

Are You Ready for Christ's Return

by Bill McLeod

Bill McLeod emphasizes the importance of being spiritually prepared for Christ's return through vigilance, repentance, and faith.

Duration: 1:13:22

Scripture: Luke 21:25

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being prepared for the second coming of Christ. He references 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and Luke 21 to highlight the signs and events that will precede Christ's return. The preacher shares a personal story of how he was impacted by a book on the second coming and urges the audience to examine their own readiness for this event. He warns against being weighed down by worldly concerns and urges believers to focus on their relationship with God and sharing the gospel with others.

Transcript

I'm going to read from Luke 21 and then from 1 Thessalonians 5. Luke 21, verse 25, And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars and upon the earth, distressing nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring, men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth. For the powers of heaven shall be shaken, and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws nigh.

Then verse 34, And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged or weighted down, overcharged with surfeiting, that's intemperance, indulgence, and drunkenness, and cares of this life. Notice that cares of this life are put in the same class as drunkenness and intemperate indulgence. And so that day come upon you unawares, for as a snare shall come, all them dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch therefore and pray always, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. Then turn to 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. Chapter 4, as we know, has to deal with the coming of Christ for his people. Chapter 5, verse 1, Of the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I write unto you.

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

You are all the children of light and the children of the day. We are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore, let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober.

For they that sleep, sleep in the night. They that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. At the age of 22, my mother was a Christian. My older brother Don was a Christian.

And one day, the mother was a very wise fisherwoman. She used to leave little booklets laying around the house, you know. So she left her little book, and the title said, The Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The Second Coming? That really rocked me. I got this book, made sure nobody could see me reading it, and read it. Eighty pages, maybe.

At the end, the writer said, Reverend Clarence Larkin was the man. Dear reader, that was me, can you say you're ready for the coming of Christ? Well, I couldn't. He said, if your answer is no, here's what to do.

And I did it. Went up the stairs about four at a time to find my mother and my brother and tell them what happened. That's a long way to go, of course, as you know.

You can figure it mathematically. But it's been a great time, learning, studying, praying, witnessing, traveling. Paul said in Journeys Oft, I've probably flown 600 times over the years, and I don't like those big planes.

It's like riding in a bus. I like riding on the bush planes, where you can see what's down below. Anyway, I'm not complaining, just reporting.

Jesus said, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also. What a promise, and what a thought. Now, are we ready for his return? I have no idea.

There's people today, quite a few of them, on programs and stuff that tell us they know when he's coming. Don't listen. Do you want a text that tells you when he's coming? At such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes.

Now figure that one out, okay? Now here he says in 1 Thessalonians 5, that is, the thought that when they, that's the world, when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes upon them as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. It seems to suggest that the world will eventually get to a place where everybody can say, peace and safety, and then Christ comes, and sinners and sinful institutions are dealt with, and the angels dry clean the earth, if you know what I mean. They're going to take out of the world everything that offends God.

And then you know what it says in Matthew? Then the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their father. What a day. We don't shine now.

They don't even know we're around, but someday we'll be the only ones around. Shining, it says, like the sun. Well, as we noted in Luke 21, there's a danger in 1 Thessalonians 5, there's a danger we might be caught sleeping when Christ comes back.

That can happen. I meet sleepy Christians now and then, and they are sleeping spiritually. They're not walking with God.

They're not studying the Bible. They're not doing anything for God. They're a Christian, but they're asleep.

Do you want to be caught sleeping when Christ comes? There's a verse that says, one in Daniel 12, many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt. But there's another verse. Well, there are many verses relating to this.

First John 2, 28, and now little children, it's a term of endearment used by John. And now little children abide in him that when he shall appear, you may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming. Some Christians will be ashamed, being caught when Christ comes back in some place they should not be, or doing something they should not be doing.

So abide in Christ. That means you don't want to fall asleep. You want to be walking with Jesus, abiding in Christ day by day with all the trials and tribulations.

Don't worry about it. Paul had a lot more you'll ever have. So you will have confidence when the trumpet blows, confidence.

You know, I was first converted and I, of course, I was converted by a book in the second coming of Christ. And I was so taken up with the doctrine. I thought he can come today.

You know, I remember one time I was away from home working in the bush and I wanted to get home and see my... So I asked the Lord to forestall the coming until I got home, which he did by the way. Anyway, we want to have confidence when he comes and not be ashamed. So obviously some will be or John would not have written what he did.

Now the thief aspect of the coming of Christ is mentioned I think five times in the New Testament. Jesus spoke about it and we know it here in Paul's writings. Peter spoke of it five times.

The thief aspect. If somebody's going to break into your house, they don't phone you and tell you at two o'clock the next morning I'm going to break into your house. Right? That doesn't happen.

They just come. The Bible says they mark houses in the daytime, then they break into them at night. And of course that's exactly what they do.

So it's something you don't know, you hope not, but it may happen. I know in Winnipeg now older people, a lot of them don't sleep well. In so many cases where guys have come, kicked the door down, broken and beaten them up and robbed and tied them up maybe and all this kind of thing.

It's been happening again and again and people don't know what to do. You know what they did in the States? One city in Florida, they passed a law that every home had to have a hand pistol. Do you know what happened after that law was passed? There wasn't a single home break-in in the whole city.

In another state, they passed a law that was legal for you to carry a pistol concealed on your person. You know what happened? Street muggings dropped to zero. So there's a book written called More Guns, Less Crime.

Well, we don't want to get that way up here, but you know what? It may get that way up here. The way it's going now, they catch these guys, what do they do? Give them a cup of cocoa and a little wrap on the knuckles? It's about the size of it, figuratively speaking. It's bad.

Anyway, we're not in darkness at that day. Let us not sleep as others do, but let us watch and be sober, for they that sleep, sleep in the night. They that be drunken are drunken in the night, but let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love and for a helmet the hope of salvation.

God has not appointed us to wrath. By the way, that is not referring to the Great Tribulation, because he's talking about salvation. The opposite of salvation is condemnation to eternal hell.

That's what he's talking about. God has not appointed us to eternal hell, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, some will be caught without a wedding garland.

Jesus told a parable about a certain king who made a marriage for his son, and he sent his servants out to invite people to come. Nobody wanted to come, and the king got a little angry, and finally they got a big crowd. Then it says the king dropped in to see the guests, and you know what he found? There was a man there that didn't have a wedding garment on.

I have to explain that. In some countries then, and some today even, at the wedding you have to wear a certain garment which the host gives you as you walk in the door, and you're expected to wear this wedding garment. And this king found a man who was so bold he hadn't accepted a wedding garment, and he said to him, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? I heard some guy, and he said, I'm just waiting till I stand before God.

I'm going to shake my fist under his nose and tell him off. Is he? How did this guy handle it? It says, and he was speechless. So will this other guy be speechless.

He won't be shaking his fist at God. So then, now this wedding garment represents, I believe, the righteousness of Christ, which is put to our account. It's called the gift of righteousness in the Bible.

We don't get to heaven because we've done some good things. We get to because of Christ. It's a gift, righteousness.

And it says in Romans 3, the righteousness of Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. He didn't have that wedding garment on. He didn't have, he didn't get there with the righteousness of Christ.

Romans 5 talks about it. They who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ. You have it? Have you got the wedding garment? You understand the righteousness of Christ is offered to you as a believer, put to your account.

So you don't have to plead your own goodness. That'll never work. It's not by works of righteousness, which we have done.

But according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Have you got the wedding garment on? You better figure it out if you don't have. Some will be because this guy was thrown out into outer darkness because he didn't have that thing on.

Some will be caught without any oil. Jesus told a parable in Matthew 25 about 10 virgins, five wise, five foolish, and the king, the bridegroom came. Well, some of them, half of them did not have any oil in their lamp.

And oil, not always, but frequently in the Bible, it's a symbol of the Spirit of God. And Romans 8 says, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. You don't belong to God.

You're not a Christian if you don't have the Spirit of God living within you. It's made very clear, as you know probably, many places in the Word of God. So these five tried to buy oil from the five that had oil, and they wouldn't sell to them.

Actually, they couldn't. And so the other five went scurrying to try and find some place they could buy oil. They got it, but they got it too late.

When they came back, the door was shut. No salvation. So we need to make sure.

Now, how can we make sure that God's Spirit lives within us? Well, here's a way. In Galatians, there's a verse that says, And because you are sons, because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts. So to make sure you have the Spirit, you just have to make sure you have Christ.

If you have received Christ, then God has sent His Spirit into your soul at that time. We all have the Spirit if we are born of God. It's a simple thought, but many people don't quite understand it, and sometimes it gets faulty teaching on it as well.

Then some people will be caught who have never really repented. When Jesus began His public ministry, Mark chapter 1, He said, The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe the gospel. It's always that way, repentance and then faith. We have to understand that.

In Acts 20, Paul said he went everywhere preaching two things, repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. That's beautifully put. And Jesus told a parable in Matthew 21, which indicates that if you don't repent, you will not be able to exercise faith.

Did He say that? Yes, He did. How did He say it? He said this, John, that's John the Baptist, came unto you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him. But the publicans and the harlots believed him, and you, when you had seen it afterward, did not repent that you might believe.

In other words, you can't believe if you don't repent. They belong together. I hear teaching.

I remember Dale Faisonfeld, Life Action, telling me he was in a huge church one time, and the pastor said, Now, he said, Dale, don't monkey around with this repentance stuff. Just tell the people, invite Jesus into your heart. But that's not really it.

When Christ sent the Twelve out to preach, it says, They preached that men should repent. Now, they preached more than that. But obviously, this is recorded that way to help us understand.

This was a big thing, to repent. We talk about rethinking, repenting. We were walking away from God, happy in our sin.

We turned around and started walking towards God and listening to God. You remember the parable Jesus told? A certain man said to his two sons, well, first of all, one son than the other, Son, go work today in my vineyard. And he said, I will not.

But afterward, he repented and went. So he changed his mind. Repentance.

When they asked Peter on the day of Pentecost, Men and brethren, what should we do? He said, Repent. That was the first word. And be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

Repentance is where it all starts. We change our attitude entirely towards God and Christ and the gospel, the word of God, repentance. You know, sometimes we have a lot of weighty things resting on our mind and we don't make any progress spiritually.

Jesus said about the Pharisees, Matthew 23, He said, You pay tithes and you ought to, He said. That's right. But you have omitted the weightier matters of the law.

What are these weightier matters of the law? Judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God. So they were tithing. You know, a lot of Christians have a feeling, I'm tithing, most Christians aren't, so I'm okay.

That's, now listen, what about these weightier matters of the law? Judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God. They're more important than tithing is. Christians need to get their head straightened in this area because I know that many Christians have that feeling, I'm tithing, my brother isn't, you know, I'm okay.

No, watch it. Weightier matters. Notice in Luke 21, He spoke about this very thing, your heart being weighted down by several things.

He meant drunks, carers of this life, and so on, and your heart gets weighted down and you can't think spiritually or walk spiritually. It can be a dangerous thing. In Hebrews chapter 12 it says, Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that's set before us.

Is there anything slowing you down spiritually? I mean, think about, think it through. I have to share something with you here. Many years ago, I liked hunting with a bow and arrow, and I hadn't been into it long before the Lord told me He didn't want me to do this anymore.

And I was asking, well, why? Well, there's people, you know, around, and they think it's wrong to be shooting wooden sticks into animals, which I agree is wrong. But I didn't bend. Well, finally, He got through, and I jumped my stop.

And you know what? The next deer season, I was out on the trail with my bow again. How did the Lord handle this? I'm walking up a hill with a very sharp arrow in my right hand, and my foot slipped. And I fell down, and the arrow broke in my hand, and that sharp point was right up where my heart was.

I almost, if I hadn't been able to go, I'd have been dead, you know. And the Lord was standing there. He said, I didn't hear the voice, but it went like this.

How stupid can you get? Okay. But you know what happened? Once more, I was hunting with my son. I made sure I wasn't going to be climbing any hills, you know.

So I have an arrow in my hand and a bow in my other hand. You know what happened? I jumped myself with this arrow, and I had to go get my leg sewn up, you know. At that time, even a Scotsman as stupid as me caught on, you know.

And I thank God. He took that away and many other things that I thought at the time were okay. Anything that slows you down spiritually, get rid of it.

So you can run with patience the race that's set before you. You can't run anybody else's race, but you can run your own. And we need to find out what God wants us to be and do.

Those things, they may be quite harmless, nothing wrong with them, but they are ways. Their hearts may be take heed, lest you be weighted down with intemperance, indulgence, and drunkenness, and cares of this life. How come that's put in the same level as drunkenness? You know, we get sometimes under a load of things and worry about this and worry about that and worry about something else.

Some people love to worry, you know. They're not happy unless they're worrying. There's some people I hate to talk to because I know I'm going to have to listen for a half an hour.

It's all about the organ recycles, you know. He had this opera, he had that opera, you know, this kind of stuff goes on and on and on. And they're Christians, maybe, but they talk as if God was dead.

And many times as Christians, when we pray, all we do is tell God things he already knows. You know, we spend a lot of time informing God of things he already knows. That's stupid, to a waste of time.

We have to learn how to sharpen the pencil, as it were, not waste time. You've got 24 hours in your day, the same as anybody else. Some people make a great deal of it.

I mean, if they're 24 hours, it really works for them. And others, again, they get nowhere. They might as well have 48 hours because it doesn't really matter.

They don't get anything done no matter how long they wait. Okay, wait here, it matters. Then some people are caught without a passport.

The Bible speaks about how, in 1 Peter 1, that God has given us an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and it fades not away, reserved, he said, in heaven for you. Have you got a reservation? You better have. And you can only get it from God himself.

In Philippians, it says, our citizenship is in heaven. From what we're waiting, it says, in the context there, for Christ to return. It doesn't use the word citizenship in the KJ, but I mean that's the meaning.

So we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom. If we are, we should have a passport. We should be able to show others how to get in on this inheritance too.

You know, many Christians, they go through a whole life, never once witnessed to anybody. I started off that way because I was a very shy person. I had a terrible time.

Like walking down the sidewalk, if somebody was walking this way I crossed the street. I knew all the back lanes in West Winnipeg where I lived. I traveled the lanes all the time just to avoid meeting people.

In school, it was a fright. The teacher might ask me something. What would I say? She'd ask me something, I'd gulp and swallow, make a fool of myself.

It was terrible. So I get saved and God called me to preach. I was in a bush camp that night, a pulpwood camp, and it was the craziest night I ever had.

I was on a top bunk, and I was awake, and God came and said, I want you to be a preacher. You know, I really laughed. I said something like this.

I said, God, that's a big joke. You know I can't do that. It's impossible.

But he gave me that verse, I can do all things through Christ. He gave me that verse six times, I'm sure, that night. And finally said, okay, okay, if anybody asks me to preach, I'll do it.

I knew nobody would, you know, so I wasn't worried. But about a week later, somebody asked me to speak in a small church with 30 people. I picked 1 Corinthians chapter 12 because it was a long chapter, and I figured if I'm persecuted in one verse, I can flee to another, you know.

And I made it last about 20 minutes. I'll never forget that because when I got up in front of those people and saw those 30 pairs of eyes looking at me, I just looked for a hole in the platform. How can I get out of this? It was too late.

That was the first time. The second time was not quite as bad. And today, by the grace of God, 3,000 people, I've said this before, some of you heard it, forgive me for repeating myself.

I do it now and then. My wife always reminds me she's in the crowd. She may throw me a hand signal so I know that something's wrong, see? Okay.

Anyway, weighty matters don't get caught weighted down with things that don't really count, that don't matter. What are you doing for God? I don't care who you are. If you're born again, you could win others to Christ if you try.

But you've got to try. And you may get rebuffed once or twice, so what? Everybody's being rebuffed who's been winning people to Christ. My first efforts at witnessing fell on the lines of me.

I was writing people I knew well and telling them how to be saved. And two people got saved that way. And all of a sudden, I discovered I could speak.

So I forgot about writing letters and had a different approach. Anyway, passport, yes. Salvation, neither is there salvation in any other.

For there's no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. So when you get talking to people about the Lord, they'll bring up all kinds of things, you know, in our church we do this. And you have to be, like it says, here's something to keep in mind.

It's a very good thing to follow as a Christian worker, as a Christian. I'm not talking about full-time workers, but we should all be, in a sense, full-time workers. It goes like this.

The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if God perhaps will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who is taken captive by him at his will. So you have to be gentle and kind. And sometimes you'll have to say, now, do you think that's what the Bible says? And they'll say, well, doesn't it? Then you have to show them.

You've got to know your Bible well. Get with it. Study to show yourself a proven unto God, a workman.

That was not written for preachers, you know. It was written for all of us. Get to know the Bible well.

If they ask you a question you can't answer, you can at least say this, I'm not sure of the answer, but I'll get back to you on that. You can do that. But people, there's no reason that we should be as ignorant as we are.

Our houses, Christian houses, they're loaded with books. I'm not opposed to Christian books. I've got many in my library, but most of my time I spend with the book of books.

And I learn more here than I learn usually from other writings. Although I do like the writings of Spurgeon. Anyway, salvation.

You have to ask people sometimes, are you going to go to heaven when you die? Or you might say, do you know what salvation is? Or you might say, do you realize that Jesus died in your place on the cross? There's many different ways of starting a conversation, but many of us never get started. There are thousands of Christians in North America who have never in their life tried to win the soul of Christ. You ever hear of T.B. Davis? He was in Moody's day, became known around the Christian world as a great winner of people of Christ.

Do you know how it started? He was in a meeting, one of Moody's meetings, sitting near the front. Moody preached, gave an invitation, hundreds of people came forward. And so workers were in there trying to win people of the Lord.

And Moody saw this guy sitting there and he says, are you a Christian? Yes. What are you sitting there for? Get out there and win someone to Christ. Well, he'd never done this.

So he picked a young kid, about 14, and he led him to Christ. And he said, a fire started burning in his heart, which never went out. He won thousands to Christ before he died.

But that's how it started. You've got to start somewhere. Start and watch God work.

Paul asked the question and answered it. What is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and his coming? You are our glory and joy. He's talking about people he won to Christ.

These were the things. This is what he was living and dying for, just to win some sinners to Christ. So get with it.

Start. Pray. Ask for help.

But don't keep asking all your life. Do it. Okay.

May I say this about salvation? It's not a plan. It's a person. We find this in Luke chapter 2, when Simeon, he held a baby Jesus in his arms.

He looked up to heaven and he praised God. My eyes have seen your salvation, which you prepared before the face of all people. Christ is salvation.

If you've got him, you've got all the salvation you need. But salvation, I say, is not a plan. Okay.

Some people are caught with no foundation. Jesus told a parable about that one guy building his house on a rock and somebody else building the house on the sand. Two of us were talking to a forestry worker many years ago, and he listened to us.

And then he said this, I think what we need to do is this. We need to take the best out of the Christian religion, the Muslim faith, and all these different faiths in the world, and just put them all together and make a brand new foundation. And so we said to him, we quoted the other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

He turned and just ran. I don't know what happened. He was scared or something.

He just took off. Other foundation can no man lay. We are exhorted in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 to be very careful how we build on the foundation.

Are we building with wood, hay, stones? Are we building with that kind of stuff or with gold and silver, precious stones? That's the way it runs. Our work will be tried by fire someday. And maybe it will all get burned up because we weren't really building with things that will stand the fire of God.

We can fool around in Christianity and do all kinds of little things that are not biblical and not really doing anything, but at least we feel happy because we're busy. I heard a man lecture one time on the life of Charles Finney. Afterwards, I met a preacher friend of mine, and he said, remember he spoke about Finney being so busy? Yeah, yeah, I remember that.

He said, I have a friend who thinks he's busy. He's just buzzy. He's always doing something.

None of it works. He never gets anywhere, never grows in grace, in the knowledge of Christ, never wins anybody to Christ, never even tries. Sings a lot, but that's about it.

Don't try and dodge the issue because. You can't dodge an issue which God has made an issue. In the book of Judith says, and not writing to preachers, just ordinary people, others say with fear, pulling them out of the fire, out of hating even the garments spotted by the flesh.

That's our business. You know, in Detroit years ago, there was a group of people in a church and the pastor got, he heard about an area in Detroit where there was no church and he got burdened about it and began praying about it. Finally got a dozen people together and began praying regularly about starting a church in this other area.

And eventually they did. They had around 20 people and they covenant together and with God in this fashion. We will use all our spare time witnessing to Christ.

We're not going to waste our time on anything doesn't matter eternally. So what happened at the end of 12 months, they had 400 members in the church. When I read about it, there were 10,000 members in that church, Gilead Baptist church in Detroit, but that's how it started.

It has to start somehow. Somebody with a vision. And so when I was a young Christian, I remember several of us were giving out tracts on the street and an older Christian tried to talk us out of it.

You're wasting your time, you know, you're hurting people's feelings. He talked us out of it for a little bit. We got back into it again.

That same Christian later on backslid far from God. I don't know if he's ever saved. It was sad to see no foundation build on the rock, Jesus Christ.

And there's certainly all we ever need to have as far as building a life, living a Christian life, pleasing to God and a blessing to others. There's enough in the Bible to help you along all you need. I found that out long, long ago, no foundation.

You better have one and be building. If you are Christian, remember, that's not the whole story. Be building on a foundation with stuff that'll stand the searching fire of God.

In Isaiah 1, God said, I will turn my hand upon you and purely purge away your dross and take away all your tin. Ask him to do that. Hey God, get rid of the dross and the tin.

I want to have genuine gold. At one time, I took a course in prospecting geology and did some prospecting. And then I found it was more important to know the rock of ages than to know the age of rocks.

So I gave up on it. But you know, it's amazing getting among prospectors now, the way these guys operate, you know, they're always operating on what they call hunches. So somebody says, I have a hunch on St. Helens Lake.

There's gold on one of those hills, you know. And you know what'll happen? Half the guys will go and check it out, you know. Today, they have much more sophisticated methods than they had in those days.

So it's a little different. But there still is that thing, I'm going to strike it rich. I'm going to make it rich.

What's that all about? Did I say it before? Excuse me, if I did, I'll say it again. God isn't on the gold standard. Christ is talking about the unpardonable sin.

But as the guy in the crowd isn't listening, he's waiting for an opportunity to say something. He gets the opportunity and he says, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance of me. And Christ said, who made me a judge or a divider over you? And then he spoke to the crowd.

They're all listening. He spoke to the crowd. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses.

Think it through. Think often of that verse. If you don't have much, you don't have to have much, just enough to get by and live to the glory of God.

You know, Moody and Sankey could have died millionaires. They didn't. They had very little left.

They gave it all away. The hymnals Wesley's had, they gave the money away. George Mueller, in his lifetime, had millions of dollars prayed in, gave it all away, had very little over when he died.

So, you know, it says, remember in Ephesians, let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands a thing which is good, that he may have to invest at nine percent. Isn't that what it says? That he may have to give to him that needs. That's what it says.

But a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses. You know what? You're going to lose it all. Yes, you are.

Don't you shake your head this way. You're going to lose it all one day. Read second Peter chapter three, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up, seeing then that all these things should be dissolved.

What manner of persons you ought to be and all holy conduct and godliness looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, when the heavens being on fire should be dissolved, the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Brethren, seeing you look for such things, it goes on to say, be diligent that you may be found of him without spot and blameless.

So you're going to lose it all. Everything's going to be burned up. Is that a neat thing, a right thing? Well, God's going to do it, so it must be neat and right.

His kingdom will not be based on the gold standard either. We have to get around this. You know, I saw a thing in a magazine, a Christian magazine, and this lady was talking about her life, and she made this statement.

She said, I absolutely refuse to be poor. My God, he's the king of the universe. He's a trillionaire and moron.

I should be the same. It's a big deal, you know. So I wrote her a letter.

I got her address and wrote her a letter. I said, have you never read James 2, verse 5? And it's a verse that says, hearken, my beloved brethren, has not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised them that love him? She read James 2, 5, I guess, because she wrote me back, and she apologized. I'll tell you, it was a very, very humble letter.

She said, I didn't know that was in the Bible. I'll never, ever say what I said before. I'll never say that again.

God has chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith. Why are they rich in faith? They're rich in faith because you have to be rich in faith when you're poor in order to survive. Do you get it? But you have God to look to, so it's never a problem.

It shouldn't be. My wife and I were going to India. We didn't have a lot of money.

We had a ticket, two tickets, and the people in India wrote and asked if we could send them \$3,000 because many of the pastors had no money to get to the place we were going to hold the meetings in. And so we didn't have \$3,000, but we knew God had, so we prayed. Forgot about it.

And a check comes in the mail for \$3,000 from a fellow I'd met in Alberta a couple of years before, a guy, by the way, that I had to really rebuke for some bad things he was doing. I didn't expect to get a nickel from him. And here comes \$3,000, you know.

There was a time you get excited about that. I'm still excited in a sense, but you know, you walk with God and you believe him, you trust him. God said to Moses, how long will these people provoke me? How long will it be before they believe me? For all the signs and wonders have done among them.

I'm sure God is saying the same thing about the evangelical church in the world today. What's wrong with these dopeheads? What's wrong? What are they doing? Wasting their time. You only have one life.

Get with it. Give it to God. Die at the cross.

Dying with Jesus by death reckoned mine. That's Romans 6. Here's a verse that helped me years ago. In that he died, that's Christ, he died unto sin once, but in that he lives, he lives unto God.

And the next word, next verse, is likewise. I looked it up in the Greek. It means after the same manner, in the same way or same fashion.

Likewise. Reckon. Reckon you also yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Savior.

We don't reckon that way. We reckon, arguing from past experience, that we're going to sin a thousand times yet before we die. I am not preaching sinless perfection, but Billy Sunday said, and I agree with this, I wish the church was as afraid of imperfection as they are of perfection.

So we are to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin and alive unto God and ask God to make it real and believe him to help you in this. Most certainly he'll do so, but we have to do the reckoning. Let me give you an example from the Bible.

There were 10 lepers and they saw Christ and they cried and said, Jesus master, have mercy on us. Well, he didn't heal them. He didn't move towards them.

He just left them standing there and he called back and he said, go and show yourself to the priest. Well, they knew well enough. The Jews among them.

I think there were some Samaritans there, but the Jews knew this. Maybe the Samaritans also that if you had leprosy and you thought you were cleansed, you were to show yourself to the priest. He would inspect you and either call you clean or unclean.

But Jesus said, go and show yourself to the priest. Do you look at each other? Hey, you still got it. You've got it.

I've got it. There's no point in going to the priest. He can see you some mile off.

We still got it. But you know what it says in the story? And it came to pass that as they went, they were healed. In other words, they had to reckon they were healed when they weren't healed.

They had to reckon on it because he was sending them and they were recognizing, of course, his authority. Mark 11, what things so ever you desire when you pray, believe that you received them and you

shall have them. So we have to reckon on these things and not reckon I'm going to keep sinning.

I've got this problem, but other people have problems too. We argue that way oftentimes. And it spoils God's work and grieves God's spirit greatly, I'm sure.

Then we mentioned 1 John 2, 28 before, but we are to abide in him so that when he comes, we'll not be ashamed. We'll have confidence. Keep that in mind, not be ashamed when Christ comes back.

And I'm sure all of us can think of things we have done in the past that we might be doing when Jesus comes and we should not be doing. Some will be caught with unconfessed sin. And Proverbs says, he that covers his sins shall not prosper.

No matter what you do, no matter how many deeper life conferences you attend, no matter how much you read the Bible, no matter how much you give your money to Christian work, if you've got unconfessed sin, it isn't going to work. He that covers his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy. What we do, we confess in our minds saying to ourselves, I know I'll do it again.

We are to confess and forsake, and then we have mercy from our God. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. So we read in the Psalms, unconfessed sin, you know, keep short accounts of God at least once a day, ask God to search your heart and take care of anything He may show you there.

Now some will be caught perhaps with a hardened heart. There are four places in the Bible we're told to not harden our heart. In the Psalms and then in Hebrews, harden not your heart.

It's easy to do. And possibly most of us have done that at some time. Job said, who has hardened himself against Him and has prospered? Well, nobody has.

Oh, come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord, our maker, for He is our God. We are the people of His pasture, the sheep of His hand.

Today, if you'll hear His voice, harden not your heart. Psalm 95. So it's easy to do that when somebody does a bad thing, you know, breaks His promises or something else and you're hurt.

There's a tendency to harden our heart. It's easy to do, but it's hard to reclaim, to get up, to get over it and out of it. You know, Job said, God makes my heart soft and God's in that business.

If anybody had a right to harden their heart, it was Job. You know what happened? These three friends came. They called him a hypocrite.

Apparently, he was a son of the drunkards. A young kid used to try and push his feet out from under him. It goes on for months.

He called them wearisome months of vanity. In all this, Job did not sin nor charge God foolishly. He never hardened his heart.

And we should never even think in those terms. Keep your heart soft and tender so God the Holy Spirit can work in you. The Bible says, He's the potter, we're the clay.

I saw in countries, maybe an eight-foot square tray with clay in it, and they're going to make a vessel on a little potter's wheel there. And the first thing they do is get into that clay in bare feet, and they tramp

around. Find something hard, they can't break it, they throw it away.

They keep on until the whole thing is soft and pliable, and then they make the vessel. God is working the same way. Something hard in your heart, ask God to break it to take it out of your life, or it'll slow the process He's working at to make us into the image of Christ.

We were predestined to be conformed to the image of Christ, and hardened heart stands in the way. Remember when the trumpet blows, it's too late. Somebody asked Moody one time, do you know of some plan that I can run to keep from backsliding? Yes, he said.

What is it? Read a chapter from the Bible every day. That's it, right? It's not quite that simple, but it's a help, of course. Somebody, Moody told somebody else, he saw him smoking, and the guy saw that Moody had seen it, and he said, nothing wrong with this.

And Moody said, no, providing you're fast enough. What? Fast enough, what do you mean? When the trumpet blows, you got to get rid of this in a hurry. He might not be fast enough.

Hardened hearts, people, I am sure there are people in this crowd tonight that are doing exactly that. Ask God to forgive you. He's the potter, you're the clay.

Let him do what he wants to do and needs to do. He'll never hurt you. The will of God is three things, good, acceptable, and perfect.

If it's good, it's not bad, right? If it's acceptable, it's something you can do. God never asked you or me to do something we can't do. And then it's perfect.

So if it's perfect, why not go for it? The will of God, good, acceptable, perfect. Don't harden your heart, whatever you do. In Isaiah 56, we read about some dogs.

People who were supposed to be watchmen, you know, protecting the cities. And the Bible says they were all dumb dogs. They were dumb, they never barked, and it has some things to say about them.

They're sleeping, loving to sleep, lying down, sleeping. Greedy dogs that never have enough. In Anchorage, Alaska, I had meetings, and next door to where I was staying, there was a guy, he had some Malamute dogs, four cages set up four feet above the ground, each one in the cage.

I never once heard them bark. So I said to my host, I said, what's with those dogs next door? Oh, he said, they used to bark day and night. But there's a noise bylaw here, and I went to the city and told him I can't sleep at night because these dogs.

So they told the guy he had to do something about it, so he debarked them. So they can't bark. And the devil has debarked some of you.

You can't bark, you never have a word, nothing to say for God, nothing to say for Jesus. You've been debarked. Listen, the devil's thing, the dog's thing is to bark, right? Must have been hard for those dogs.

And our thing is to talk about Jesus and live the Christian life. Don't let the devil shut your mouth. Be a Christian, be a light shine.

Ask God to guide you. I thought if I asked the Lord to lead me to someone, it almost always happens. Give God a chance in your life.

The trumpet will blow someday, and maybe, maybe at such an hour as you think not, remember the verse, it'll happen in God's own time. Then there's thing, you know, the fear of man. That was a factor in my life from my early days.

The Christian sometimes hits me even today. The fear of man brings a snare, but whoso puts his trust in the Lord should be safe. Who are you, the Bible says, that you should be afraid of a man who shall die, and of the son of man who shall be made as grass, and you forget the Lord your maker, and you fear continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor as if he were.

Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that's going to die someday? That's what God is saying. There are references all through the Bible about the fear of man. Abraham fell into that.

Isaac fell into it. Saul fell into it. I feared the people and obeyed their voice, and he lost everything as a consequence and died a suicide.

So the fear of man. In John 5 44, Christ said, How can you believe who receive honor one of another and seek not the honor that comes from God only? Are you in that category? How can you believe that you receive honor from men and seek not the honor that comes from God only? In John 12, it says, Among the chief rulers, many believed on him, but because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of man more than the praise of God.

Where do we live? What's your address? Where do you live in this area? The fear of man. I've heard it said that more people go to hell because of the fear of man than for any other one reason. And I've known people who have said no and died unsaved.

And maybe many of you have had the same experience. Well, we've got to take care of that by the grace of God. And we can, because really, you know, you think of God is the greatness of God.

It says he held the waters of the world in the palm of his hand. Can you feature that? I mean, if God wanted to have a bath, the Pacific and the Atlantic Ocean are not big enough. He couldn't get wet up to his ankles waiting through the Pacific Ocean.

You know, he said, The heaven is my throne. The earth is my footstool. Where's the house that you built for me? It's a good question.

We have to go back to the biblical point of view, telling us how big God is. When he was building, creating the world, he weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance. That's what it said.

And I believe it. I think it's a principle called isostracy in the scientific world. Anyway, he weighed them, mountains in a scale.

He fills the heavens and the earth. He fills the heavens and the earth. Paul said to a heathen audience, He's not far from any one of us.

In him we live and move and have our being, our existence. And he's talking to non-Christians when he said that. He fills the heavens and the earth.

I hear people, I frequently heard people say, I pray, but it seems to me that God's a thousand miles away. Listen, if God was a thousand miles away, you'd be dead, brother. You wouldn't live.

In him we live and move and have our being. This great God. And maybe I should take you for a rocket ride.

And some of you heard me do this before. Well, maybe you forgot. So you need to hear the game.

Okay, we'll get on a rocket and we're going to travel at the speed of light. So we passed the moon in two minutes. We passed the sun in eight, no, in two seconds.

We passed the sun in eight minutes, the same day we get out of the local solar system. But it takes almost three years to get to the nearest star, Alpha Centauri. Three years, almost at the speed of light.

Now we're talking about millions of miles an hour. Then the Milky Way constellation of which our local solar system is a tiny part. It's huge.

It's a constellation of stars. It's a spiral deal, you know. And the thing is this, if you're traveling at the speed of light and you have to cross over the Milky Way, it'll take you at the least 100,000 years.

Have you got it? The people behind all of this is our God and our Christ and the Holy Spirit. Our creation is ascribed to all three of them in the Bible. God made all things by Jesus Christ.

Now this is the God we're dealing with. Do we show him proper respect? Do we defy him sometimes? Disobey him? Get afraid of men? We've got to get over that by his grace. Ask God to deal with it.

He'll do it. He'll show you how. He has ways of working.

You can't explain. Give God a chance. He doesn't need you, but he wants you.

There's a big difference. So give God a chance in your life, the fear of man. Hebrews 11, 6 says that without faith, it is impossible to please God.

And I'm sure he's talking about genuine faith. Faith, I think, is related to the promises of God and Romans 4. Abraham did not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God, being fully persuaded that what God had promised, he was able also to perform, and therefore was counted to him for righteousness. Get to know the promises of God.

If you're asking about something for something, stand on a promise. And sometimes they're quite simple. Ask and it shall be given you.

Seeking you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you. Simple promises, but they're there for us to help us, to lead us, and guide us.

Again, I say give God a chance. He must often shake his head and just wonder, what is wrong with these people? Why can't they believe me? He said that to Moses. He wanted to wipe the whole nation of Israel out and start a new nation from Moses, and God talked him out of it.

I don't think we should put it that way, because you can't talk God out of anything. But God listened to Moses on that occasion. The greatness of God? People just, it's, did you ever stop and listen? Let me ask you a question.

Have you ever stopped to think that God is often answering maybe as many as nine million Christians who are praying at the same time? Ever think that? And not only can he hear each one individually, but he answers each one individually. Now to a whirling, that'd be a big problem. They wouldn't believe, but that's how it is.

So, is that possible? Well, listen to this. He counted the stars, counted the stars, trillions and trillions and trillions and trillions of stars. He counted them.

Well, not only did he count them, he named them. How many stars could you name? A hundred? He's named them all. So when you're praying, he hears you, and you're a special object of interest to him.

How can he do this? He's got that kind of an intellect. He's that kind of a person. Remember, we're told, though you have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

It's not Jesus on a cross now for us. We never forget that, but he's the eternal son of the eternal God. God made all things by Jesus Christ.

That's why in Ecclesiastes 12, 1, it says, remember now your creator. In the Hebrew, it's in the plural. Remember now your creators in the days of your youth.

Don't doubt him. Love him. Give him a chance.

He doesn't need it. He just wants to use you. He wants to bless us.

He wants to bless our children, and often we just stand in the way. Stubborn, unyielding, hardened hearts, unbelief, and all of these things that grieve are God. In Hebrews 12, it says, follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man will see the Lord.

If you're not a holy person, now listen, I know that holiness is a matter of degrees. Some people may be more holy than somebody else, but if there's no holiness, you'll never see God. That's what it says.

Follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. I think one of our greatest problems, of course, in North America is just money, you know, things. Remember I had meetings one time in a certain place, a thousand people there.

I just felt that of God to fast the whole weekend. I had such a burden for God to do something, you know. You get tired after a while if nothing is happening, and I preached in the final message.

This message, the title was The Demon of Greed. I got the title from a book I have in my library. The Demon of Greed, and God really helped.

I'm sure it was nothing I did or said, but that night the whole crowd was just broken to bits. And you know, doctors began selling their big house, and other people with big houses they didn't need, we heard later on, began selling their house and getting into a smaller house and putting the money into missions. And people were selling vehicles, and men were calling the ministry.

And all kinds of things began to happen from that night by the grace of God. His power, you know, is great. There's no limit to the power of God, except it's limited to the feebleness of our faith.

We get in His way. They turned back and tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel in Psalm 78. So He couldn't do the things He needed to do, wanted to do, because they're wicked unbelief.

Where are you at? Where are you at? Are you at the level of unbelief, or simply neutral? Many of us are just neutral. We're not going anywhere, and we don't want to go anywhere. Just want to be a Christian, have a ticket to heaven.

That's wickedness. Never forget 2 Peter chapter 3, gain the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up. They don't make asbestos thick enough to save your car or house either, or mine, you know.

So that's what's coming. We ought to order our lives in the light of what's coming. Christ is coming.

Then the righteous will shine forth, as we said before, like the sun in the kingdom of God. He's coming someday. People live as if it was today.

Walk with God. We're told to walk in love, walk in the light, and walk in the Spirit. Walk in love, that's concerning other people.

Walk in the light, that's the light of the Word of God. Walk in the Spirit, that's the Holy Spirit. Walk in the Spirit, you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh.

So we're to walk, it says in Ephesians, walk not as other Gentiles walk. That's not our business. They don't know what we're talking about walking in the light, walking in love, walking in the Spirit.

They don't understand that. We should understand it and be or try to be by the grace of God that kind of person. Be a loving person.

People tell me, you know, I don't have a loving personality. Well, you better forsake that personality then. No, they're talking as if I've got this personality, I was born with this, and this is how it is.

It can never change. Nonsense. If you're a Christian, you are supposed to be a loving person.

All of us are. We're supposed to be ready to help other people. I remember hearing a fellow one time, he had been driving on the road and he slid into a ditch and nobody would stop and help.

He stood there thumbing, nobody would listen, no. Then he saw a car come with a big gospel sign in the front. Well, this guy stopped.

Well, he didn't stop either. He just zoomed by. Then a guy driving a big truck stopped, said, hey man, I'll get you out of there.

He said, well, no, you've got to back your truck down. No, he said, I've got a long chain, I'll get you out of there. And so he worked at it, got mud on his hands and everything.

And when it was all through, this Christian guy, he thanked him and offered him \$20. And the guy said, don't you offer your money to me. Someday I'll be in the ditch and you can pull me out.

But he did better than the Christian going by did. And oftentimes it is that way. God gives us opportunities to show the love of God to others.

Remember what David said about Mephibosheth? Are there any left of the house of Saul that I can show the kindness of God to them? And Mephibosheth came up and he showed him the kindness of God. Other people never know the kindness and love of God unless they've seen it in you and me. That's why God gives us opportunities to help people.

So we can demonstrate in a tangible way, the love of God. He's coming. Are you ready? I hope your answer is yes.

Let's pray. Father, thank you for all you said in the scripture about these things. And thank you that in your plan, Christ one day will return.

We'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. So shall you said ever be with the Lord. It's a wonderful thought.

And then your kingdom, this earth, Father, burn with fire, a new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. Your plans are great, magnificent, wonderful, Lord. And we're part of it.

We thank you so much. We're not here to judge others. We have to judge ourselves.

You said that if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we're chasing of the Lord that we should not be condemned with the world. So Father, bless this church and other churches that may be represented here tonight.

You're building your church, but Father, somehow here in North America is going pretty slow because we're dead. We're not looking up. We're looking down, wanting more money, praising you, dear God.

And we get a raise in salary, but very angry if we get a dock in salary when it should mean nothing. Father, I am no better than anybody else. I made many mistakes over the years, but dear God, you've been so gentle and kind.

David once said, your gentleness has made me great. God has been very gentle with me, but he never gives up. He waits, he waits.

And the Bible says, wait on the Lord. You don't have to wait long on God. In prayer, of course, that's a different matter.

But when God is doing something, we get in the way. Oh, Father, be patient with us. Bless this pastor here, this church, and all of us.

We need thee every hour, most gracious Lord. No tender voice like thine can peace afford. I need thee.

Oh, I need thee. Every hour, I need thee. Precious Savior, come to me, empty me of self and sin, and fill me with your spirit.

While we're in the attitude of prayer, may I ask a question? Are there things in your life that need to be changed? You want to change them? Would you raise your hand? We'd like to remember you in prayer. Yes, yes, yes, yes. Others, perhaps, things you know, yes, things that need to be changed.

Father, bless these dear ones who raised their hands, and others, Father, who have their hand. Oh, God, in a special way, guide us. Oh, God, thank you for your kindness, your love.

Guide us and bless us in Christ's name. Amen.

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