

Acts 20_pt2

by Bill Gallatin

Paul's sermon emphasizes the importance of humility, faithfulness, and trust in God, and the power of the gospel and God's grace to overcome fear and persecution.

Duration: 1:01:20

Scripture: Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 4:20-22, Matthew 7:3, Acts 20:27-35, 2 Peter 1:10

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of giving and generosity. He references the biblical concept of casting bread into the waters, explaining that when we give, God multiplies and blesses us in return. The speaker also highlights the contrast between those who withhold and those who give everything away, noting that the latter experience abundance. He then shares the example of the apostle Paul, who lived a consistent and godly life, and encourages the audience to follow his example. The sermon concludes with the reminder that it is more blessed to give than to receive, as giving allows us to experience the unmerited favor and love of God.

Transcript

Well, last week we stopped at Miletus, which is about 28 to 30 miles south of Ephesus. Lord willing, we'll be visiting Ephesus next year on our Israel tour, and again, one of the most amazing cities that they have on the face of this earth. An amazing thing to see and walk through, to see the amphitheaters and the administration buildings and the theaters and the public bathhouses, things that just really blow your mind because of the advanced technology and things that they had way back in the Apostles' day, back in 60 A.D., when it was flourishing.

And so Paul is passed by this very city, and he feels in his heart that he'll never see them again in this life. He's on his way back to Jerusalem. He wants to keep, at least get there by Pentecost.

Now, he doesn't know that in God's sovereignty, he is losing his freedom as he knew it. The next few years of his life will be as a prisoner of Rome, and yet God uses him in the most dynamic way by God overriding Paul's choices and decisions, and yet still anointing him on high with the Holy Spirit and using him in the government of Rome, Caesar's household, in a powerful way. But he had such a concern.

One thing I noticed about the Apostle Paul and about most godly men, they wept a lot because of sin. Now, certainly they wept because of their own sin, but it's interesting as you look at the Bible how real men

can weep and are not ashamed of it. You remember Jesus wept openly at the tomb of Lazarus.

Jeremiah is referred to as the weeping prophet. And there are several places in Paul's letters where he confessed, he wept, he shared weeping, and his concern most of all was the false teachers and the heresies and the apostate teachers that would come in and try and ravage the church and lead people astray after he left the scene. We'll find out there is no such thing as the apostolic succession.

Many cults claim to have apostolic succession, that certain keys are handed down from the apostles to the men following behind them, and Paul shows us that that is not so. After the original apostles, there can be apostles, but never like the original twelve that he handpicked. But we see that in Mormonism, we see that error in Roman Catholicism as they pass the keys to Peter and after Peter to the popes and things like that.

But Paul contradicts that here. So as he sent for the elders, as they represented the church in Ephesus, they came to meet with Paul. Probably down near the dock, he didn't go far from the ship.

And when they were come to him, he said unto them, You know from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons. You've seen my life. It's a wonderful thing to see the life of a godly man or woman and watch the consistency and the pattern of their life that glorifies God.

What a beautiful example. We see the consistent manner of life of Billy Graham. I happen to have been given the privilege to see the pattern and the consistency and manner of life of my own pastor, Chuck Smith.

I have been given the privilege of serving here for many years with several pastors and being around many elders and families in this church. And I do nothing but thank the Lord for their consistency and their holiness and their faithfulness to Jesus Christ. I've seen many, many people start out great.

And we hear the tragic story of on the way, what a tragic fall. Someone who has left the Lord. Someone who has apostatized.

Or as Paul said, Demas loving this present world has forsaken me and gone back into the world. What an honor and a privilege to see life and see the manner and the consistent pattern of someone who really loves Jesus Christ. Tremendous for the body of Christ.

Paul said, You know in all the times you've been exposed to me what I've been like. Serving the Lord. Notice Paul did not serve man.

Paul was anything but a man pleaser. He said, If I be a man pleaser, I'm not the servant of Christ. And so it didn't matter if the person, what their social status was.

What their importance or their non-importance were. Paul was equal and just and fair and loving to everybody on an equal basis. He didn't show preference.

He wasn't influenced by pomp and wealth and position. And if somebody at position needed a rebuke, Paul was faithful to Christ and gave the rebuke. He wasn't afraid of offending or losing friendships.

He was more concerned about the glory of God. He loved God. And so you've seen that.

He didn't disregard somebody in the crowd if they had less material things or if they had less importance. Everyone was equal in the eyes of Paul. Because everyone in the eyes of God are equal.

No man of power or importance has any kind of an advantage over the common person. Everybody is accountable and must abide by God's rules equally. That's the way God operates.

But notice how Paul served. Serving the Lord with all humility of mind. He wasn't an arrogant sort of a guy.

Drawing attention to himself. Verbalizing the things of the Lord in such a way to draw attention to himself. We can be clever.

And I've been around people and they have a way of touching the glory in a very subtle way. Maybe raising their voice a little bit louder in the crowd. Or maybe trying to stand out a little more in the music group.

Dressing just a little, just a notch. Or somebody's like, you know, they've got to dress bizarre. Now they act like they're humble, but they dress so weird just so you'll notice them.

And then when you meet them, you wonder what is there to notice? There's always somebody that needs to draw attention to themselves. Well, and touch the glory. Or say that, you know, it was their prayer or their faith.

In a way to draw attention to themselves. But see, that's not humility of mind. When you have humility of mind, you know that apart from Jesus Christ, we are worthless.

Apart from the work of the Spirit of God in our lives, we can accomplish nothing. And so when something is accomplished, there's nothing to boast about. There's nothing to swell up a little bit about and get a little pompous and act a little more spiritual than somebody.

Humility of mind? Well, praise the Lord. Somebody thought that, you know Billy, you don't get excited. Someone walked in the other day and they were just all excited.

They were listening to our radio program and the Lord healed them. And they came to the church to tell me that while they were listening to the teaching, they just were getting so into it and God healed them. I said, oh, praise the Lord.

I did. How can you get excited? God did it. I said, isn't the Lord good? It had nothing to do with the radio program.

It certainly wasn't my voice. And I know I don't have the gift of healing. You can tell by listening to me.

If I had the gift of healing, I wouldn't be all clogged up right now. And I like this, with many tears. The tears, particularly the false teachers.

All of the disruptive, false things that, remember Paul brought out in his letter to, I think, to 2 Thessalonians, about the mystery of iniquity that does already work. That Satan was seeking to infect the church, put the leaven in the church, so to speak. Knowing as soon as the apostles were gone to come in with some kind of a weird thing.

And temptations. His life was constantly being threatened. Physical abuse.

People turning on him. His own friends. It's unbelievable the things that Rosemary and I have heard about ourselves.

And we get home sometimes and we hear things that are said about us. And we go, why in the world would they say those things about us? What have we ever done to them? We have never had dinner together. We've never gone anywhere together.

We've never asked them for money. We've never asked them to do something for us. Why would they say those things about us? We can't figure it out sometimes.

Why they would, and some of it seems like it's so filled with hatred. Just resentment and hatred. What did we ever do to them? Now multiply that in Paul's life.

Multiply that. As God is using him so powerfully. Because he wasn't a man pleaser.

Because he was faithful to God. Invariably, on a regular basis, somebody would, you know, have trouble. Maybe they could get along with Paul until they're confronted with their own walk with Christ.

And rather than change to maintain the friendship, Paul would be faithful to the Lord. And so they'd have to react at Paul. Because they weren't going to change.

So Paul becomes the bad guy. And it shows that he hurt. It hurt him.

Many tears and temptations. Which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews. His own countrymen.

People that he at one time worshipped with. But now he's walking with Christ. And now there's this deep resentment and animosity.

And attempts to harm him. Now we know that Paul taught to the Ephesians that we wrestle not against flesh and blood. He knew that behind human agency and actions, there's the invisible realm of Satan to try and harm.

To combat the gospel. But still, you know, when you look at the person and say, well, what is your reasoning? I think one of the most difficult things, and you've probably experienced this, is to hear someone say something about you. And begin to draw a little crowd of tail-bearing and back-biting and whispering about something.

And yet they've never come to you to verify it. They just run around repeating the story, talking about you. But they've never come to your door and said, you know, is this true? I heard this about you.

Is this true? You're the one person they never go to. Yet they spread the lies. Well, Paul lived under that.

Maybe that's happened to you. But yet, look at the love that he has to get the truth out. And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you.

Paul didn't serve the Lord for his own profit. He served the Lord for the profit of others. All he wanted to do was explain and get the truth of Jesus Christ to other people.

Not to manipulate or throw an obligation, or maybe six months down the road, remind them of a favor. A spiritual favor. All Paul wanted to do was to get people excited about Jesus Christ.

To follow Jesus Christ. Paul didn't even want people to follow him. Now he said, now watch my life for an example.

But follow Jesus Christ. That's who you follow. I've showed you and I've taught you publicly.

And from house to house. Not stadium to stadium, air-conditioned auditorium to air-conditioned auditorium. The great apostle Paul, probably the greatest servant in the New Testament other than Jesus Christ, didn't mind teaching home Bible studies.

For his own ego and satisfaction, he didn't need large crowds to serve. A house. If the door was open, Paul said, hey, I'll teach the study.

Testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks. Repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Change your opinion about God.

Find out about Jesus Christ, how wonderful he is. Know that he's the Savior. He's the only way for the forgiveness of sins.

The only way to heaven. The way. The only way to heaven.

And now, behold. I go bound in the Spirit. In other words, his own spirit.

He said, I do not have the freedom to try and protect myself anymore. I go bound in the Spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there. Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me.

Now, the question is, was Paul out of God's will? Not necessarily. The Spirit wasn't saying, don't go. The Spirit was saying, this is awaiting you.

It's going to be difficult. The Holy Spirit didn't say, don't go. We know that in other cases in Paul's life, he was smitten with a sickness to change direction because of his self-will.

There were times when God used Satan to change the direction of Paul. He was so determined to go to a certain area to share the gospel. But if he did go that way at that time, he may have been taken out of this earth before his time.

Satan may have been victorious over his life. And so God actually used the enemy, used sickness to change his direction, to hinder him and close doors. He recorded that.

The Spirit often spoke audibly to Paul. And the Holy Spirit will speak audibly even in this day to our hearts. The thing is, today there is so much external noise that often we don't hear the voice of the Lord.

He does speak day in and day out. But there's just so many other distractions that we just don't hear the voice so often. It's still a small voice.

So I don't believe he was out of God's will. The Lord didn't say, don't go. He's just saying, if you continue in this direction.

Much like he told the Apostle Peter, remember he told Peter after he was baptized in the Holy Spirit and he no longer feared death and no longer tried to control and preserve his life, the flesh, was ready to deny himself daily, take up his cross and follow the Lord wherever he led him. Remember, the Lord has shown

him by what manner of death he's going to die. And he said, now I know shortly I'm going to put off this, my tabernacle, my tent, this temporary thing that I'm dwelling in, the real you, the real me, my spirit and my soul.

And Peter didn't flinch. That's why it's so important to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Remember, Jesus said, Terry in Jerusalem, until you are baptized from on high in the Holy Spirit, with the Holy Spirit, that you may be a witness unto me, a martyr, or not afraid to die, not to speak in tongues, not to have the gift of miracles.

Those things are all, they follow along and God adds those things in later. But the purpose of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is, I'm not afraid to die for Christ. I'm not some coward when I'm not sitting in the pew.

And you see, Paul was no longer a coward. In fact, Paul could care less about his life anymore. All he lived for was Jesus.

Notice, after the Spirit warned him and told him what was awaiting him, he said, but none of these things move me. Neither count I my life dear unto myself. Paul was at a point now where he didn't care.

I have no goal or agenda to have a little chunk of money set aside so I can serve more fully down the road. Well, if I have a guarantee of, you know, blue cross and blue shield, then I might just get a little more involved, you know. But you've got to take care of the future.

You know, Y2K, you don't know what's going to happen here. The computers all may go down. And after all, man's got to have food, you know.

I don't know what's going to, where am I going to live? You know, you've got to think. Paul said, you know what, I don't care what happens to me tomorrow. I am so filled with Jesus.

He has got so much of my life now. I don't belong to myself anymore. It says, you see, he that denies himself will save his life.

He that seeks to save his life in this life will lose it. And then Jesus is going to say, what does it profit him in? So you get your financial security, you've got everything laid out and played out for the future, and you're all set, and you lose your soul. What does it profit you? To get to a point in your life and there's no eternal rewards.

You haven't lost your salvation, but no eternal rewards. There's been nothing stored up and planned in glory where moth does not eat and rust doesn't corrupt. You see, Paul said, hey, my life doesn't belong to me anymore.

I don't care. He's promised to take care of me tomorrow, the day after, whether the computers go down, whether there's a Y2K or a third world war before the rapture or whatever. I'm not afraid.

He's promised to take care of me. I'm free. I've denied myself.

I'm taking up my cross and following him. It's amazing. You can tell the degree of death to self by the panic and the fear of the future in an individual.

No matter what they profess, but you see, their degree of fear of the future, what if, and their actions prove how much they have died to self like Paul or like anybody. That's it. I'm trusting God.

Now, I'm not going to act like a fool. I'm not going to be irresponsible as a rational human being, but I'm not going to be afraid either. The Lord's got control of my life.

And he's not an evil God. He's a faithful provider, you see. And neither do I count my life during to myself.

I'm not going to try and save my life. I want to lose it for Christ's sake so that I might finish my course with joy. You know, Jesus taught, said, He that having once put his hand to the plow, and even looking back, not turning back and going back, but looking back, is not fit for the kingdom of God.

So, Paul, you see, and what's he saying? You know, there's a lot of people that start out serving the Lord and then they back off. They quit. The pressure, someone talks them out of something, the fear, or maybe, I don't know, that God will provide for them in the future.

Then all of a sudden, they aren't doing anything anymore for the Lord. They're just preparing down here. You see, they're seeking to save their life, and they lose all their joy.

Paul said, I don't count my life during to myself that I may finish my course with joy. Six years later, you remember in that Roman jail, he's writing to Timothy, 2 Timothy, I think it is, in chapter 4. He says, you know, my time is at hand to be offered up. It's there.

As the final sacrifice for my Lord, my time is at hand. I finished my course. I fought the good fight.

And he had joy. He's about to be beheaded, and he had joy. Now, that's the work of the Spirit, you see.

That's the grace of God. That's the faithfulness of God. No matter what the future holds, he's going to be there with you and for you.

I see people, they're so concerned about making it down here that they've lost all their joy. He says, you keep serving your joy. You'll have this joy.

You'll finish your course with joy. And the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the gospel of the grace of God. Oh, the unmerited favor of God.

The grace of God. All that I need from God, whether it's spiritual, emotional, physical, material, the grace of God will impart it to me. So I don't have to worry.

I don't have to be bound up with fear and worry. I can be totally released and free to take the cross, whatever it is for me, and follow him. He's going to provide for me.

He's going to protect me. And there's nothing more joyful than serving God, following God, the unmerited favor of God. I've discovered that he's done things for me that I don't deserve, ever.

I ever could deserve. That's his grace. That's where God loves to operate the most.

Mercy and grace. His unmerited favor. Now, some people deal in justice.

Justice is you get what you deserve. They can be, you know, fairly easy to get along with. But if you do something wrong, you're going to receive justice.

Justice is you're going to get what you deserve. Now, there's mercy. You don't get what you deserve.

I deserve to go to jail. But the judge showed me mercy. And I don't.

I get what I don't deserve. Or what I do deserve, I don't get. Then there's the epitome, the greatest thing, is the grace of God.

I'm getting what I could never deserve. It's superior to justice and mercy. I don't deserve it.

I could never earn it. Yet God is pleased to impart it to me. To show his love for me.

That's what Paul said. He wants to testify the good news of the grace of God. In other words, you don't have to be afraid to hold back from God.

You open yourself up to his grace. To constantly give to you, to me, what we could never deserve. And that's what pleases God.

To operate in grace. And now, behold, I know that you all among whom I have gone preaching the keno of God shall see my face no more. Wherefore, I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men.

Paul was faithful. Now, why was he pure from the blood of all men? For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. He taught all the scriptures.

He didn't try to start a movement of just faith. Or a movement of end times only. Or a movement of taking all the scriptures and his pet scriptures, holiness.

Or build a church on the baptism of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit only. And that's all you'd hear from Paul over and over again. Wherever he was with teaching on, oh, why you need tongues today.

And the baptism of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. And there's the weakness of the church today. You can just about identify what portion of truth is their favorite topic when you walk in.

He shared it. And that's what's so wonderful, why it makes us so joyful to serve the Lord. He gives you everything you need from Genesis to Revelation.

He says, now, just share it. It will automatically keep the sheep healthy if they'll partake of it. If they'll take all the counsel of God.

Now, I have never, in all the years I've been a pastor, had someone knocking on my door with continual troubles that read their Bible. That read all the counsel of God. Once they begin to get all the counsel of God in them.

And it's an interesting thing. Remember, David writes in Psalm 119 that he delights in, I delight in my testimonies, oh Lord, for they are my counselors. All the professional help you need.

All the counseling you need. Really, if you just read this from cover to cover, all the counsel of God, you'd be very, very healthy. You'll have no problems whatsoever.

And the Spirit of God will reveal to you doctrine, the balance of all the teachings of the Bible, a clear picture of Jesus Christ, the Trinity, the second coming, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, love, redemption, everything you need. And God wrote the book so it's perfectly balanced. What do they do? You know, when you go to an athlete's training table, when you're playing football, they have special dieticians to

balance the meals so these guys can be these human machines, healthy and powerful.

And all the nutrients are going into the body to keep these athletes healthy. They have trained dietitians to give balanced meals continually so the body, the machine that God designed can function, getting all the nutrients, all the vitamins, all the elements that it needs, the amino acids and the trace elements, everything to keep the body fit and healthy. Well, God did the same thing spiritually.

And when someone's not reading their Bible like they should, it's amazing how they're knocking on the door, I don't know what's going on in my life. I've got problems. Sometimes it's very legitimate.

And if you can get them into the Word. Now, sometimes they come in and they try to make you their Jesus. That's all they want to do is spend the rest of their life coming back, please counsel me, say something nice to me.

I think I lost my salvation. Tell me God still loves me even though I'm fornicating. Tell me I'm not going to get lung cancer.

I still smoke. I know it troubles me and I'm tormented with it. And you try to tell them, look, God still loves you.

But you don't have to go through this. You don't have to be knocking on our door all the time. If you'll just read your Bibles, Jesus Christ is the great physician.

Whatever your emotional makeup and whatever this blind spot in your life may be right now, if you just read your Bibles on a continual basis, you're going to get everything you need. It's the light. He is the light of the world.

He'll shine light in the darkness. It'll direct you. It'll give you spiritual health.

Everything you need will take place. And please don't get the idea that we don't counsel. But it's amazing how people get a little upset because we keep saying, now, read your Bible.

Have you read this? No. Well, how long have you known the Lord? Well, I got saved in 1983. And you haven't read this yet? Well, I go to a lot of Christian concerts.

I listen to the radio. But don't you read your Bible? Well, I don't have time. Why? Well, I go to concerts.

And pretty soon, you see, if that persists, I'll start going to the wrong concerts again. I want to go to all the concerts. And yet they're tormented.

I can guarantee you, if you just read your Bible, you'll have no problems. You'll have no problems. God will honor it.

You'll be the healthiest, most joyful, strengthened, balanced Christian there is. It'll take you. There'll be no emotional problems, no torment, no fatigue, no Satan can't come in and deceive because you'll have discernment.

You'll learn the wiles of the enemy. You'll know everything. God's promised it.

He's promised it. So Paul said, I've not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. Now take heed, therefore, unto yourselves.

You know, so many times I think I make the mistake of taking heed of someone else. Let's take heed of ourselves. Let's get the speck out of our or the beam out of our own eye before we try to take the speck out of someone else's eye, Jesus said.

Take heed to yourself. Lord, search me. Search my heart, Lord.

See if there's any wicked thing in me. Now take heed, therefore, unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers. Now, remember they were bishops.

Now there's three different words that mean the same office here. Bishop, Presbyteros, Elder. They're all the same office.

Kind of like a teaching, like a pastor, a teaching pastor. He said, now God's made you overseers and look at the responsibility of the pastor. Feed the church of God.

That's all you have to do. Please, feed them. Don't turn the church into an entertainment center.

Feed them. Don't manipulate them. Don't coerce them.

Don't beat them. Feed them. You remember Peter after his failure and then Jesus recommissioned him and Jesus knew that Peter loved him.

You remember as he brought him and drew him back into the ministry, he said, Peter, lovest thou me more than these? His friends were standing there in the fish and the nets and everything, his job. He said, Lord, thou knowest I love thee. He said, if you love me, if you want to prove you love me, feed my lambs, my little lambs.

In other words, take care of the little children. Make sure they're taught the word of God. That's how you prove you love God, by feeding his sheep as a pastor.

He didn't say, love my people. That's automatic. But if you love God, he said, Peter, if you want to prove you love me, feed my church.

Nothing else. Don't put pressure on them to give or to serve. You just feed them.

Teach them the truth and I'll take care of the rest. And remember, he said to Peter, my sheep, they don't belong to some organization in Rome or in St. Louis. You don't belong to some organization that meets in a skating rink.

You belong to Jesus. You're his. And I have the privilege to tell you that.

He's a wonderful shepherd. He'll never forsake you. He'll always rescue you if you call on him.

Which he hath purchased with his own blood. Now, isn't that interesting? Here's a direct statement that says that Jesus Christ is God. A lot of people miss that.

He has feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. Well, certainly that can't be God the Father because God is the Spirit. So here's a direct reference that Jesus Christ who shed his blood is God.

And you know something? The Lord told me what his blood type was. It's the same as mine. Yeah, it is.

Be positive, Bill. I know. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. Now, notice Paul says, I'm going to depart. He didn't pass his mantle on to somebody else.

Now, after my departing and then someone steps in succession in my apostolic office. It's not in the Bible. It's an invention of certain groups in the body of Christ to make themselves sound important.

But he said there are going to be departing wolves, or after I depart there will be wolves coming in. Grievous wolves. And they'll try to make disciples after themselves.

In other words, instead of really teaching in such a way to have you follow Jesus Christ, they teach in such a way to make you dependent upon them. And you begin to follow them. And you get enamored with them.

You should never be enamored with a man. Be enamored with Jesus. Respect a man.

Respect somebody that God may use. Admire what God has done in his life. But, you see, you only love Jesus.

You follow Jesus. That's someone Jesus is using. And to be a faithful witness, you don't quote the man that Jesus is using or that you're impressed with.

You quote the Bible. You share Scripture. Well, how do you know that's right? Well, Pastor So-and-so said that.

That's wrong. You share Jesus. You want people to follow Jesus.

And you can see it. You can see that maybe somebody ignorantly or immaturely is following someone that Jesus is using because all they talk about is the individual more than Jesus Christ. Pray for them that they begin to follow the Lord.

Jesus taught about wolves. It's important to know there are two characteristics about a wolf. First of all, wolves run in packs.

And wolves kind of watch the flock and look for someone who's weak. Like a wolf will attack if you watch any of the National Geographic specials or Discovery Channel. There's some great channels, you know.

I love to watch them. And it shows how wolves operate as they follow maybe a herd of caribou and they begin to pick out someone who's weak or lagging behind. And you see, that's how a false prophet or a wolf will go after a sheep.

Begin to look at someone who's starting to take things for granted and lag behind or getting a little weak. And then they come in after them to devour them. And it's interesting.

Jesus describes them emphatically what their ministries are. And the apostle Paul does. And Peter, there are two characteristics.

First of all, they're always after your money, and usually it'll come out they're sexually impure. I'll turn to Matthew 7. I think we should just show you what the Bible says about wolves because Paul spent three

years in one place warning about wolves. Matthew chapter 7, I say Jesus is the greatest authority.

And look at verse 15. Beware of false prophets. So that shows you there are true prophets and there are false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing.

I mean, they'll look like a real evangelist. They'll talk like a real evangelist. They'll have a TV program.

They'll have a radio program. They'll come to town with a good praise band. They'll stand in a pulpit.

They'll speak at some churches. They come to you in sheep's clothing. But inwardly, they are ravening wolves, or literally, they're extortioners, always after your money, inventing some way to get more of your money, ravening, or they rake it in.

And then they design some false teaching to justify their materialism and the wealth and the standard that they're living. You shall know them by their fruits. Now, that's wonderful to know that Jesus said you can know these men when you compare their life with what the Bible describes as a real prophet is.

First of all, do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles? You begin to partake of their teaching and begin to apply it to your life. Eventually, you're going to be hurt down the road. Something's going to collapse.

You're going to go for the fruit, and inside is a horrible thorn or thistle that's going to pierce you with many sorrows. So even a good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. Something evil and unclean will be exposed in their life.

You'll find something out about them. It'll be evident. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, and neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire. Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them. Then Jesus describes what they do, basically what their ministries are.

Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? Not Buddha's name, not Confucius or Muhammad or Joseph Smith or John Russell, but we've prophesied in thy name, Lord. We put on the big show, thus saith the Lord, in front of the TV and in these churches.

And we, in thy name, we've cast out demons. We really, we like to cast out demons. That's another thing that we do a lot.

And we've done miracles. We've performed miracles. The wonderful works are miracles.

Then I will profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, you that work iniquity. That is amazing to me because someone can have a demon cast out of them.

Someone can be healed. Someone could go to a ministry and they could be prophesied to. And Jesus says, it's a work of iniquity because I didn't raise that man up.

He's a wolf. He's doing it all just to get the money from the people and fame. He's a wolf and he's unclean.

Turn to Philippians chapter 3. Here's where Paul, his heart breaks here. In Philippians chapter 3, in verse 17, he said, Brethren, be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as you have us for an example. For many walk of whom I have told you often and now tell you even weeping.

Here he's weeping again. That they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. In other words, denial of self.

Walking in humility. They deny the cross of Christ. Whose end is destruction.

Whose God is their belly. They use the name of Jesus just to fill their bellies for the easy life. And they deny taking up your cross and following Jesus.

They deny the cross in their teaching. They teach materialism, ease, pleasure. Their God is their belly.

And whose glory is in their shame. They're not even ashamed of it. They glory in it.

They glory in their false teaching. And they mind earthly things. Materialism.

This life. They mind earthly things. But notice what Paul said.

But our conversation is in heaven. From whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Turn to 2 Peter.

Here's one of the classic examples of a false teacher that Peter said the church should beware of. A wolf. He plainly declares, again, that they will make merchandise of people.

Go after people's money. But usually they are sexually impure or unclean. It will come out.

They're licentious. There's no holiness. There's no real holiness in their walk.

They'll talk grace, but there's no holiness. It's not pure. Look at verse 14.

It says they have eyes full of adultery. They'll come in and sit next to you in a pew and act like a Christian. Or maybe come into a setting and act like a pastor, an evangelist.

Maybe looking for someone to take advantage of. And they cannot cease from sin. You hear about it, and it's in the papers again.

Then you hear about it again. Then they've done it again. They cannot cease from sin, and they beguile unstable souls.

A heart. They have exercise with covetousness. Covetous practices.

In other words, a desire for material things. Cursed children. Which have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Bozar, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.

All they want is money in the ministry. Remember, Jesus told the disciple who asked about serving him in the fire, he said, hey, be content with your wages, and if somebody asks you to go an extra mile, go two if you want to glorify God. But he was rebuked for his iniquity.

The dumbass speaking with a man's voice forbade the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water. They don't have the Holy Spirit.

Water is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever, for when they speak great swelling words. In other words, they bulge with insolence and defiance of vanity.

They allure through the lusts of the flesh. Through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promised them liberty.

Oh, you're free in Christ. This is the age of grace. God is love.

It's okay if you do this. Calvary covers that. Christ took care of the cross.

You can do that. You see, there's no holiness. They're wolves.

They promised them liberty. Oh, you're free to do that. But they themselves are the servants of corruption.

They smell alcohol on their breath. Their personal lives will give them away. For of whom a man is overcome, of the same he is brought in bondage.

These are wolves. These are men who profess to be teachers of God, prophets, pastors. This is what Paul said.

After I leave, they're going to come in with a flurry into the church to try and beguile and lead people astray. You can discern. You can begin to know.

And the Bible describes them. You can discern them and know. You don't have to be deceived.

Therefore, watch and remember. We're back in Acts 20. Watch and remember that by the space of three years, I cease not to warn everyone night and day with tears.

Again, the concern for false teachers in the church. And now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. Isn't it wonderful to know, again, the word of grace builds you up.

Read your Bibles. You want to be built up in the Lord? You want victory over sin, over temptation? Do you want joy? Read the word of God. It's the word of His grace that's able to build you up, or you'll never change.

And you may be one of those sheep that's on the verge of lagging behind the rest of the flock, and the wolf's going to get you. It doesn't have to happen. You and I are promised by the Lord in 2 Peter 1.10 that if we make our calling and election sure, you'll never fall.

The Lord will preserve you unto the end. He loves you so much. He's given everything that you need to persevere unto the end, to receive a full inheritance.

And it's amazing, Satan in the world says, well, here, I'll give you this. And saints go after it and are destroyed. They fall by the wayside going after things, making the same effort to go after something illicit or something that's vain and worthless to read or watch.

They'll take the time to read something worthless. They'll take the time to watch something worthless. And God says, I've given you something that's able to make you stand and build you up and give you an inheritance.

When you read it, it renews the mind. It purifies your heart. It strengthens you in these areas of holiness.

It opens you up to the gifts of the Spirit, the fullness of the Spirit, the fullness of my love. And so, notice, that's all he could do. Paul said, I commend you to the Word of His grace.

God will not force anybody to experience this wonderful life. He just says, here it is. Here it is.

The Word of His grace. The Word of His unmerited favor. His unconditional love.

Love that jumps out of every page of the Bible for you. Encouragement. Hope.

Direction. Forgiveness. Strength.

I have coveted no man's silver or gold or apparel. Ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities and to them that were with me. I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you 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.

See, Paul received so much from the Lord, it didn't bother him to give at all. He discovered you cannot give the Lord. You give it away, He's just going to give it right back to you.

Whether it's emotional, spiritual, some gift, whatever it is, you give it away. You see, God just gives it right back. It says, when you cast your bread into the waters, God just gives it back and multiplies it and just presses down and just overflowing in the container.

It says there is that person who's not wise, and he tries to withhold, and it's not necessary. And he holds it back and says he hurts himself. So there's that person that gives everything away, and he has everything.

And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and he prayed with them all. And they all wept sore and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

Last time he saw them in this life. Now, just think, they're all with him now. They're all together again.

And isn't it amazing? They were only separated for three years. Now, they didn't know that. Some of them were only separated from Paul for three years, four years.

But now they're all together again forever. Just think, we are going to dwell together forever in the presence of the Lord, never to be separated again. Now, there's something, just a little sidebar before we go home.

And I'd like to share with you. Paul wrote this about 60 A.D. Six years later, he was beheaded and went into the presence of the Lord, full of joy. He sought an offering, his final offering for Jesus, his own life.

He's going to be beheaded, the sacrifice. The Lord was finished with the ministry. He had nothing else to do down here.

He finished his course. Now, remember, this was probably one of the most powerful, healthy churches in Asia. Now, here's the tragedy.

After he said all these things, just 35 years later, when John wrote the book of Revelation, one of the letters that Jesus said, send this to the pastor at Ephesus, just 35 years later, he said, you've left your first love. You're doing everything that Paul said. You're discerning those false teachers.

You're doing all, you hate the Nicolaitans. You've got good doctrine, but I have someone against me. You don't love me anymore like you used to.

You're just settled down in the church, going through the motions, and your heart isn't the same toward me anymore. And as I thought of that, I was thinking, wow, Lord, you know, we've been here 20 years. Actually, we came here in 1977 and started teaching the Bible house to house all over, down to the southern tier, Corning, all the way up into the city, all over, at a radius of 85 miles, practically every night of the week, just going and teaching Bible studies house to house.

God quickly formed a group of people and became Calvary Chapel. Some 20 years ago, I'm thinking, Lord, what's happened to us? Has anything happened to us? Do we still love you? Do I still love you, Jesus? Or is it all just a religious job now, going through the motions? Do I really worship you, or have I memorized the words? Do I go because I want to, because I still love you? Lord, if that could take place in just 35 years to that right on church, what's Calvary Chapel right now? I hope that we all still love him like we did in the beginning. Let's all stand.

I want to pray that we do. I want to grab the hand next to you. Let's pray together.

Yeah, go through the aisle. We're a family here. Yeah.

Praise the Lord. Dear Father, we are so thankful that you touched our lives and you formed this fellowship, just a family of believers. And Lord, we pray that we still love you as we did at first.

In fact, Lord, we pray that we love you more, with a greater understanding and more maturity and more balance. Oh, Jesus, we fear so much that you might have to say you have somewhat against us as a church, as individuals. So, Lord, please search our hearts.

We do love you, Jesus. We are so thankful, Lord, that we can gather together and worship you, and we pray that we've not left our first love. That if you choose to tarry in a few more years, every night we gather together, we truly worship you from our hearts.

And we thank you, Lord, that you will watch over us, that you've given us all that we need for that inheritance. And most of all, you've given us your word of grace, which can build us up and guarantee us eternal life, once we've put our faith and our trust in Jesus Christ. And we thank you for tonight, dear Father.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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