked in a time warp.

We're under the schedule of things. We're under pressure and we're addicted to the visible. We have five senses that contradict the word of God.

So many times we have feelings that sway us, desire for creaturely things that make us warm and feel fuzzy and all these things that we long for. You know, it's normal to want to be comfortable and safe and to have a happy this and wonderful that. But you see, all those things can bind us into walking by sight and not by faith.

When something comes, we often say, how will this affect me? What will it do? How will it bless me? What benefit will I get? And when we do this, we interpret everything in terms of ourselves. And what this does to our Christian experience, it makes us man-centered. And that is the great enemy of the glory of God in our day.

A man-centered church that promises the moon and delivers only that, never gives the sun. To know God, we must see him not from a man perspective, but from an eternal perspective, from a timeless, spiritual, knowing him in spirit and in truth. And so the great work of the Holy Ghost tonight, praise him for his goodness in our life, is to present to us God as he is, to really teach us through the word about the Father and the Son and himself.

The scripture that says he shall not speak of himself, talking about the Holy Spirit, is the same very word in the Greek that says when Jesus said about, I do not speak of my own self, in other words, of my own power. The Holy Spirit doesn't speak on his own. He speaks by the Father and in the Son.

And so the Trinity and unity acts. We shouldn't be afraid of learning about each glorious member of the Godhead. There is no jealousy in the Godhead tonight.

And we must not allow ourselves to be cheated by man's theology. God wants to lift us up tonight and root us in himself in eternity. Now, I'm going to show you a lot of scriptures tonight, so I hope you'll just jot them down.

And if you're quick, if you're a past Bible driller, then perhaps you can join me in turning to these as I go. But if you're not, then don't get frustrated because you'll quench the spirit and you won't be able to follow along. Let me ask you a question.

Who do you think is controlling the world today? With all that's going on, the wars and the rumors of wars and just the violence and corruption as it was in Noah's day? Well, to answer that, it'll depend on whether you walk by faith or walk by sight. You see, if you walk by sight, you'll say the devil's winning out. Look around us.

Men's hearts are failing them when they look around for fear. Distress of nations and perplexity and perilous times. Fierce.

Men will be fierce and proud and haters of God, it says. Well, if you walk by faith, you'll see that God is still on the throne. And even though man is alarmed, there's no panic or alarm in heaven.

In fact, in First Chronicles, twenty nine, verse eleven, we find our first scripture. I'll just read these to you and and you kind of hang in with me as we go through these. First Chronicles, twenty nine, eleven.

It says there very clearly Solomon's prayer. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty for all that's in the heaven and in the earth is yours. Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and your exalted head above all.

Both riches and honor come from you and you reign over all. Remember, he doesn't change tonight in your hand. There's power and might and in your hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all.

And then in Second Chronicles, twenty verse six. Again, we have good theology as it says, O Lord, God of our fathers are not thou God in heaven. Don't you rule and power over all the kingdoms of the heathen in your hand? Is there not power and might so that no one is able to withstand thee? Nobody has ever or can ever resist God for any length of time.

If they do and it appears they are, it's because he's letting them. His will is irresistible. His will is irreversible.

And God is absolutely in control. Look at Isaiah chapter 14 with me. Isaiah chapter 14.

And stick with me because we're going to have some high theology here tonight. But theology is meant to bring us to neology. If it doesn't, then it's just deadhead.

We need to be on our knees after we get this tonight. Isaiah chapter 14, verse 24. And when you read this, see it in the light of eternity.

Isaiah 14, verse 24. The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, As surely as I have thought it, so shall it come to pass. And as surely as I have purposed it, it will stand.

Everything God thinks, everything he desires, it will stand. And look at verse 27. The Lord of hosts has purposed it.

Who shall disavow it? His hand is stretched out. Who's the one to turn his hand back? You see, he's saying no one. And if you were to go to Isaiah 46, you'd also see his sovereignty coming out, blasting out through this verse.

Isaiah 46, verse 9 and 10. It says to his people, Remember the former things of old, for I am God. There is no one else.

I am God. There is no one like me. I declare the end from the beginning.

And from olden times, I tell you the things that are not yet done, saying my counsel will stand. I will do all my pleasure. In other words, everything God decides to do, he is going to do.

And he may be behind the scenes, but just like this passion play that's coming up, you may never see the people who are moving the scenes, but they're behind them and they're in control. And so it is with God. He is absolutely in control.

And for it to be in his heart is the same thing as for it to be done. Kings and rulers and princes, the Bible says, are like grasshoppers in his hand. And in Isaiah 45, verse 7, he says, I form the light.

I create darkness. I make peace. I create evil and its adversity.

I, the Lord, do these things. You see, that'll blow the barriers down in some people's theology. But God is sovereign.

He is in control and there is no variableness with him. There's another scripture that's sometimes uncomfortable to a person who hasn't seen all that we're going to cover tonight in Deuteronomy, chapter 32, verse 39. We read these words.

See now that I, even I, am he. And there is no God with me. I kill.

I make alive. I wound. I heal.

And neither is there any that can deliver themselves or get out of my hand. And so we see that God gives men the government that they deserve or that they desire in order to bring them to repentance. You see, we often think that there's something going on in America, that God is on America's side and that he's trying to salvage things, trying to save the Christian kingdom in America.

But the truth is that God is allowing things to happen in America to bring us to repentance. He gives us what we want. If we want a king, he'll give us a king like, like, like, like he gave Israel, a king head and shoulders above all other men, but yet infinitely below what God himself wanted to do.

Well, in Proverbs 21, 1, it says this. The king's hand is in the hand of the Lord. The king's heart, excuse me, is in the hand of the Lord, like rivers of water.

He turns their hearts wherever he wants. God's in charge of Gorbachev. I mean, Gorbachev is a pushover for God.

God's in charge of Reagan. They may not love him back publicly and say the name Jesus. They may talk about God or whatever, but God's in charge and every man will give an account.

We're starting off with God's honor tonight, not man's privilege. Acts 17, verse 26 says this. Listen to this talking about all the nations on the earth.

He has determined the times before hand, and he has appointed the boundaries of their habitation. Every nation, every establishment of every nation on earth. God decided you'll be there for that long and the border disputes and all the rest.

God's in charge of. He says, this is how long you'll be there. This is how long your border will be secure.

God is never taken by surprise. You see, doesn't this minister a little confidence to your heart about who our God is? Well, we're just starting tonight. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 11 says that he works all things after the counsel of his own will.

Everything is for his glory and his pleasure and his honor and not for man's satisfaction. Now it's a given that if we are plugged into his pleasure and his glory and his honor, then man will be deeply satisfied. But there is no wisdom or counsel apart from the Lord.

Well, there's no battle today between God and the devil. There certainly is activity by the enemy, but we have victory. The Lord's victory is certain.

We have a God to be revered. Well, you might say, well, if God is in such control as you say, why is there so much evil in the world today? Anybody been asking that as I've been going through this? Well, I'll tell you why. Because man is in cold-blooded rebellion against God.

And we come from the presupposition that man is innocent. If God is good, then why all this suffering? The truth is that man is not innocent, that men are in cold-blooded rebellion against God. And what you're seeing is what Romans 1 says, that the wrath of God is being released from heaven, revealed against all who suppress the truth and hold back God's revelation.

God is eager, more eager to save every man than any man is to be saved. Man is a wicked-hearted creature. Romans 3 says that we are far from God.

There's none that seeks after God, but God is seeking after man. Now, man hates this truth. We just hate it.

We want to leave a little ground to stand on and say, no, no, some people are really interested in God. Well, we want God's perspective on truth tonight, so we must start with who He is. And I'll tell you, if you get this, and if you're freed from the blinders of the flesh to really get a hold of this truth, you will be blessed.

I'll tell you, it's blessed me this afternoon. God is not the old man sitting on a cloud whose kingdom or world is falling apart like so many people make him out to be, saying, oh, He needs your help. Won't you come and dedicate your life to His kingdom? It's coming apart.

God needs you. That is totally unworthy of the God of the Bible and totally ungodlike. He does not need me.

You say, oh, no, He doesn't need you. He needs no sponsors. We need Him, and we have the infinite privilege of being plugged in to what He is about.

Now, what I want you to do then in your mind is to go back in your mind, and we're going to go back before the Old Testament period. We're going to go back to before the flood. Now, you can get back there pretty easy.

Back before the flood happened, when it was like today and the world was populated probably more than today, historians that know would tell us. Back before even, the Garden of Eden. Back before man.

It's getting a little harder now to go back. Back before there was man, but yet we can see that in Genesis 1, God spoke and the stars came into existence. Let's go back before that.

Let's go back before He created the light and the darkness. You say, ooh, it's getting hard now. Let's go back before there was anything else.

Back before the earth. Back before the stars. Back before outer space.

You say, I can't go any further. That's right, you can't. And you have to come to one place.

Where am I now? Well, where the first words of the Bible are. In the beginning, God. Before there was anything else.

Before there was earth. Before there was man. Before there was outer darkness or space.

In the beginning, God. And that word in the Hebrew is Elohim. It's a masculine plural.

Masculine plural. In the beginning, God. And we think of masculine plural, father, son, and Holy Spirit.

You see, once God dwelt entirely and absolutely alone. This is going to blow some of your minds tonight. I warn you, you better just watch out.

It's going to blow your mind. There was absolutely nothing else but God. And he didn't need anything else to add to his glory.

The great I am. He didn't need to create heavens and earth and man and angels. Back before there were angels, there was just God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And when he did create, it didn't add anything to him. If all of creation were to poof today and disappear in a fiery inferno, it wouldn't take anything from him. Theologically, this is called transcendence.

God is transcendent. He is over all. You say, that's bigger than my mind.

Great. If he was small enough for your mind, he wouldn't be big enough for your needs anyway. He's a big God.

And we read in Psalm 33, verse nine, he spoke and it was done. He spoke and it was done. In Romans 11, 36, it says of him, through him, and to him are most things.

Now, it says all things. Of him, he's the source. Through him, he's the means.

To him, he is the end. Romans 11, 36. He is a great God and he's the source.

By him are all things made that are made. By him, all things consist. And to him, all things are headed.

God is God. So, he is entirely self-sufficient and transcendent. But not only that, he is omniscient.

Omniscient. That means he knows everything. In the book of Acts, chapter 15, verse 18, it says these words, foreknown unto God are all of his works from the beginning.

Foreknown unto God are all of his works from the beginning. That means exactly what it says. That he's known about what he's going to do from the very beginning.

He knows all things. He is the all-wise God, the Bible says. Well, how does God know things? Does he have to think and go through mental exercise like you and me? No.

He doesn't have to do that. He doesn't have to go through the gymnastics that we... He just knows them. You see, he is the fountainhead of all knowledge.

He knows it. And all things are naked and opened before his eyes. It says in Hebrews 4.13, he knows all things and everything is stunned and before his eyes.

Every sparrow, his eyes on the sparrow, every ant, every little footprint of every little bug, in every little gushy piece of clay around the earth, every little moss, every little photosynthetic cell and every grain of sand, every snowflake, everything is held together by the word of his power. He knows it all and he is in

charge. He's the architect and every hair of every head is before him.

And some of you, it's easier than others. But it's every hair of every person of every age. And, you know, he knows about it all when every hair falls.

1 Samuel 2.3 says that our God is a God of knowledge. By him, actions are weighed. And he understands it.

There's a tremendous scripture in Psalm 139. Listen to this one. Psalm 139.

David is writing and he is absolutely amazed as he says in verse 2. Thou knowest my down sitting and my uprising. You understand my thoughts while I'm afar off. Not God afar off, but David afar off.

And you come past my path, my lying down. You're acquainted with all my ways. There is not a word in my tongue, Lord, but you know it all together.

You have surrounded me behind and before and laid your hand upon me. So he knew that God knew everything. Daniel 2.22 says he knows what is in darkness.

You ever seen any real bars with the lights blaring and bright? Bars are dark. People cut the lights down low to hide sin. I'll tell you something.

God just says the day and the night are alike to him. He sees what's done in the darkness. And Psalm 90.8 says he has set our secret sins in the light of his face.

In his immediate presence, all of our secret sins. Ezekiel 11.5 is even more uncomfortable. It says that I know the thoughts that come into your mind, every one of them.

So he is the God who knows all these things. And see, our minds have to crack at a certain point. He doesn't just know what's going on right now worldwide.

He knows what's going on all the time, past, present, future, right now. See, to him, right now is eternity. And past, present, and future are the same to him.

They're all right there before his throne. So he's not only omniscient, he is omnipresent. He is omnipresent.

This means that he has no bounds. He cannot be contained in any denominational box or any other type of thing. There is nowhere where God is not.

And he is infinite. He has no size. He has no limit.

He is close to everything, but everything is not close to him. No matter where you are, God is there. Going on, it says in Psalm 139, verse 7 and 8. We just read in that Psalm, but listen, David cries out saying, where shall I go from your spirit? Where shall I flee away from your presence? Jonah should have read that.

If I ascend up into heaven, you are there. Of course, he's there. But look at this.

If I make my bed in hell, behold, you're there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, I'll find out your hand has led me and your right hand holds me. And I say the

darkness will cover me up.

God won't see. Even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hides nothing from thee.

The night shines as the day. Darkness and light are both alike to you. So he's everywhere and he's closer to you than your thoughts.

As an ocean is to a fish, so is God to his creation. In him we live and move and have our being. And although his presence is everywhere, his manifest presence is quite another different manner.

It's a great mystery, but I know it's true that God does not dwell in the heart of a sinner the way he does in the heart of a saint. He's not there in the same way. He says, here's who my father and I will manifest ourselves to, him who loves me.

And if you keep my word, my father and I will come and openly make our abode and manifest ourself unto you. In John 14. So here's the contradiction, you see.

All of eternity contains God around us. There's nowhere he's not. Can you see the contradiction and the pressure that's on a man who refuses to allow God in his life? The pressure of everything around him, no matter where he goes, to try to deny reality.

God all around him, he's trying to do. Well, God is not only omniscient, he is not only omnipresent, but he is omnipotent. That means all power.

All power. Now, those are the three omnis. There's a lot of other theological truth about God, but the omnipotent, Psalm 62, verse 11, says, Power belongs to God and to no one else.

Power belongs to God and to no one else. Well, you say, well, what about the New Testament? Does it have anything there? Who knows what verse I'm going to go to next? You're bound to know. I know you're thinking of it.

Romans 13.1. It says, Let every soul be subject to higher power. For there is no power but what's from God. The powers that are be ordained of God.

You see, even the man who stands and says there is no God, his tongue, his breath, his blood are being kept in array by God. Even Madeline Murray O'Hara, who says all these things about God, her heart is kept beating by a merciful God. You see, she's denying the very God that's keeping her living.

It's an amazing grace situation, you see. It's an amazing thing. This kind of power is non-acquired power.

God didn't get his power from anywhere. We get our power from maybe youth or exercise or something or from God, but his is residual power in his person. God is power.

And earthquakes and volcanoes and tidal waves and explosions and novas in the outer space, it's just peanuts to God. Peanuts, that's nothing. And it's no big deal for him.

It's just nothing is too hard for God, you see. It's no more difficult for him to blast a star out of an orbit or to part the Red Sea than it is to go and blow a lock of hair out of my little girl's eyes when he wants to clean it out of her face. He just blows it out of her eye.

It's the same for him. It's no harder for him. Is there anything too hard for the Lord, he asks in Genesis 18, 14.

So he is omnipotent, all power. Well, that should be enough to get us going. But let's go a little further.

He's eternal. Deuteronomy 33, 27, it says he's the eternal God. And this means that he has no beginning and he has no ending.

God has no beginning. Well, we can't think of that. He didn't ever begin.

He's always been. If you see what I'm saying, your mind will go, you can't do it. You can't go that far.

He never has not existed. He's timeless. He is always previous.

Wherever you go, God's always been there. He's always been there. In fact, I'll go one step further and this will blow your mind.

It blows mine. I can't even get it yet. But when you get to heaven and meet people like Paul and Abraham, to him who lives in the eternal now, you're going to find out that Paul hasn't been there any longer than you have.

You think about it. See, past, present and future are like to him. They're swallowed up in eternity.

I know this is hard to follow, but I'm just trying to broaden our idea of God here. To him, our lives, past, present and future are all present. They're right now before his throne.

And time is like a book to God. Did you know he could take the book of the Whitting Hill life and he could open us up at the beginning and see me when I was before I was in my mother's womb and he could see me in my last heartbeat. When I collapse over and I'm ushered into his presence.

I mean, he could tell you the number. That made my heart feel funny just thinking about that. He could tell you the exact number of heartbeats that my whole heart's going to take.

He could and yours too. That ought to humble us. It's supposed to humble us, to number our days.

It may not be tomorrow. It may be tomorrow. Don't say tomorrow, but say tomorrow if the Lord wills and let it sober you and let it bring you to an account that not if you just have a year, you should live differently.

But the fact that every day will be the same when you get before God, he is immutable as well as eternal, unchanging. I am the Lord. I change not.

Of course, he doesn't change when you're perfect. You can't change. If you change, you're either getting better or worse, right? So he doesn't change.

There's no need to. He's perfect in all his ways. He's also holy and righteous.

It says in Psalm 145, verse 17, that he is holy in all his works and he is righteous in all his ways. Habakkuk 1.13 says that he is of purer eyes than to even look on sin. He's holy.

He's righteous. And in Psalm 97, verse 2, it says that righteousness and judgment are the base, the foundation of his throne. Everything he does is always right.

Everything he does is always based upon all the facts. That's why around the throne they are crying out in amazement. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.

The beauty of the Lord is his holiness and his person. He is the standard of the universe. Everything will answer to who he is.

Not just what he does, but who he is. Now don't get tired. This is big thinking.

I know he is always just. Everything he does, he is righteous. He has all the facts.

He is never wrong. He has no respective persons and he has no favorites in the sense of what we call favorites. He does favor those who fear him, reverence him.

Ezekiel 18.20 says that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. So here we have a holy God who's promised, who never lies and who can't lie, the soul that sins, it shall die. What an awesome and fearful thing.

It's too much for me, you say. Well, see, God is also loving and he's holy. How does he show his mercy and his loving kindness while yet being holy and saying the soul that sins shall die? Well, he'll never exercise his grace and mercy at the expense of his holiness.

You see, what his holiness demanded, his love provided. What righteousness required, his mercy secured. And he did it at Calvary.

Righteousness and peace have kissed one another and truth and judgment have come together at the cross. Well, as we begin to see this kind of God, our mind begins to go, this is too much for me. Maybe you've done that already.

Maybe you did it halfway through to this point. I can't take it. It's too much for me.

I just want to sing Amazing Grace. Just leave me with that, singing Amazing Grace. But you see, the truth is, when we begin to see who God is, our hearts begin to panic.

Our minds begin to reel and we begin to realize all of a sudden, this is not a God who is a God of convenience, who when I pray to just right, he'll do a miracle when I need it. He never inconveniences me. He never astonishes me.

He's a good God. He gives me what I want. He's made my life meaningful.

And when we see he's a whole lot more than that, that he's a God who's to be feared, then we begin to kind of zone out and begin to say, what's going on? I'll never forget. And those of you who know me have heard this before. The time that God was making these truths really real to me, a couple of years ago, probably about eight years ago, I was on the beach in North Carolina.

It was the winter. No one was there, totally deserted. And I was just down there worshiping, praising God, walking on the beach alone at night.

It was wonderful. I mean, there's a thunderstorm way out off the ocean outside. It wasn't the kind that big bang, bang, but it's kind of this muffle way out there, you know, echoing.

And the wind was just blowing. The sea was crashing. Boy, did I feel spiritual.

And I remember walking out on this old rickety pier and out toward the end, it was just as dark as you could imagine because it was kind of cloudy. But every now and then there'd be this tremendous boom and it would light up these massive cumulus clouds way out there and it would just kind of flash. And I could see, you know, power like I've never known out there flashing.

And the pier was going like this. I was as far as I could get to the end and was leaning out with no wood before me, just the ocean rolling and crashing behind me. And, you know, I'm trying to paint a picture to let you know how great it was.

I was going back and forth and the wind was blowing my hair up and, you know, and this big thundering and I was getting goosebumps. And I remember looking up and this panic came over me. As I began to, I said, look at all that water out there and all those bugs and everything and fish out there.

And it's like I heard the Holy Spirit say, and Al, that's only the top of the water. And then I saw this flashing and I realized that and I saw the perfect coordination of nature. And I remember in my heart saying, my God, what kind of a God are you? And tears were coming out of my cheeks.

I said, you're a God of power. You're a God of might. And the Holy Spirit said, when you've seen me, you've seen the Father.

I was saying, what kind of a God are you? I mean, what do you really like? And I heard the words of Jesus. When you've seen me, you've seen the Father. I'll tell you, I found this old light bulb on the end of the pier.

I just kind of switched it and a light came on like that. And I got up my New Testament and I had a big old time out there on the end of that pier just praising God. You see, nothing is more unworthy of God than a low concept of him.

It is the truest form of idolatry when we fashion God to our own ideas. So he wants us to fall on our face before him and to really be stunned and to be shaken. And you know, when this happens, this is the beginning of what the Bible calls the fear of the Lord, when he's bigger than our thoughts of him.

He's a big God. We realize that, look, even if he was a tyrant, you'd be smart to be on his side because he's got the last word. Even if he was going to judge you and throw you like a French fry in hell, you'd be smart to be on his side because he's got the last word.

But the fact is that he's a loving, merciful, wonderful God. And it's idiotic to say no to a God like that. Well, when we begin to understand this, it's the beginning of wisdom and we begin to see the real eternal purposes of God in Christ.

Ephesians 3:11 says that God had an eternal purpose, which he purposed in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Now we're coming to the climax of this whole message. All that's been for what I'm taking you to now in Revelation 13:8, you would read if you were to go there, you'd find that the Lamb of God has been slain from the foundation of the world.

That means before Genesis 1:1. In the mind of God, Jesus was slain before Genesis 1:1. In the purpose and in the mind of God, God's eternal purpose. But how and why? Well, back before Genesis 1:1, something mysterious happened within the Godhead. Back there when there was just Father, just Son, just Holy Spirit.

And in the mind and heart of God, before the beginning, it was purposed somehow in the mystery. I don't begin to understand it or pretend to try to relay it, but the scriptures say it, that there was a counsel, a mysterious counsel within the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Somehow they together purposed.

God is light. God is love. God is truth.

God is a consuming fire. And they purposed to manifest themselves. Hissself.

Three, yet one. It's amazing. And it's, I'm not trying, whenever you try to picture something like this, you make, you have the dangerous possibility of making it seem too human.

But that's just for illustration's sake. Think that it might have been like this. The Father in union and covenant oneness looked at the Son who had always been with him and said, I want more like you.

Perfect oneness. I want more like you, Son. And the Son said to the Father, I will guarantee the procurement of more like me in a family of sons to you, Father.

And the Holy Spirit said, I will set my seal. I will carry it out. In other words, God, the Father thought it, God, the Son would be the one to have bought it and the Holy Spirit will be the one to have wrought it.

And this is exactly what it says in Ephesians chapter one. It says that he has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus. But the Father predestinated us and the Son purchased us with his blood.

The Father predestinated, the Son purchased and the Holy Spirit then protects it and carries it out. So it's an amazing thing. There was a promise.

There was an oath within the Godhead, a covenant. Remember how we said the secret, the intimate counsel of the Lord is with those who fear him. Intimate counsel means like a counsel of war.

It suggests two or three in intimacy there together. Father, Son and Holy Spirit purposing eternal counsels before there was anything else. And they purposed something.

God swore by himself that his purpose would stand. And the Father said, I want more like you. The Son said, I'll guarantee you'll get more like me.

And the Spirit said, I'll carry it out. Now, that's pretty simplified, but this is where we've got to start. If we're ever going to see truth in right perspective, if we're ever going to see any truth at all, it'll have to be there.

See, most people's theology starts with the Garden of Eden, the fall. And we go from there and we leave ourselves man centered. But God's purposes were much bigger than the fall.

Let's go to the New Testament and look to see these truths in the heart of them. Look at the first Corinthians chapter two with me. And I want you to see this.

We're going to be moving on from this point. I've been taking my time up to this point. First Corinthians, a counsel within the Godhead.

Think of that. And the counsel, the father's heart determined there would be a vast family of sons and loved ones for each other and for the father. These would be real sons of God birthed.

Remember I read you, beloved, what manner of love the father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the born ones of God. Amazing. Amazing.

And it doesn't yet appear what we shall be. But even though now we are the sons of God. Well, the father and the son and the Holy Spirit purposed in this counsel to have a vast family of sons.

Why? I don't know. But I'm sure glad he did. I'm sure glad he did.

One day we'll probably know this, but but it's because of this counsel that we're here today. It's hidden wisdom. In fact, first Corinthians chapter two, verse two, Paul comes preaching.

He says, I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified. I was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling. My speech and my preaching wasn't with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and power so that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in power, power of God.

How be it we speak this wisdom. Here it is. Look at this.

Among those who are mature means full grown. Consistently, it's the word that means mature. Yet it's not the wisdom of this world, nor the princes of this world that are coming to nothing.

It doesn't just mean earthly princes. It means powers of darkness, because look at the next verse. We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained when before the world to our glory, which none of the princes of this world knew.

Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. The demons didn't know God's eternal purpose. Had they known it, they would not have engineered the death of Jesus.

As it is written, eye has not seen, ear has never heard. It's never entered into the heart of man, you could say naturally. The things which God has prepared for them that love him.

So God had something in mind before creation. Right there it says it. Hidden wisdom ordained by God for our glory.

Now let me ask you a question and be careful before you answer this question. As you think about it, this will probably be a new question to you. I'm not trying to be irreverent at all, but did Adam's sin change what God had planned? No, it didn't.

You see, God's whole purpose and plan is not just a recovery plan. God knew before that he created Adam that he would sin and he knew that by that he would amplify the overall purposes and revelation of who God is as he was going to recover him. And redemption.

But there's more to God's revelation than just redemption. That's a big statement. You need to think about that.

If Adam hadn't sinned, God would still have brought everything together in Christ because the glory of Jesus Christ was his eternal purpose. Having sons under the Father. And so that's why your theology must not start in the Garden of Eden.

It's got to go back before that, back to the Father's heart. It was God's plan within himself to bring all things together in Christ for Christ's sake, not just for my sake, not just for your sake. Redemption is not a panic salvage job.

And so everything God does in the Bible and today is in the light of and for the glory of his son. To him, all the promises of God are made. And in him, all the promises of God are yes and amen.

We are joint heirs when we're with him and in him. We have everything he has. So God does not exist for man like so many would believe or try to experience.

We wouldn't say we believe that a humanist wouldn't mind saying that, but never a Christian man exists for God's pleasure and for his glory. And he doesn't exist just to bless me. So Jesus Christ is the center of God's eternal purpose.

Titus chapter one, verse two, brings out this deep theology again that we're talking about. I'll tell you, this is deep enough to drown in. Titus chapter one, verse two.

We just read this one phrase in hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began. Well, before the world began, he promised eternal life. Who did he promise it to? God promised eternal life.

I believe he promised it to his son. He promised it. They agreed together for a vast family of life.

And you see the same truth. If you just go to second Timothy back to verse nine of chapter one, chapter one, verse nine, second Timothy. It says that God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ Jesus.

When before the world began, but now is revealed by the appearing of our savior, Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and it goes on. And so, Timothy, don't be ashamed of the gospel he's writing. It's greater than you can see at this point.

And don't let the afflictions of being an eternal being bother you. God has a purpose and it's not according to the things that we work up in our own experience. It's according to his own purpose and grace, his plan that he's ordained for us.

This is a real mystery. Well, it says it again in first Peter. We're hitting Peter.

We're hitting Paul. We hit John. But in first Peter, chapter one, verse 18, it talks again about always having been in God's heart to send the second person of the Trinity to die, to manifest love, not just to cover sin, but I'm not minimizing that, but to reveal love.

This is love laying down his existence for his creation. It says in first Peter one, 18, as for as much as you know, you are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold from your empty way of life received, handed down from the tradition of your fathers. But you are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Remember, slain before the foundation of the world who verily was established or foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in these last times. It says at the end of the times for you. So, second Thessalonians, one more we'll look at.

Second Thessalonians, chapter two. You see in second Thessalonians, chapter two, verse 13, we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through the sanctification of the spirit and believing of the truth. So, God is the great giver of himself.

When God wants to give something and bless, he doesn't just give things, he gives himself. And he is the lover of the universe. He lays down his existence for his creation.

This is love. He lays down who he is for love's object. And the cross was always in his heart.

I like what brother Ian says. He says the cross was in the heart of God before sin was in the heart of man. Oh, that is so true.

It's so true. All the Old Testament is teaching us about the deep longing of God to give himself, to manifest his love on the cross. God wanted to reveal himself, to show everyone his character and who he is and the love and the truth and the power of his being.

And so God demonstrated his love to us in that while we were still sinners, enemies of God, hating God, that he died for us. So, this is the opening of what we call the everlasting covenant. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit had a council.

Now, they did this before in the Bible. We know they came down and said, let us make man in our image. They came down to the Tower of Babel and they said, let us go down and see.

In Isaiah 6, they said, who will go for us? The Trinity in unity acting. Three yet one. So, if God gives you a revelation of what I'm saying tonight, the Holy Spirit applies these truths, I believe that all of a sudden your life will cease to revolve around yourself.

And your lives will begin to revolve by choice around the purposes of God. And we'll see them. Now, we all know this, Adam did sin.

And we know it by agonizing experience. And God knew he would and had already planned the provision. We sinned in Adam, but God provided still plans for a family.

A family that would be grateful for having been forgiven. And so, the Father, I'm going to say it again, had marked out for himself a vast family who would actually have the very nature of the Son. You get that? This family would actually have the very nature of the Son, his life, his spirit, his purpose, his vision.

And it wouldn't be by imitation. It would be by his very own self being in them. Life begetting life, love begetting love.

But if it's going to be a real Son, then love's got to choose because God gives himself. He lays his life down. God doesn't want robots.

So, love must choose. And so, the Father intends for the Son to have preeminence in all things. The Son wants to reveal and glorify the Father.

And the Spirit wants to reveal the Son and to give glory to the Father. And the Father and the Son say, we'll never do it except by my Spirit. So, it's a perfect unity of revelation, God coming, saying to man, you now must choose to become lovers, to become lovers like your Father by his Spirit.

So, the starting point of all the ages is the Father's heart. The Father's heart, the Fatherhood of God. And Father must have thought this, and this is again a small way of saying it.

The only way that I can have a family is to have a family of like-minded, like-natured people. Is this too much? Am I losing you? It's too much. My wife says it's too much.

But she hears me all the time. But, you see, it's possible to do this only, God would say, as I reveal who I am and allow them to choose against who they are. Because that's what I do.

I choose to deny my own existence, to pour out myself for them. We love him because he first loved us, and we begin to see what he did, so we can do it back. So, as I love and lay down myself for them, says God, they must choose to lay down their self for me, and they'll love me back.

That means that it's at the cross, the place of mutual exchange, the place of covenant. So, Jesus, follow this carefully, received the necessary commandment from his Father, to die, to come into history, to the word become flesh, to dwell among us, to lay his life down in sacrificial obedience for a principle higher than his natural existence. And so, they decided all that before Genesis 1.1. All of that.

And so, they said, we need some place to do this, to reveal this great eternal purpose of God. Some place, Jesus, the Son of God, for you to go and deny yourself, to give yourself as the object of divine love. So, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.

An arena, a stage, a setting in which the Son of God could come and reveal the glory and the being of God. Angels, too, were watching, and they were amazed. And so, he who measured the heavens in the span of his hand, and held the oceans, came into a virgin's womb, and was born, and could hold on to Mary's pinky.

He's God, but yet he's man. It's an amazing thing. The eternal word became flesh.

Now, let me just take a few more seconds and read some scriptures from John. Look at John chapter 6 with me, and I want to just fan through a few quickly, and show you the language of Jesus that reveals exactly what we're saying. John chapter 6, verse 37.

Jesus says, When were those people given to Jesus? Before the foundation of the world. You read Psalm 89 later, in the light of what we've said tonight, and it'll blow your mind. It's exactly along the lines of what we've said.

Psalm 89. God the Father gave Jesus a like-natured, spirit-filled, holy-visioned people, for a son for the Father, but for a bride for his son. And the Father gave Jesus a family, and we see in John, seeking love, coming to look for the bride.

It's all one integral truth. And so, in John chapter 10, verse 18, we see this truth coming out again. It says, Jesus says, No man takes my life from me.

I lay it down myself. I have the power to lay it down. I have the power to take it up again.

This commandment have I received from my Father. He was commanded by his Father. When? I believe before the foundation of the world.

I can't prove it. But the truth about the cross is that it was obedience unto death of the cross. We read that in Philippians chapter 2. So don't feel sorry for Jesus.

We look at him suffering and say, poor Jesus. We can enter into the agony of God. But Jesus himself turned and said, Don't weep for me, sons of Israel.

Daughters of Israel, weep for your sons, because they don't realize the greatness of this moment. And what's happening here, they don't know the day of their visitation. See, he wasn't a sickly little white-laced, cuffed, effeminate-looking fellow who walked around, but he was rather God in the flesh.

John 12, 49, look at this, the language of deity. He says, I have not spoken of myself. The Father which hath sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, what I should speak.

And I know his commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even what the Father hath said to me, so I speak. Over 50 times in the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to himself as the sent one, sent one, sent from the Father.

John 14, 31, it must be this way. You see, this is the messenger of the covenant coming to fulfill his oath. John 14, 31, it says, But that the world may know that as I love the Father, as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do.

So he's doing it. So apparently Jesus had received an oath under charge from his Father and he solemnly swore, he solemnly swore to fulfill it. And lastly, John 17, we see him coming to the very end.

And in John 17, verse 5, he says, Now, Father, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. You see, this is the word made flesh, word made flesh. When he stands before Pilate, he would say, Pilate, 1837, look at chapter 18, I'm sorry, I forgot this scripture, 1836.

Jesus answered Pilate and said, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, if my kingdom were of this world, then my servants would fight that I wouldn't be delivered to the Jews, but my kingdom is not from here. Pilate said to him, Are you a king? And Jesus says, Yes, that's what thou sayest, I am a king, means yes.

To this end, I was born. I was born. For this end, for this cause came I to the world.

Here it is, not just to redeem, but to bear witness unto the truth. That's why he came. And everyone that's of the truth hears my voice.

And so he came to bear witness and he died to seek and save the lost. He bore witness to the truth, but to show that God is love and that God is worthy, the father of having a family. And this truth would ravish us to come to him to be born again, washed in his blood.

And the cross being no afterthought of God, no parenthesis, but all part of a whole. See, this is meant to elevate our whole concept of God tonight. I think maybe you're tired.

I look at your faces and I see that. He emptied himself. God became obedient unto death.

He, in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be God, but emptied himself, became the servant of his father. That's why he could say my father is greater than me. He became the servant before he became a

man.

My father is greater. But he also said my father and I are one. And so the eternal covenant is a covenant made between the father and the son and the Holy Spirit before the world ever was.

It was sealed in mystery and it was made mysterious on purpose, hidden from those who don't fear God. And it was sealed in the blood of Jesus at Calvary. And it means now that our redemption is incorruptible, undefiled, fading out of way, hidden in Christ.

See, and literally before God could ever change his mind, now he would have to destruct himself because we are organically bound into the heart of Jesus. He's not transcendent from his own anymore. He was transcendent from everything.

But now he's plugged into the creature, the new creation who he's made, which is us. Jesus said, I must be about my father's business. I must be.

Even so, it must be as the father has determined. I must work the works of him that sent me. You have taken with wicked hands and slain Jesus, said Peter.

But I want you to know that God planned it beforehand. He's going to judge you for doing it, but it's all under control. See, it's not a deal where we're wondering what's going to happen, what might not happen in the days ahead.

We are secure if we belong to Jesus. When God had Jesus slain in his mind before the foundation of the world, it made the basis for creating the universe and allowing even sin to have an entrance. Do you see that this was the grounds for God's dealing with the after-created universe? He couldn't even allow sin for a moment were it not for the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

So behold what manner of love the Father has shed upon us, that we should be called the Tekna, the born ones of God. Born of God. And he that's begotten of God is kept by him.

And that wicked one touches him not. The only reason the devil can ever touch a child of God is for the perfecting of the saints, like Peter. Peter, I've prayed for you.

And when he's through with you, you'll strengthen the brothers. Or like Job, we see him suffering, but we behold the end of Job, that the Lord is very pitiful and full of mercy. Or like Jesus, though he were a son, yet learned he obedience to the things he suffered.

So we tonight are a people of destiny. Do you sense that divine destiny? I mean, have you ever sensed that divine destiny that for this hour you were born? God's not confused. You exactly were born.

And God has a specific thing on this earth for you to do. And you're plugged into him. And the cross of Jesus made it so that you are now organically in the heart of the Father.

And bone of his bone, one spirit, the mind of Christ in you, God has shown his character. I'm going to tell you something. Then that means to neglect such a privilege or to reject such a truth means an eternal tragedy that's well deserved.

The Christ rejecter has an eternal tragedy that is well deserved. Angels now marvel at the wisdom of God. They see Jesus coming and revealing himself to people no better than you or me.

And we see our sin and we are amazed. And they see us looking at our wounds and they say, get your eyes off yourself. Get your eyes off your sin.

Get your eyes off Satan. Look at the Savior. Look at Jesus.

And we look at him and we say, that's good news for bad people. And then he says, Lord, if you're willing, you can make me clean. But I don't think you can do it for old leper like me.

I mean, look, I'm full of leprosy. He says, I will. Grace, be thou clean.

And we just can't believe it. The angels can't believe it. Can you imagine them saying, praise God the Father for what a sinner that was.

Boy, he is really something. You think they're occupied with sinners? That's why they're rejoicing? Absolutely not. They're cartwheeling in heaven because every time Jesus, Holy Jesus, takes an unholy sinner and makes him as holy as he himself is in the presence of God.

They say, holy, holy, holy. Praise the Lord Jesus. Look at his grace.

Look at his power. Look at his plan. And he's being praised today for that great, great work he's done.

They're crying ceaselessly, holy, holy, holy. And so now, born again, we have his nature. We grow in his image.

We've got to choose. You've got to choose. You've got to choose to love him back.

I've gotten all that behind me tonight to say this. This is why God demands choice. People say, it's just so hard.

That's why he allows it to be hard. It's the only thing you can do. You can't give him your breath.

You can't give him your money. You can't give him anything. You can choose.

And that's where the whole battle is. In choosing what God has revealed in his infinite goodness and grace that he by his power will enable us to do if we'll lose our own life to find it. You see, when he shows it, we can do it.

We are now sent as Jesus was sent. And we are plugged in to eternity. Eternal life's not coming.

Eternal life for a Christian is here. We're in it now. He that believeth hath eternal life.

He stepped from death to life. And so we're already the sons of God, even though it doesn't appear yet who we really are. But you can live by faith, exercising grace reigning through righteousness and reigning in life by Christ Jesus.

The bride putting on her garments, getting ready for the marriage, getting ready to sit on the throne forever with King Jesus. What a privilege to be called a son of God. And it's a high calling.

Like Paul said, tonight we should walk worthy of the calling and not despise small things. Because small things to an infinite God are infinitely big. Well, let's just pray together.

Father, tonight we've covered so much and we've said so much. But I pray that the Spirit of God will bind these truths to hearts and that we'll leave here, Lord, with the strength of the natural man, struggling and broken, that our spirits will embrace this truth and it will come back to us. We will meditate on your attributes and your love and your plan for a family of sons to love and worship and be loved by you throughout eternity.

What an incredible privilege to be in the family of God. Thank you tonight for this. May it grip our hearts and may we walk worthily, choosing to love you back by denying ourselves by your power, through your word, by the agency of your seal, your spirit in us.

Thank you, Lord, for these truths. In Jesus' name, amen.

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