

# To What Purpose

by Bill McLeod

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of obedience, faith, and good works in pleasing God, and warns against superficial practices such as tithing and church attendance without a genuine desire to serve others.*

**Duration:** 53:21

**Scripture:** Isaiah 1:11, Isaiah 66:3, Jeremiah 6:20, Jeremiah 7:23, Matthew 23:23, 1 Corinthians 16:14, 1 John 2:5

**Topics:** "Purpose"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of living a life focused on Christ rather than material possessions. He references the teachings of John Wesley, who advocated for making money, saving money, and giving money, but also warned against accumulating wealth. The speaker highlights the need for purity of heart and single-minded devotion to God, as double-mindedness is a result of impurity. He also emphasizes the importance of demonstrating love through actions, rather than just words, and the significance of true fellowship with God and other believers. The sermon concludes with a question about whether Jesus needs friends, suggesting that friendship with Jesus is a privilege and opportunity for believers.

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## Transcript

I'd like to read from Isaiah 1 and then from Isaiah 66, the first and the last chapters of the book, and then a couple of verses from Jeremiah 6 and Jeremiah 7. Isaiah 111, To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, says the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts, and I do not delight in the blood of bullocks or of lambs or of he goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts? In Isaiah 66, verse 3, He that kills an ox, he means in sacrifice, is as if he slew a man. He that sacrifices a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck.

He that offers an oblation, a drink offering, as if he offered swine's blood. He that burns incense, as if he blessed an idol. Then in Jeremiah chapter 6, we have those three words again.

To what purpose comes there to me incense from Sheba and a sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me. Then chapter 7 of Jeremiah, verse 21, Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Put your burnt offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices.

But this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people, and walk you in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward. I want to gather our thoughts around the three words, to what purpose.

Didn't God instruct Israel to offer sacrifices? What did he mean when he said in Jeremiah, this was not really what he had asked them to do when they left the land of Egypt? He had commanded them rather to obey his voice. King Saul, instead of obeying God, he decided, because the people put pressure on him, and when he really got honest, he said to the prophet Samuel, I obeyed their voice. I feared the people and obeyed their voice.

But he wanted to put a good face on his disobedience by telling the prophet Samuel that truly, yes, they had spared the best of the sheep and oxen because they wanted to offer a sacrifice to God. Now, the word of God was they were to utterly exterminate all the animals. And he didn't do it.

So Samuel saw through the whole thing and said, has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have disobeyed the word of the Lord, he has, because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king.

And Saul found out the hard way that God was not really interested in animals being offered on altars, except as they looked forward to the death of his son, Jesus Christ, on the cross. When the Philistines had the ark, and then David became king when Saul was slain, and they brought the ark to a tent that David had pitched for it, it says every six paces they took, apparently took six paces and stopped, then they offered oxen and fatleaves. So I don't know how far the journey was.

There may have been hundreds of beasts offered, I really don't know, it doesn't say. Later on, when the temple was built, King Solomon brought this same ark into the temple, and it says he offered sacrifices that could not be numbered, hundreds, perhaps thousands. And then, when they dedicated the building, the temple, they offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep.

Can you imagine the blood, the mess? Petru Lelusa, the singer, and I were in Romania, driving one day, I forget the name of the town, they had just discovered, well, a couple of months before, the remains of an old Roman amphitheater dating back to the second century after Christ. And they were excavating and restoring everything. We stopped there for several hours, and I don't know why Petru did this, he told these guys that I was an archaeologist, which I'm not, and so they fell all over me, even gave me a book describing the whole thing.

I had to remonstrate with Petru afterwards. Well, he said he'd see me with a rock hammer in my hand, and if that makes me an archaeologist, I guess I am one. It was very interesting, though.

There was a room where the gladiators came out, a room where the animals came out, and there was a field probably twice the length of this building or more, I mean this way. And in the center of the field, there was a ditch about this wide and probably 10 feet deep, and it ran right across the field over to the end. And they explained to us that when animals died or gladiators died or people died, they dragged them over and just let them lay over top of this trench so their blood would drain out with gravity flow out to the field.

And we were talking about it, you know, back in the second century after Christ, it's very possible that some Christian blood was shed there as well. But when you think of 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep, it is incredible. I mean, Solomon was a wise man, but I don't know where he got his wisdom fouled up to think that this would really please or impress God, because in Isaiah 40 it says, And Lamanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts are oft sufficient for a burnt offering.

If you're going to offer to God what He really wants, as in Proverbs, my son, give me your heart. We give other things so we don't have to give our heart. And that's the problem.

Who has required this at your hand, God said, to tread my course? Well, what happened then, of course, is happening today in different ways. So we're going to look at those three words. To what purpose? First of all, to what purpose repentance unless it's followed by faith? Paul said in Acts chapter 20 that he went everywhere preaching two things, repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

I mean, almost every religion in the world, somewhere in their system, they have a concept of confessing sin. And if you hear or hear of some person, he may not be born again, but he's confessing his sins to God, we sort of have a warm feeling, almost to the point of thinking, well, maybe he'll make it after all, because he's crying when he's praying, he seems to mean business, he seems to truly repent. But I say, to what purpose repentance unless there's faith in Jesus Christ? My faith looks up to Thee, Thou Lamb of Calvary, Savior divine.

Now hear me while I pray, take all my guilt away, O let me from this day be holy Thine. That has to follow repentance. Or repentance means nothing at all to God.

Then, to what purpose repentance that's not followed by good works? John the Baptist made that clear when he said that we were to bring forth fruits that were answerable to amendment of life. Fruits meet for repentance. If I've truly repented and put my faith in Christ, then obviously there has to be, and there will be, if I'm truly converted, a change in my life.

Fruits fit meet for repentance. Then, to what purpose, to what purpose faith? Unless faith is followed by good works. You recall in James, five times in one chapter, he tells us that faith without works is dead.

And there's no dichotomy between the teachings of Paul and the teachings of James. Paul says, faith saves. James tells us what kind of faith saves.

It's faith that produces works to the glory of God. Remember Paul, he said to Titus, instructing Titus as to some things he should preach to the people, and one of them was this, that they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

So, if I'm really a child of God, then 1 Corinthians 15, 58 ought to mean something at least to me. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. They tell me in the average church, 15 or 20 percent of the people do 95 percent of the work.

Why is that? Some Christians are very skillful at evading responsibility. They are masters at the craft. They want to get the credit, and they have devious ways of getting the credit for something somebody else does.

To what purpose salvation if Philippians chapter 2, 13 and 14 do not follow? What does it say? Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it's God who works in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasures. So, I say, to what purpose salvation unless I'm working out my own salvation? Did you know there's such a thing, pardon the phrase, as a Christian stalker? Yes, there is. The Bible talks about it.

A Christian stalker is a Christian who has nothing on but the helmet of salvation. That's all he's got, and he's very happy. But the Bible talks about Christians walking naked in revelation, and the world sees their shame.

To what purpose church attendance unless I'm prepared to do what the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 3 and chapter 10? Exhort one another daily while it's called today, lest in you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. I sometimes ask this question, how long is it since you exhorted another believer? And I go like this, a month? Anybody? Last month? Two months? Six months? Then I put in the word, ever. And most people have to confess they've never, ever, not even once, exhorted another Christian.

Now, some have nagged, I'm not talking about that, although sometimes nagging is constant reiteration of the truth, you know, in some situations. Exhort one another daily. People, why don't we do it? You know, the revival in East Africa, most revivals run for a couple of years, then they kind of scale down.

The revival in East Africa has gone for 25 or 30 years. It's not dead yet. Do you know what the secret is? They say the secret is a very simple thing.

In that area, when two Christians meet, they don't ask about the kids or the family or talk about the weather. The first question always is, do I meet you praying? And if the answer is no, then the question follows, what's wrong, my brother, my sister? Can we pray together? They say it's almost impossible to backslide in that revival area. Very simple.

The Bible says we are to provoke one another. Well, most of us are good at that. But the rest of the verse says we're to provoke one another unto love and to good works.

Are we doing that? Do we urge one another to get involved in the work of God? There's a ministry here that's spoken of a great deal in the Word of God and is almost entirely neglected among the people of God. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some of you, and so much the more as you see a day approaching, but exhorting one another. And so, dear people, when we come to an assembly of God's children, pray a prayer, dear God, lead me to somebody I can be a blessing to.

Do you do that? We should always do that. Be looking around for somebody. And God will lead us to people if we're prepared to help, to exhort kindly, to provoke to love and to good works.

I mean, to what purpose church attendance if we're not doing that? To what purpose church membership? I think it's fine to join a good evangelical church. We should pray about it. Find a good church.

Get in there. But after we do this, we've got to think in terms of responsibility. What can I do to really put this church on the map for the glory of God? I need to be reading Romans chapter 12.

I need to be reading 1 Corinthians chapter 12. I need to be reading 1 Peter chapter 4. I need to be reading Ephesians chapter 4. Another place to talk about the gifts that God has given to His people. I said in one of the other meetings that the manifestation of the Spirit of God is given to every man for the common good, for the profit of all, one translation says.

But you know, there's a lot of this mock humility that says, well, I'm so small and I have failed so many times and I know God can't bless me. And it's a great big rotten excuse for not getting involved. It doesn't matter who you are.

If you're born again, God can use you. Let me give you an illustration. I heard a preacher one time.

He was from Minneapolis. He had a large church, several thousand members. And he told us about a time when a banker, a very wealthy person, began attending his church.

So he told his guys to know, lay off this man. Lay off him. He's very skittish, you know, just let him come.

And he came for about six months. And then the preacher prepared a sermon just for the banker. And he said to his preacher, you can see the fellow sitting on the edge of a seat.

And he knew when he gave the invitation, he'd be the first one to the front. But while he was giving the invitation, there was a boy in the church. You know, when the Lord said brains, he thought he said trains, and he missed his.

And he came over to this wealthy banker and whispered something in his ear. And the banker looked at him, shook his head, and the kid whispered something again. And the banker got up and just went right out of the meeting.

And the preacher said, I was so sick at heart. I mean, God, how could you do a thing like this? He was ready to be saved. He said he went home just in a terrible frame of mind.

But about two o'clock in the morning, his doorbell rang, and the banker just said, Pastor, I've got to get saved. I've got to get saved. So he let him in and led him to Christ.

And then he said, what was it about my sermon that led you to Christ? He says, Preacher, I don't remember what you said. It was that kid. What did he say? He said, Mister, do you want to go to heaven? I said, no.

He said, then go to hell. We may not be highly gifted, but we can say that much. But people, to what purpose? Tithing.

Tithing is right. Jesus said in Matthew 23, 23, that tithing was right. These ought you to have done, but not to leave the other undone.

And if you read the parallel account, it goes like this. Judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God. Jesus called these weightier matters.

The average Christian thinks if he's tithing, heaven is really pleased. I mean, I'm really doing something. But a friend of mine was in South Korea ministering one time, and he said after he'd been there a few days, said to some of the pastors and missionaries, Would you mind if at this conference, I brought some messages on tithing? No, no.

They said, no, no. No, no message on tithing. He said, well, don't you believe in it? Oh, they said, listen, our people are so far beyond that, we wouldn't want to go back to that.

But really, in North America, if we're paying the tithe, we think we're doing everything that God wants. And we kind of hide behind that. Let's put it differently.

We hide behind it, not just kind of. There are things, dear people, that to God are more important. Judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God.

Any one of these four to God are more important than tithing. So I say, to what purpose tithing if I'm neglecting these other things? What does it mean? Am I trying to buy God off? You remember how Jacob bargained with God? God, if you'll do this and this and this and this and this and this and this, and bring me back home to my father's house in peace, then I will give you a tithe of all I possess. What would heaven want with a bunch of flea-bitten camels and sheep? You know, we don't have anything to bargain with when it comes to God.

If Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, and the beasts are not sufficient for a burnt offering, what do you expect to give to God that'll really make his heart leap for joy? I mean, he likes us to give and all of that, but remember the weightier matters of the law. I can give my body to be burned. And do you know there were Christians who did that in a rather stupid way? There were some, not many, but there were Christians who wanted to get a martyr's crown, and so they gave themselves up when they might have hidden, you know, in being a witness for God for many years to come.

Just so they could get a martyr's crown. But Paul in 1 Corinthians 13 said, though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profits me nothing. I just threw my life away.

To what purpose would be that sort of thing? I mean, this is really what God is saying. Then I might be able to speak. Well, let's say like Spurgeon, I can.

In a marvelous mind, he could read three or four 300-page books in half an hour and then quote whole pages verbatim. I can't even remember the title for a day, you know. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, I am become as a clanging gong.

Boing, boing, boing. You know what God said about Pharaoh? He said, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is just a noise. And some of us, dear people, we're just a noise.

That's really all. Because our hearts are not really filled, perhaps, with the love of God. John told us, you know, we can talk a lot about love.

We can preach about it. But in 1 John chapter 3, My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And James picks up on that.

And James said, If a brother or sister be naked, now that's a fellow believer, and destitute of daily food, and one of you, Christians, say unto them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled. Notwithstanding, you give them not the things that are needful to the body, what does it profit? To what purpose this? In other words, in Ezekiel 33, describing some people, it says, With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goes after their covetousness. So we can talk it.

We can sing it. We can preach it. Do we practice it? After all, that's what God wants.

The rest doesn't matter. It says, Walk in love as Christ also has loved us, and has given Himself for us, and offering His sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling fragrance. Walk in love.

Let all your things be done with love. To what purpose? Bible memory work. Unless I'm trying to make what I'm learning part of my life.

Reading about those churches in Mexico, there was a certain area where missionaries said they had constant perennial revival. And the secret was very simple. It was this, that the Christians in those churches had made up their minds.

I think it was a kind of a pact between them and the Lord. They did it together. They would not read any further in the Word of God than they were currently prepared to obey.

So if they came across something, OK, I'm not doing that. They closed the Bible. They might struggle with it for days or even weeks.

But they would not read one verse further until they were able to say, I'm doing that. Then they'd read on. Well, I can see how people living that way would experience constant revival.

I mean, to what purpose? I know of a certain man. He's memorized 10,000 Bible verses. Well, that's great.

I know some kids in a contest. And the kids that won, there was two that were tied. They learned 3,000 verses each.

I mean, that's fine. I picked up a couple one time, got talking about the Lord. They began quoting Bible verses to me.

They'd gone to Bible club as kids. They never accepted Christ. They were far off from God.

He was just out of jail. They were panhandling. But all kinds of Bible verses stuck away in his heart.

It didn't mean anything to him, obviously. So I say, you know, to what purpose? People go to church, maybe a meeting like this. Then they go home and say, Oh, we had a marvelous time of fellowship.

Somebody said, The average Christian has fellowship with other believers about God, but not with God. And there's a big difference. We get together.

When Christians get together, what do they talk about? The kids, the job, the world situation, abortion, something else. And these things are important in their proper place. But how seldom do we talk about the Lord? The late Dr. Harry Ironside, who pastored the Moody Church for years.

Matter of fact, when he was pastor, they had to have double services to get the crowds in. It seats close to 5,000 people. He certainly had something on the ball.

But he was very concerned in this particular area. He used to, when he went into a home, let's say for coffee, people used to watch him because they knew how he operated. He'd just wait for an opportunity, you know, the conversation, politics and everything else, you know.

And he'd just wait, and there's a silence, and he'd start talking about the Lord. And he'd get the whole thing switched around to the Lord. Well, after 20 minutes, he's back on politics and stuff.

And he'd wait a bit, and then he'd get in there again. He'd get back talking about the Lord. At least he had a real gift to do that.

But isn't it sad? You have to have a gift to talk about the Lord. I mean, a special gift? Fellowship? John said, 1 John 1, verse 3, That which we have seen and heard, we declare unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship was with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 1, Paul wrote, he said, among other things, God is faithful by whom you are called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. There's an old song. It's not in our books anymore.

Maybe there's a reason. I don't know. I'll be a friend to Jesus.

Ever hear that song? Some of you older people have heard it. I'll be a friend to Jesus. Does Jesus need friends? I don't suppose He needs friends, but He wants them.

Why do you suppose He made us in His likeness? Have you ever seen a horse pray? Ever watched a cow sing choruses? Never. I mean, they can't. They have no concept in this area.

We have because we're made in the image of God. He made us for Himself. Our bodies are His temple.

And He wants us to have daily, sweet fellowship with Him. Don't let anything be a substitute for that. It isn't easy, especially when you start this way.

A little tract I wrote years ago. God's blessed a lot of hearts. It's just a very little two-page thing.

Starting the day with God. And I point out there that if you haven't been doing this, you'll find it difficult to get started. Your mind will run this way and run that way.

I'm glad David talked about what he called the multitude of my thoughts within me, because I have that problem sometimes too. My mind is crowded with thoughts. They're going in all directions.

You have to ask God to assist you to quieten your heart, to just sit down or kneel down and be quiet and let God speak to you. I mean, to what purpose otherwise? To what purpose, dear people, interest in missions when I have no interest in the guy next door? There's lots of churches like that, you know. They're great for evangelism, you know, here in Canada or the United States or wherever.

Or perhaps they're not. They're great for evangelism across the sea, but to get a church that's interested both ways seems to be very, very difficult. I had a friend, he married a girl from a church in New York, and he said it was a church for missions just absolutely tops.

He said, but you couldn't get one person in that church to walk across the street to talk to a sinner about Jesus Christ. Isn't that rather hypocritical? I think it is. But I have no concern for the person next door.

I never tried to reach him or her for Christ, but I pray for Ethiopia, and I pray for Turkey and Yemen and all these countries. Maybe spend a lot of time even doing that, and the guy next door can go to hell as far as I'm concerned. I don't really care.

It's a lot safer, you know, to pray for somebody in Africa or some other part of the world than to start praying for the fellow next door. Because if you start praying for the fellow next door, it isn't going to be long before God's going to give you an opportunity to share the gospel with him. And we need to expect that.

Do you think it's right to have a burning passion for missions and no passion for the people in my block? In our church in Winnipeg, we're into door-to-door calling. People say that's not the way to do it anymore. I don't know.

I read in Acts, daily in the temple and in every house, they cease not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. If it was right then, why is it wrong now? It's wrong only because people are afraid to do it. You know what people say? Well, especially now in the election coming up, they'll think you're a couple of politicians.

Well, let them think it. They'll soon find out I'm not. Or maybe they'll think I'm a Jehovah's Witness.

Well, they won't have that idea in their mind very long after we begin talking to them. And it's amazing to me how many homes are wide open, how seldom you get a door slammed in your face, even how people thank us for calling. I remember when we started that, this other young fellow I was training, we specifically prayed that God would get us into at least one home that night.

And the first place we called, the fellow said, my wife's a backslidden Mennonite and I'm an agnostic. You guys better come in and talk to us. So the first house.

Now his wife wasn't home. He didn't accept Christ. But we had an hour with him explaining the gospel.

He came under conviction. We could see that. We're not through with him yet.

But there's a lot of people saying it's not the way to do it. And they've got other ways to do it that never seems to get done. To what purpose God is saying? All this activity, if Jesus Christ is not at the center of it, if what we're doing is not really for His glory.

You're not your own. You're bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

You don't really have a choice. Neither do I. We're His. And our hearts will never be happy until we acknowledge that we're His.

One hundred percent His. He created us. He recreated us in Christ.

Remember? We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus. So we've been created twice. And we're God's.

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show themselves strong in behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him. Do you have that kind of a heart? A heart that's perfect towards God? We may have. That's simply a heart where His will has become my will.

And I'm no longer trying to do my own thing. There are lots of Christians. I remember one Christian.

I knew him well. His first goal in life was to make \$50,000 a year. And he was a hard worker.

And he made it within about five years. After he made it, he discovered it wasn't really what he wanted after all. It didn't fill his heart.

It didn't make him happy. He wasn't satisfied. It wasn't too long before he was in Bible college.

Now in full-time Christian work. But that's how it started. Why is it, dear people, if somebody makes a million dollars, we almost worship the God? He's a successful Christian businessman.

You know, when a wealthy man dies, the question is asked, how much did he leave? And the right answer is, he left it all. Wouldn't you mind if I gave you your biography in four words from 1 Timothy chapter 6? Paul said, We brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. So it goes like this.

Nothing in, nothing out. That's your biography and that's mine. I mean, what else? And only what's done for Christ will really last.

Jesus Christ said, A man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesses. That's not the way a lot of Christians think. I know Wesley said, make all you can.

But let's finish the sentence. He said, make all you can, save all you can, give all you can. And he also said this.

Now you can turn your ears off if you want. But he said something else. He said, if, when I die, I leave behind 200 pounds in English money or more, history will bear me record that I died a dishonest person.

How can I have so much when millions have so little? Was he wrong? I don't think so. If God gives us money, it's for His glory to be used. For His honor and glory.

I'll never forget a missionary from Africa telling me years ago, he said, my chief worry is that my people in Africa will find out how Christians live in North America. He said, if they ever find out, my ministry's finished. Why did he say that? Because his people had the idea, since Christians in North America had sent this man as a missionary to their tribe, that all the Christians in North America, they tithed and maybe gave two or three tithes, like some of them were doing.

They attended all the prayer meetings and all this kind of stuff. You know, they were all busy soul winning like they were. He said, I'm just scared sick that they'll find out the truth.

But isn't that sad? Dear people, whatever our daily life happens to be, there's a sense in which our great God, our loving, kind God, you know, David said, thy gentleness has made me great. And Isaiah said, he gently leads those that are with young. And all of us as Christian believers are pregnant with spiritual young.

And God leads us gently by the hand. His gentleness can make us great. Maybe not in dollars, but in other eternal things, things that really matter.

I remember in a crusade one time, this gal came and she said, I've been stealing money from the petty cash drawer in the office where I work. And I've taken some other things home. She said, I justified it by saying I was just subsidizing my income.

I wasn't stealing. Well, she said, God spoke my heart. And she said, I'm afraid I'm going to have to go to my boss and confess it.

But, you know, he's liable to fire me. Do you think I should go? Now, she wanted me to say, well, now, sister, don't worry about that. I think everything's OK.

You've confessed it to God, haven't you? But I knew what I had to tell her. So I told her. And she confessed to the boss the next day and he fired her on the spot.

And she said, if I could have gotten a hold of you, I'd have really told you all. I was back a year later. She came to talk to me after one of the meetings.

She said, I was so angry because I had such a good job and I lost it because of you. And then she said, I got over that, the initial shock. And I praised God for what happened.

You know what happened, she said? Within a week, I got a job much better than the one I had. Well, God may not always do it that way, but sometimes He does. He knows how.

He loves us with an everlasting love. And dear people, He wants to be involved in the whole of our life. If you're doing something you can't take Jesus Christ into, you ought to quit doing it.

I mean, whatever it is. Your thought life, you ever think of things that Jesus wouldn't be happy with? You better not do that. Think on these things, Paul said over there in Philippians.

You know, Paul gave us, on the positive side, wonderful instruction. Many places, but Philippians chapter 3. He had seven things going for him as a Jew. You know, circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, the tribe of Benjamin.

A Hebrew of the Hebrews, that means a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents. He mentioned the righteousness which is in the law. Touching the law blameless, he said the righteousness was in the law, blameless.

And finally he said this, after enumerating these seven things. He said, what things were gained to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yes, he said, without doubt, I count all things but loss.

For the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, the Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things. And to count them but dung or garbage, that I may win Christ and be found in Him. Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is true faith in Christ.

The righteousness which is of God by faith, that I may know Him. And the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death. If by any means, I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect. Let me just say, this is not the language of unbelief. It's the language of humility.

He knew he was saying, this one thing I do. Forgetting those things which are behind. And reaching forth unto those things which are before.

I press towards the mark for the prize of the high. I think it really means the up-calling when the trumpet blows. The resurrection morning.

For the prize of the up-calling of God in Christ Jesus. There it is. I say on the positive side, I know Christ.

I want to know Him better. I've been a Christian 51 years. I'm still learning.

Still growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I know Him a lot better now than I knew Him when I was first converted. I knew very little about Him then.

When I look back at my stupidity. In a certain church, they were so hard up. About a year after I was converted, they asked me to become their pastor.

They sure didn't know what they were getting. I'd never baptized anybody. I'd never run a business meeting.

I'd never married anybody. I never buried anybody. I didn't know anything, but I was learning.

And you know, God gave us a revival that year. We had 75 people saved in a week of special meetings. And some of those people went to the mission field.

When God looks at us, dear people, and all our activity here in North America. I'm sure you're thinking this constantly. What in the world are they doing? What's this all about? Why are they wasting their energy and their money on things that don't profit? You know, when Peter talks about the coming day of God, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.

And he told us, if we know these things, what manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. People, we say yes, amen to that.

We believe it with all our heart. But there's a sense in which we don't believe it at all. You know, most of us as Christians are practical atheists.

I mean, we live like an atheist would live. There's really no difference. We're the same values along certain lines as an atheist or an agnostic would have.

The only difference being we profess to believe in a living God. We complain as much as the world complains when things go wrong. There's a sense in which things can never go wrong for a Christian believer walking with God.

But the world would say it went wrong. We don't say it went wrong because disappointments are his appointments. God knows what he's doing.

God is in business day and night. He never slumbers in our sleeps. The hairs of your head are all numbered.

We know that. But sometimes we act as if we didn't know that. He knows my thought far off.

There's not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it all together. He understands my down-sitting, my uprising. He surrounds my path.

He's in front of me and behind me. The past, present, and future are all taken care of. It's all in the hands of God.

Really, there isn't a single solitary thing, dear people, that's worth worrying about. When you stop and remember who you are, who owns you, who loves you, whose covenant to keep you. Paul said, The Lord will deliver me from every evil work, and he'll preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom.

Do you believe that? I sure believe it. I can't keep myself. We're kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 1, But we've got to get our priorities straight. Get right with God. Not make the mistakes that Israel made, which eventuated in now 1900 years.

Actually, more than that, because the Old Testament, the same kind of record, 70 years captivity in Babylon, and you know the record in the book of Judges, when they sinned against God and he allowed certain people to come in and desecrate the country, rape their women, and kill their choice young men, and rob their treasures, and all this happened again and again and again. And somehow, dear people, they never seem to learn. And when Pilate washed his hands, he said, I'm innocent of the blood of this just person.

They said, his blood be on us and on our children. And dear people, that's how it's been. And to go back to Jeremiah chapter 7, God said, when I called you out of Egypt, I didn't say offer sacrifices.

I said, obey my voice. And God is saying the same thing to us today. He didn't tell us to do a lot of things we're doing, which are really basically a waste of time.

He doesn't want all of us in a foreign country serving Him, but He wants all of us serving Him full time, wherever we are. I mean, giving all we can, praying all we can, sharing all we can, living for the glory of God. And people know the darker it gets, the easier it is to be seen when you're alive.

Isn't that right? Sure, it's right. Things are dark, yes. I'm just currently reading a new book on the subject of AIDS.

When Erwin Lutzer saw it, he said, can I borrow it, Bill? And he borrowed it the other day and had it for a couple of days. When he returned it to me yesterday, he said, Bill, that book is only half true. We're facing an awful future.

And we likely are, but for the grace of God. I'm sure if we could see 20 years down the road, we'd see the need for revival now. God wants to do it.

We believe in revival, don't we? We sing about it, yes. We have revival conferences and God is saying, to what purpose? Well, to what purpose do we have a revival conference and we don't have a revival? I mean, to what purpose? What's it all about? You see, that comes down to you and to me. Are we really? Revive us again, fill each heart with us? No, we sing that, we mean it.

We don't expect it to happen. And that brings me to my last point, dear people. To what purpose prayer? If I pray and don't really believe God's going to do it, how seldom do we pray as in Mark 11, 24? It says, what things soever you desire when you pray, believe that you, it's in the past tense, received them, or have received them as one translation puts it.

What things soever you desire when you pray, believe that you have received them and you shall have them. Now, Jesus said that, but a word of caution here, because sometimes as Christians we ask for a

bunch of things that God doesn't really want to give. How can we be sure? John 15, 7. Jesus Christ said, it begins with an, If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, so shall you be My disciples. If you're abiding in Christ, drawing from Him in the vine, you're a branch in Christ, you're not allowing anything to come between yourself and the Lord, and you're filling yourself full of the Word of God, Colossians 3, 16, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, then you'll not be asking for selfish things, you won't be making the mistake of asking for things that God doesn't want to give. You'll know better than that.

But don't think you can take that Mark 11, 24 by itself and make it work for you. Not unless you're abiding in Christ and you're filling your heart full of the Word of God. In closing, you have a responsibility, I have a responsibility.

As Christian believers, we all have a responsibility to seek the face of God. Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near.

In James chapter 4, God gave us a recipe for personal revival. It goes like this. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Do you believe that? Would that work tonight in this building? Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. It's clear, unequivocal, simple. The other half of the verse says, cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

All people say, He's talking to sinners. There's two kinds of sinners, saved ones and lost ones. Paul didn't say, I used to be the chief of sinners.

He said, I am. The context shows, He's talking to Christian believers. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. James 1, there's a verse that says, a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. And James 4a tells us that double-mindedness is the result of impurity in the heart.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be afflicted and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to heaviness.

Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He shall lift you up. Do you believe it? That's God's recipe to people for personal revival.

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