

Rotten People Belong Here

by Billy Strachan

The church is a place for sinners, where we can come just as we are and receive the liberty from the dominion of sin through Jesus Christ.

Duration: 56:12

Scripture: James 1:27 - 2:1

Topics: "Sinful Nature"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of true religion and righteous conduct. He emphasizes the importance of practicing love for all people, regardless of their background or appearance. The speaker shares a personal anecdote about how some Christians may struggle to accept and welcome those who are different from them. He concludes by encouraging the audience to strive for unspotted behavior and to be a blessing to others. The sermon references the book of James and highlights the need for genuine faith and works in the Christian life.

Transcript

I refused to join Moses in the singing of his favourite chorus. I was sinking deep in sin. That was Moses' chorus, you know, in the wilderness.

One of his other favourites was, All myself is my strength. My starvation is me. I will trust me and always be afluff.

Praise myself, praise myself. I am struggling within. Praise myself, praise myself.

I am still bound to my sin. All myself is my strength. My starvation is me.

I will trust me and always be afluff. Here endeth the lesson. And he read the book entitled Daily Darkness.

Yes. Well now, we are in G in your outline. G. We've just seen in F that there is a true religion that's undefiled.

And the emphasis is on occupying thyself in two ways. Practice of being a benefit and a blessing to other people. And secondly, a ministry to yourself.

Keeping yourself unspotted from the world. And we looked in G at the fact that there are three ways in which righteous conduct, behaviour is seen. And the first one last night was in verses one to four.

True religion is evidenced in the fact that the person that practices it works it without respect of persons. A true religionist has a love for all men everywhere. Irrespective of colour, creed, tongue, nation.

And this is a hard one for Christians to accept. Because you'll find that if you go Sunday morning to some places of worship dressed rather tatterly, you'll find that people will not sit near you. Or you'll be stopped at the door and asked if you can't go down the street and bother people at the other church.

I can remember one occasion finishing a coffee bar week and in the middle of that week three hippies, long-haired gentlemen that were on drugs and drink, had come to Christ midweek. And they said that they wanted to come to church tomorrow and I said, no don't, you'll scare them to death. Besides, they won't accept you.

He says, but they're my Christian brothers and sisters. I said, I know, but they won't accept you. I said, you'd frighten them.

I've given you a Christian friend in the neighbourhood that I think you should keep in touch with until such times as your spiritual growth in the Lord is such that they can take you in and they won't frighten you and you won't frighten them. We want to hear you. I said, well, all right then, come.

But remember, I've warned you, you may not be accepted. So the next morning they came straight in, giving their hymn books and prayer books at the door. And they marched right down to the front row and bang, sat right under the pulpit.

While all the stalwarts of the faith with their big hats and peppermints sat under the balcony at the back. And you could tell that they'd never been in a service before. They did everything wrong.

When people knelt, they stood. When people stood, they knelt. If you said the reading was from Genesis, they wanted to know who he was.

But they really listened. And you never saw three faces glowing so much. They never missed a word of the sermon.

And yet at the door of the church afterwards, as I stood there with the pastor, first gentleman up was a rather tall, coronerly looking type with a waxed mustache and Homburg, rose in his lapel, rolled umbrella, natty little striped suit. And he said, did you see what was in our sanctuary this morning? If we have anything like that in our church again, I for one am not coming back again. This is a holy place.

The dwelling place of God where I come to worship my God. Not to sit with that kind. It's not a dos house.

It's a holy place. That's all I'm saying. Good morning.

So the minister turned and said, well, what are you saying? I said, will you take him up on his offer? Go home at lunchtime, write him a letter and say, dear friend, don't come back again. You're an utter hypocrite. The church is a place for sinners.

It's a place for rotten people. It's a place where the rotten people can come and find mercy with their God and get peace with God and begin to live with God. It's not a society for the clean.

And I haven't found a clean person in it yet. They've all got their Achilles heel. Or if you want the biblical term, the thorn in the flesh.

And every Christian has his weak spot. And you may keep the outward appearance perfect while the inside is just like a dustbin. And it's sheer hypocrisy to keep people away.

And we sing the hymn, just as I am, I come. And we won't let them come just as they are. It's get a haircut before you go to the altar.

We get it all the wrong way around. We tell people to clean up to get introduced to God at church. You don't.

You come to church and get introduced to God as a filthy lout in order to get cleaned up. You've got to get it the right way around. And if you don't get it the right way around, you'll keep people from the kingdom.

And too long the church has presented to people, join our society and we'll introduce you to God. Have a bath, have a haircut, put on a nice suit, come to church next Sunday and we'll introduce you to God. And it's not in the book.

It's come to church just as you are, irrespective of what condition you're in. And we'll introduce you to God and he'll give you what it takes to clean up. It's the other way around.

I remember on one occasion going to a coffee bar and I saw a fellow come in and his head filled the doorway, at least his hair did. And with a corny sense of humor like mine, I wondered if I could go up and put my arm around him and welcome to the coffee bar without losing my head inside his hair. So I tried it.

I walked up, put my arm around and said, welcome to... And I dug myself out of his hair and he looked sort of staggered at me and I brought him in and sat him down and brought him a coffee, put my hand on his shoulder as I put the coffee on the table and he turned around, looked up into my face and he was in tears. I said, what's the matter? He said, you touched me. And I said, yes, I did.

Was that wrong? He said, yeah, but you're a Christian and you're a preacher. And preachers haven't touched me in years. In fact, he said, I can't even remember when my father last touched me.

And it's perfectly true. We're in a world of people, overpopulated, that can no longer communicate physically with each other without thinking it's sensual, erotic and filthy. And I said, well, I hope you're not upset by it.

He said, no, I'm not upset. Not really. He said, it just means you've accepted me like this.

I said, well, I had to. You came in like that. So when I went up to speak, I thought, now I must get back and talk to him, but I didn't have to worry.

As soon as I finished, these mates picked him up, carried him forward, sat him in a seat in front of me and said, hey, he's going to talk to you about God. And I said, why is he going to talk to me about God? That's because we're going to make him, see. I said, and why are you going to make him talk about God? He said, because for three years he's been like this.

He has 10 O levels, 10 A levels, and can't get a job because he won't cut his hair. And he said, he's gone to different churches all around the community and every time he goes, they kick him out, tell him to move

on. And he said to us, the day in the hour that anything Christian accepts me just as I am, I'll talk to them about God.

And he said, you spoiled it tonight. You accepted him. He said, right, Charlie, you're on.

You talk about God. So he was sitting there like a sheep ready for the slaughter. And so I said, okay, you might as well let me have it.

Give us all a religion. I said, well, I'm sorry, I hate religion. He's the preacher, isn't he? Yeah, he's the preacher.

You're the preacher, aren't you? I said, yeah, I'm the preacher. And you hate religion? Yeah. You're putting me on.

Where do you get the idea as a preacher that you should hate religion? I said, from God. From God? Yeah. And then you tell me God hates religion.

I said, you can't stand it. Are you a Jehovah's Witness or something? No. Where do you get the idea that God hates religion? I said, in the Bible.

In the Bible? Yeah, I said, I've never read that in the Bible. I said, you ever read the Bible? No. I said, that's probably why you've never read it.

So you show me that in the Bible. So I turned to one of the minor prophets. I said, read that.

He says, I hate. Hey, he says, give me that. Who's speaking? I said, God, through one of his prophets.

Go look. He hates their solemn meetings. He hates all their singing.

He says, you know, God isn't as bad as I thought he was. He says, I've been in that opinion for years. They couldn't stick their solemn meetings, and their long faces, and their ceremonies, and their, all their little ways of doing things, and their songs.

And even I thought it was up the creek. Look, God agrees. I said, I know.

He says, why? I said, because he doesn't want your religion. He wants you. He says, but every time I go to church, he can stuff me with religion.

I said, that doesn't mean to say it's true. He said, but that whole book's full of religion. All the ten commandment things.

I said, I know. I said, but they're there to tell you, you can't be good enough. He said, I know, I'm not good enough.

I said, well, you're right for becoming a Christian. He says, but when I go to church, they tell me, you know, I have to stop doing this, that, and the other thing. I said, well, they're liars.

He said, but preachers have said it. I said, well, they're liars. He said, am I getting you right? He said, can I be frank? I said, if you want.

He said, I mean, hey, Susie, Susie, come here. And this dish came over. And he says, do I have to stop having sex with Susie to become a Christian? I said, no.

He said, no. I said, no. He said, do you say that in church? I said, yes.

He said, do they write you back again? I said, not very often. I said, they'd like me to tell the lie they've told for years. And that is that if you stop having sex outside a marriage with this girl and come to church next Sunday, we'll introduce you to God.

I said, but it's not in the Bible. He said, but how about telling lies? I said, you don't have to stop telling lies to become a Christian. He said, but I've never heard this before.

I said, you're hearing it now. He said, you mean to tell me I don't have to stop telling lies to become a Christian? I said, no, you don't. Stealing.

I said, you name it. You don't have to stop it to become a Christian. He said, well, that's the opposite I've ever, ever heard.

From Sunday school, and I've been in Sunday schools, where we're always taught you to stop stealing, you wouldn't see God. I said, what's wrong? I said, if it depended on you stopping stealing, lying, or having sex with your girlfriend to get to meet God, you'd never meet God because you can't stop it. You're too weak.

I said, and the great message of the Bible is this, God says to you, how you come in and meet me as an immoral person, and I will give you what it takes to stop it. You don't stop it to meet God, you meet God to stop it. You don't stop lying to prove to God that you're acceptable.

You're acceptable to God through the work of Christ and the cross to get the power of the life of the Lord Jesus in you to stop you from exercising what you are by basic nature, a liar. And all this business of flipping people into suppressing by self-effort every evil they've ever practiced in order to get a wee introductory card to heaven is downright untheological. It's not in the book.

The word of God tells us that we are totally depraved. We have no power. We cannot break sin's dominion.

We cannot stop doing the things that are wrong. But Jesus Christ came and died in the cross and bore the punishment for our inability to keep God's law. And if we will come and say, thank you for dying for us, we are forgiven for our inability to keep God's law, we then receive a living, ever-present, present tense, dynamic saviour in our lives to empower us to stop doing what we were doing before.

That's the gospel. And woe betide you if on personal work you spend half of your counselling session telling people when they suddenly reveal to you their own personal life. Now, you have to stop that if you're going to become a Christian.

There's no prerequisites. There is a genuine repentance of hating the fact that you are like that and a willingness to want to be better, but also an awareness that there's no other way to change that creature other than by receiving Jesus Christ as your personal saviour into your life to get the power you need to become different. And the tragedy is we take that untheological idea straight into Christianity.

We get you converted one night and then from there on and in Bible class we're still preaching the same old thing. To be spiritual is to stop doing this and stop doing that and stop doing this and stop doing that and then you'll become spirit-filled. Stop 120 rotten things and you are ready to be filled with the Spirit, to be controlled by Jesus.

Get yourself all ready to be holy and you'll never be ready. You'll never be ready. You come just as you are.

Just look in Mark's Gospel chapter 11. There's a little story there that's commonly known as the triumphal entry to Jerusalem. Very often we're so wrapped up seeing Christ in his entry to Jerusalem in triumph, we miss the vehicle that brought him into Jerusalem and that's the donkey.

And may I say just before I take you through this little section of God's Word that should there be any similarities between the donkey and you, those similarities are purely intentional. And remember this isn't any old donkey. This donkey was known to God 750 years before it walked the earth because it was prophesied a way back in the Old Testament, 750 years before this very day that Jesus Christ would enter Jerusalem riding in the back of a donkey.

And if God knows a donkey is going to be born and what he's programmed for that donkey is after it's born in life to glorify God and present Christ to people, he knows that much about you Christians. And when they came nigh to Jerusalem unto Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, he sent forth two of his disciples and he said unto them, go your way into the village over against you. Just that one over there.

You see, I know where everybody is. I know where you are because if I know where a donkey is, I know where you are. And as soon as you be entered into it, tell you where you'll find it just as you go through the door of the city.

You shall find a coat tied. I'll tell you the condition it's in when you get there. It's going to be tied.

It's not free. It's tied. And yet I know what I want to use it for on the earth.

But the only thing is at the moment it's under the ownership of another owner. And it has been since birth and he's got it tied. And no man ever sat on it.

It's never been controlled. And I want you to take it two messages. Emancipation, loose him.

Secondly, bring him to me. Now that's the gospel to a donkey. It's the gospel to us.

Liberty from the dominion of sin and brought back not to a denomination, not to a system, but to a living person, Jesus Christ. And if anybody says unto you, why do you this? Say ye that the Lord hath need of him, and straightway he will send them hither. And they went their way and found the coat tied by the door without in a place where two ways met, and they loosened.

It was in the very threshold of decision. It could go one way or the other to make its mind up, coming to him or away from him. And certain of them that stood there said unto him, what do you loosing the coat? And they said unto them, even as Jesus has commanded and they let them go.

And they brought the coat to Jesus. Where had it been? Tied, rope around its neck to a peg in the ground. And it could walk forward and it could walk back.

They couldn't go very far. It was limited in its liberty. And it walked itself in a little circle till it made a rut.

Every step in that circle, it knew it by heart. There was nothing new in life. I've been there before.

Boredom, frustration, emptiness, nothing fresh, everything the same. And it was walking round and round, even over its own dung, just living in dirt and filth. And I'm sure its tail and its coat and its feet were just as dirty.

And what does it say there? And the disciples loosed him. And they gave unto him a packet of soap powder and said unto the donkey, clean thyself and we shall take thee to the master. You know, it's as frustrating for a donkey to try to scrub itself with soap as it is for you to try and clean yourself up for Jesus.

Jesus Christ, they brought it to Jesus as it was a smelly old donkey, straight from its pit, straight from its rut. And they brought it to Jesus. And what happened? They cast their garments on it.

They covered it up. Here's one of your big cover ups in the Bible. You know what the Bible teaches us about Jesus Christ? He is your robe of righteousness.

He covers you up so that people no longer see the dirt. Only you know it's there. And that's what some of you have forgotten, that it is there.

The shadow's there. You've been suppressing the dirt. You've been trying to brainwash yourself into the fact that since receiving Christ and receiving his righteousness has covered you completely, and hidden you from public view to being what you really are, you've tried to believe that you're no longer what you really are, and that that's gone because everybody else sees you as righteous.

You've said to yourself, then the other thing's gone. It isn't, it's underneath it. You've never changed.

You're the same today as you've always been, but it's the righteousness of Christ that covers you. It's an imparted righteousness. No demand's here to clean up, just to receive, come to Jesus, and receive the covering.

And they cast their garments on him, and then he sat upon him, because that's one of the reasons we don't like coming. We hate being sat upon. It means he's got to become the boss.

Then many spread their garments in the way, and others cut down branches off the trees and stowed them in the way. And they went before, and they that followed cried saying, Hosanna, what a lovely little donkey. Isn't it maturing? You can easily see it's a Christian donkey now.

And everybody went home praising God that now they had a marvellous donkey in the town. Was that the outcome? No. They said, Hosanna, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.

What did the public see? Jesus. What happened in the notice? The donkey. That's how it should be.

Because it's a perfect gift that cometh down from the Father above, with whom is no variableness near the shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth that we should become a first fruit of his creatures. And if God's prepared to have all that for a donkey, and from morning until night change the whole of its life to free it from the dominion and ownership of another owner, cover all its dirt and use it to glorify him and take him to people to the extent they forgot the donkey and just noticed the Saviour, I'm sure that's kind of what he's got in mind for us.

And nowhere was there a demand for the donkey to become clean enough for Jesus. And yet it staggers me the people that are under the pressure of having to maintain by self-effort a certain standard of behaviour in their local church in order to be qualified by the local believers as being spiritual. Quite honestly, how many of you have been under such pressure? Hands up.

Thank you. It's true. Pushed by your peer group to keep to a certain line by sheer determination and grit of teeth to become spiritual.

You do not take a tree in our garden at the moment that looks just like a dead twig and tie on lovely green leaves on the outside and pretend that it's fruitful. They won't last. Nor do you go out in the autumn and pull the leaves off.

You know what you do? You leave them alone. And there are other powers other than human powers and the tree's power gets the old life off. And if you leave it long enough to the spring, there's a new life comes through the branches and pushes what's left off and produces a new leaf.

You won't recognise this place if you stay through to spring school. You'll be staggered at the beauty of the flowers. You keep your eye on that herbaceous border out there along that wall and along this wall and just watch the stuff beginning to come up now.

By mid-summer, it's this height and full flower all along both sides. We don't have to go around encouraging it. Nor do we whip it.

Pressure it in to grow. The life inside takes care of the problem. No matter how much we persecute that herbaceous border, it's never died out in all the years we've been here.

Oh, and we persecute it. In September, we cut some of them back. Prune them down a bit.

Chop roots off. Chop old leaves off and stuff. You know, you can really hack it at about.

It still grows. Can't stop life. And if you allow the Lord Jesus to become your saviour, He'll take care of you.

He'll do the changing. He'll give the power. He'll be the one that will say, now I'm giving you what it takes to be different.

It won't be self-effort. Remember the hymn we sang? Not what I am, O Lord, but what thou art. That and that alone can be my soul's true strength.

It's what you are in me, not what I am for you. That's the thing that makes the difference to your Christian experience. Some of you have just got a bit exhausted trying to be good.

I tried to be good one morning. I never tried it in the afternoon. But it didn't work.

Jesus said, I'm prepared to give you the power. I'm prepared to manifest my goodness to you, if you'll just let me. So remember that.

And this will help you to accept other people. This will help you to have a true religion without respective persons. Whenever you see the crummy guy enter into church, from now on, you're the first to go up and put your arm round him, even if he's small.

And just simply say, boy, when God gets a hold of this guy, just think, he's going to really make a difference in it. And try to be as patient with others as God is being with you. Just remember how long it's took him to get you where you are.

And if you're honest, you have a long way to go. And the funny thing is, as soon as we get somebody converted from a rather distasteful background or from another class, we expect overnight that they should move up a class and be tasteful. Learn to put up with all the babyhood, dirt of a newborn babe in Christ until Jesus Christ changes them.

True religion works without respective persons. It accepts everybody and lets them grow in the Lord. I went to one church in the South and they didn't have a pastor and they asked me if I'd care to stay afterwards to a church meeting.

And I said, yes, but I can't legislate because I'm not your pastor, I'm only a visitor, but I'll sit. And so the deacon got up and said that some lady in the village had suggested she wanted to become a member of the church and would we admit her back to the church as a member of the church and come to Christ through listening to a Billy Graham program or a decision on the radio. And boy, the women in that church got to town on her.

Not yet. Oh no, she's not ready for it yet. Not for full membership and baptism, certainly not.

I don't care if she's given her testimony. Have you seen her house? Healthy. Can't even put two curtains on the window to look the same.

And have you seen the condition the kids are in? Dirty. And the place is dirty and they tore strips off her. And I had been visiting some of the homes of some of these ladies, sitting in all the finery in church.

And as a visiting preacher to any home, I usually get to three rooms. My bedroom, the lounge and the toilet. All other doors are kept closed.

And on occasions, some of those Christian homes, the door has opened into a bedroom. Oh, you'd think a bomb hit it. And I knew that, and one lady in particular that was really hammering, one of her doors had opened and I had seen in that the rest of the house was a mess.

So I said, well, I wondered if I just might ask some questions. And they said, well, go ahead. I said, if any of you ladies from the church ever thought of bringing her into your home and showing her all through your houses to show her what a Christian home should look like.

You ever thought of just sort of flinging open the bedroom door and saying, there, that's a Christian bedroom. There, that's a Christian laundry. There, that's a Christian lounge.

And if you women ever thought of stopping having your little midweek meeting, your cup of tea and talking about the local gossip of who got married and who died and said that next week we won't bother having a meeting, let's go down with scrubbers and buckets and clean the house out for her. Nobody's mentioned her husband. Where's he fit into this? Oh, he's a drunkard.

I see. So how does she get the money to feed them? Well, she goes out and works to get the money to feed the kids. I see.

So she's working all day and comes home tired. Yeah. Has to contend with her drunken husband and get children off the bed.

Yeah. Don't you think that might account for the dirt in the house? Woman's tired. I say, how about this youth group? Instead of playing table tennis on Friday night and spending more money on billiard chalk, why not buy a couple of rolls of paper and go down and paper the woman's house? Dive a cut and show her how to bake.

You ever thought of that? If she's expressed her faith and trust in Jesus Christ and asked for baptism as fast as the Ethiopian eunuch dived off his chariot and jumped in the water, she's entitled to the waters of baptism in this church. And Jesus Christ will make the change. So they put it to a vote and quite a few folks got up and left immediately.

Didn't like the idea. But there was enough left to vote her in and to say, yes, she could have baptism and be admitted to the church. But we don't like it, do we? We've got to keep up the show.

And it matters more what you look on the outside than what you are inside. And there was these wavering hags, absolutely devoid of love inside, but all fine outside. And they wouldn't admit her to their fellowship because she wasn't clean enough.

My suggestion was that they should go down and show her how to live. And they didn't like that either. It works without respect to persons.

Number two, it works with God's choice in mind. Righteous behavior works with God's choice in mind. Verse five.

Listen, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him? True religion, true righteous conduct, remembers, remembers and remembers. God's choice. He has designed the gospel to reach the poor in spirit, not the rich in spirit.

He has designed the gospel to reach the man that's poor in this world's goods, poor in this world's power, poor in this world's ability. He's designed it in such a way that it can step down to the deep parts of the prayer and bring a man up from the gutter. And don't ever forget it.

And if you keep God's choice in mind that the gospel's for sinners, it should be evident in your behavior towards sinners. And remember this, you have to hate the sin but don't hate the sinner. Hate the sin but love the sinner.

Realize that many of them walk in utter darkness and don't even know what they're doing. I remember once visiting my own brother and his wee boy comes skipping into the room and asked his mother for a, what we call in Scotland a jeely piece. It's like the heel of the loaf, the end piece of the loaf, spread thick with butter and jam.

It's like a doorstep, you know. And he came in and asked for a jeely piece but he described the jeely piece with a few four-lettered words. And his mother fetched him a belt that knocked her kid clean across the room and told him to get out.

And she looked up at me blushing and says, I don't know where he gets it. Two or three minutes later she was asking us to pass the loaf of sugar. I know where the kids were getting it, they were learning it from their parents.

But they had no idea that they were using profane language. They just don't know they're doing it. And I can remember Grace, my wife saying, boy I never heard language like that in my life.

And I said, well I'm glad you've heard it for a change, now you know why I pray for them. Good you've met it. But they had no idea they were doing it, just natural.

And you have to learn to love the sinner but hate the sin. And realize that if I can get this person introduced to Jesus Christ, he'll take care of that condition in that nest. God loves the sinner, God's at war with sin.

It works with God's choice in mind. Number three, it works to fulfill the royal law. It works to fulfill the royal law.

Verses six to 13. But you have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you and draw you before their judgment seats? Do they not blaspheme that worthy name by which you are called? If you fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well.

But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill.

Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall have judgment without mercy that has showed no mercy, and mercy rejoices against judgment.

If you're going to be saved by obeying the law, you're going to have to do the law of it. And you've got to remember this business about the law. There are those who say I'm under grace now.

That means the law is out the window. That's not true. The Old Testament said of the law, this doing thou shalt get eternal life, thou shalt live.

But nobody ever did it, so nobody ever got the life. But Jesus Christ did it. And the gospel is not this doing thou shalt get life.

The gospel is acknowledge you can't do this, come to Jesus Christ, and he'll give you the life and the power to do the law. And so you don't throw away a law, Jesus comes to fulfill the law. You receive within you the law keeper.

You receive within you the only one that ever kept the 10 commandments. His name's Jesus Christ. And there's not one jot or tittle of the law being thrown away.

But you don't have to keep it at all to get eternal life. You receive Jesus Christ to get eternal life. But in receiving Jesus Christ, we should see you being a law keeper.

Why? Because you've got within you the law keeper. And you can put the law into two statements. Look at Romans 13.

Romans 13, verse 8. Oh no man anything but to love one another. For he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Can you credit that? He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

For this thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet. And if there be any other commandment is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely the royal law, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Two laws. You could have it all wrapped up in two statements. Number one, a right relationship to God.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul, with all thy body and have no other gods before him. Then tie all the rest up in that one statement. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

And do you know why? We've never loved our neighbor as ourself because we've never discovered how to love ourself. Because you've listened so much to so much preaching about crucifying self, death to the old self. I must die daily.

That you've developed a disrespect for the you that God loves. And every time you read about death to the flesh, death to the old man, death to the old nature, death to the old self, get it right where it's meaning. That is a reference to the old ego.

That's with reference to the shadow. That's with reference to the real you inside that is opposed to God's law, that wants to be independent of God. That wants to do everything piggish under the sun.

That is the one that you have to stomp on. But don't try to make yourself a zombie. Don't begin to have a total disrespect for the personality that God expected you to be under his control.

Because he wants you to love that person you ought to be, a complete whole personality, recognizing what you are and loving what you are when you're under the control of Jesus Christ. And that will make your personality beautiful. That will make your personality wholesome, normal, acceptable, beneficial to other people.

And if you start having a respect for yourself, you'll learn how to have a respect for other people. If you start having a true religious respect for your own life, you'll have a true religious respect for other people. If you have a total disrespect for yourself, you'll have a total disrespect for other people.

And that's really why we've never fulfilled the law. We don't know how to love ourselves. Oh, but Billy, I love myself.

No, you don't. If you loved yourself, you wouldn't tolerate the hypocrisy that you put up with in your own experience. You wouldn't put up with your own realities.

But it's because we tolerate hypocrisy in ourselves that we hate it in other people. Yes, we have a total disrespect for ourselves and we don't love ourselves. And because we don't know how to love me, we're certainly not going to be able to love my neighbour.

But if we begin to have mercy on ourselves, if we begin to see that what's been warped has to its other side what was to be a true person that God expected us to be under his control. And if we start working and loving ourselves towards that place of being a normal personality that God created under his control,

letting his power bit by bit changes in the process of being a Christian into the genuine you that you're supposed to be will begin to be a little bit more tolerant with other people. We'll say, if that's what God's got as a job in my life, that's what God's got as a job in my neighbour's life.

So I'm going to start being patient. So the next time I see my neighbour doing something nasty against me as a Christian, I'm going to remember that 10 to 1, I did it yesterday. And I wanted God to forgive me.

So I've got to learn to forgive other people. And Nathan marched in before David and said, you know that you had a man in your kingdom that had a big flock. And yet when a neighbour pounced on him suddenly rather than go and take one of his own big flock for a meal, he went out to some poor neighbour and took his only little pet lamb, slaughtered it and used it for a meal.

And David rose up in a rage from his throne and screamed, the man that did it will die. And Nathan said, you are the man. You've got a whole harem of concubines.

And yet you've gone and stolen the wife of your idea, the Hittite, and had him murdered by proxy just so that you could have your adultery. And you find that it's true. What we hate in others, we're allowing in ourself.

Oh yeah. We are twisted in our nature. And that's why it's necessary to begin to try to see who you are.

And then begin to see that who you are is meant to be under this new leader, Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit in your life. And in a practical way with your feet in the earth, bringing you to the normality he expected you to be. Working towards it day by day.

And as you know, you're in the process of being rehabilitated to normality. You will begin to love your neighbour as yourself. You'll say, well, God, let's see the same being done in my neighbour and help him.

If you work to fulfil the royal law, you'll be fulfilling the law. You'll be doing well. But remember what it says.

Those that just have no sense of mercy won't get any. And believe me, one of the most merciless groups there are in the world are Christians. We have no mercy on each other.

The minute somebody here in this school steps out of theological evangelical line and their behaviour pattern, the rest of the dorm will be on them. Can't do that. Have you told somebody since they've come, they've been sinning? Had we conversations to change people's behaviour pattern since you come into what you think it ought to be? I know what that's like.

I came here from the Air Force and I hadn't met Christian. I didn't know him, didn't know the Bible. Somebody told me in the first week, there's a man coming next week to talk about the tabernacle.

I said, what's that? It's a big temple made with tents. Where do you read about that in the Bible? Rubbish, isn't there? It is. I've never read it.

Never knew it was in the Bible. I thought the Bible had Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Romans. Never knew there was the Acts of the Apostles.

Amazing what I didn't know. And boy, I was excited to come straight here from the military forces to meet real brothers and sisters in Christ who were going to be a big blessing and help to me and really helped me on in my Christian faith because I never met any before. I'd been living amongst 3,000 men in the Air

Force that didn't believe in Jesus Christ.

And it was hard going. And I came in here and boy, some of the truths that I was discovering just made me so happy that after lunch, I'd come sliding down the banister in the main stairway, jump up on top of the table or the chest in the hallway and do a tap dance and sing something from Annie Oakley or Oklahoma. And a Christian would come out of the lounge and say, brother Billy, this is not Christian.

Would you care to come a little walk with me? And we used to go little walkies in the garden to a special little seat. This hall wasn't here then. It was just over in that corner.

And they'd sit me down there and they would say, you're Christian life. And they'd tell me how to live. And do you know something? I believe in Christ.

And I believed them, hook, line, and sinker. Because I thought they'd been Christians a lot longer than me. They must really know.

And surely my own brothers and sisters in Christ wouldn't deceive me. I'd go back up there very chastened and walk into the main building saying that thou shalt not slide down the stairs anymore. Thou must not.

Next day I'd come down the stairs. Brother Billy. You know, if one of them had only been practical enough to say, meet me in the lounge at two o'clock and I'll teach you some hymns.

Nobody ever asked me to come and have a wee lesson on singing. They just covered me for whistling. It wasn't spiritual.

Have you got a minute? And I'd say, walkie, walkie. You know, I'd be a whole new path down to that seat down there. And I believed every one of them so much so that in the middle of one of the lectures one day I stood up and I made a pronouncement to the whole class that from now on I was going to be holy.

No more foolish jesting. From now on, I was going to be spiritual and everybody was praising God for my sense of commitment. Do you know what happened? I died.

I became a tense, pressurized, suppressed zombie and I was ill. I went around that building for nearly six weeks and never spoke to a soul. And everybody thought they'd done me a favor of making me sanctified.

They did a good job of nailing me in a coffin, taking away the dignity of my right to be a human being with my feet on the earth, although a Christian. And one morning I tumbled into a room where there was a private prayer meeting going on for me. And they were asking God to forgive them for what they'd done.

Then we were in a position where I didn't know how to get out of the box. Fortunately, God sent one of his servants along that took the nails out of the coffin and let me out. And when I got out... And I've never gone back in again.

And that's why to this day lots of people, even students, don't find me very religious. But I know Jesus Christ. And they had no mercy on me.

And some of them are nowhere today. Nowhere today. And it's interesting to see the reaction when they meet up with me 10, 15 years later.

I remember one coming. He stood in the lounge with Mr. Van Dorn and I had just finished doing a pantomime to teenagers in the lounge. And Mr. Van Dorn said, well, what do you think? Says he never changes, does he? No, I don't.

I'm free and I'm staying free. And it's a freedom in Christ. And he's the one that makes them a justness.

And he's had an awful lot of mercy upon them. And believe me, it's time Christians learned to start having a little bit of love for each other, fulfilling the royal law, being a little bit more merciful, giving God time to reshape life instead of doing it by a dictatorial command in the face of each other. Of course, if you see somebody in a park committing adultery, you have every right to say that is wrong.

But the things we are merciless about are the little things that it's really none of your business. Give God time. He'll train the child how to change.

There are things my kid does at home now. I don't pelt him. Because I know that he has no idea what he's doing.

But he's been trained not to do that. We're teaching him bit by bit. I don't go around the house putting all my books on a shelf six feet off the floor.

Have you ever been in a house where everybody takes danger out of the children's way? Everything gets raised the minute he starts to walk. Rubbish. Everything's where it is.

He's taught not to touch what isn't his. And we've never had any problem. And he gets his training.

We don't just stand there tapping our feet saying don't. And we know that there are some things that he wouldn't be able to adjust at the moment because he's just too young. We're hoping that he'll soon be dry and clean.

But sometimes he just forgets to shout quick. And you have to get the mop out. And the shovel.

How do you tolerate that? Because somebody did it for us. Somebody did it for you. Oh yes, you know when we get converted we walk around as though we're people that never did these things.

There'll be some Christians who'll have you think they'd never been in a toilet. Listen now, two of you all go and you're all human. So righteous conduct works without respect to persons.

It works with God's choice in mind and it's merciful insomuch that it remembers to fulfill the royal law. That is true Christian behavior. That's spirituality.

Let's pray. Father, we prayed at the outset of our gathering tonight that you would show us more of yourself. Thank you.

Thank you for what you've shown us. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

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