

That Ugly Flesh

by Bob George

The sermon emphasizes the importance of letting go of confidence in the flesh and focusing on the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus.

Duration: 52:43

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 15:4-5, Romans 3:10, Galatians 5:22-23, Philippians 3:1-3, Philippians 3:9, Philippians 3:12

Topics: "Flesh"

Description

In this sermon, Paul is emphasizing the importance of repetition in teaching and learning. He is unafraid to repeat his instructions to the believers because he wants them to truly understand and grasp the message. Paul warns against false teachers, referring to them as 'dogs' and 'mutilators of the flesh.' He encourages the believers to press on towards the goal of winning the prize that God has called them to in Christ Jesus. Paul also emphasizes the need to forget the past and not dwell on past mistakes or unpleasant experiences. He reminds the believers that the law was given to show their sinful condition and to point them towards salvation in Christ. Paul explains that living the Christian life is a matter of faith, just as receiving Christ was a matter of faith. He encourages the believers to walk in faith, trusting in Christ and His work, rather than relying on their own efforts.

Transcript

Well, let's begin in chapter 3. We've come to the point where Paul is saying, brothers, finally I rejoice in the Lord. And he said, it's no trouble for me to write the same things to you again. This is a safeguard to you.

So what Paul is saying here is, I've written these instructions to you before, and I'm going to write to you again. You know, many times we are scared to death of repetition, and yet we're told and we know that repetition is the mother of learning. And yet many times we're scared to death of it.

So he said, no, I'm going to write to you again, and probably again and again if necessary, because I want you to get what I'm saying. Watch out, he says, for those dogs. Now guys, that is not real politically correct, calling people dogs and people who are mutilators of the flesh.

But if that's truth, then why have we grown to the point where, for the sake of being so-called politically correct, we fear to proclaim truth? That has become almost a mystery to me. I didn't grow up that way, and most of you who are at least a little older certainly can agree with me that you didn't grow up that way, that you kind of spoke truth is what truth is, and no big deal. But we've become so sensitive today that we just

cannot stand to hear even truth.

But the fact is that in the scriptures, you're going to see truth proclaimed. When Jesus said to people, you're a bunch of white-washed sepulchres, that is not what you would call politically correct, but it's truth. And because it's truth, it will set you free.

And so he says, watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those manipulators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision. In other words, these people who are claiming that we are the true believers in Christ Jesus.

That is true even today, where you will find people who say we are the church. Well, folks, there is no the church except the church of Christ Jesus. And that doesn't mean that you name your church the church and that becomes the church.

It's the church that Christ brought about, not the ones we bring about, not the memberships that we create, but the memberships that he created. And the only way that he creates a church is through spiritual birth. We create them through baptism, church membership, rolls, donuts, all kinds of things that we create church with.

Those are man-made. Those are what's called fleshly things. But Jesus' church is a supernatural church.

It's an invisible church. As a matter of fact, our founder isn't down here except in us. But he says that is my church.

It isn't a denomination. You have people today say, well, our church is the first. I don't care if it was the first or before the first.

It's man-made. The only church that God is interested in is his church, not ours. And so we go out and we build big memberships and we build big buildings and we just are so proud of our congregation and our group.

And why? Well, because we built it. We went to church growth seminars and we did all kinds of things and we built this thing. And we visited all the visitors and we encouraged them or manipulated them back into church or whatever it might be.

And we have built this thing. We're so proud of it. But God says that isn't what I'm looking for.

He said, the church that I'm interested in is the church that I produced. And that's produced by being born again believers, all color, all creed, all backgrounds, all economic strata. It makes no difference, just born again people.

So he said, you watch out for these people, these people who do evil, manipulators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, no confidence in the flesh. Now he said, I have reason to put such confidence in the flesh.

And so what Paul is going to do here is describe some of the ways in which we put confidence in the flesh. And it's, it's very explicit. He says, first of all, I have, I was circumcised on the eighth day.

That meant he followed religious observance. It would be like saying I was baptized when I was 12 or I was baptized or I'm a tither or I have a 99.9% church attendance or whatever else you want to put into there. It's something that I have done.

And, and, and I, because I've done it, I have confidence that that's what's going to get me in. And so he said, circumcised on the eighth day. In other words, religious observance, the people of Israel ancestry, my mommy and daddy were Baptist.

My great granny would Baptist and my great, great Grammy or Baptist and brother. I'm a Baptist. And so I'm okay.

Now I could use Presbyterian or anything. I'm not down on Baptist just use it as an example. Okay.

So politically correct. Need to clear that up. There are people like that.

I am so proud of the fact that I come out of a generation of Presbyterians or a generation of Baptist or generation of Methodist and my relation clear back to the days that I can't remember. We're all the same denomination. And so am I. So I'm okay.

How can I not be okay? When I followed the traditions of man through all of these years, confidence in the flesh, he said out of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. In other words, as far as my race is concerned of being a Hebrew, I'm one of the best ones out there. So Paul's kind of identifying himself that I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

I'm a Christian of the Christians. And if you want to take a look at a, at a healthy, good Christian, I guess that's comparison to a bad Christian, but to a good Christian, man, you just look at me and I'll show you what a good Christian is. So your confidence there, what is your confidence in how good I'm doing? You just put you folks just don't realize how much I pray.

And, uh, you just don't know how much I read the Bible. And, and, and I do it in an orderly fashion. Uh, when do you do yours, Joe? Seven in the morning? I do mine at six.

If he said six, I'd have done it at five. And we play Christian one-upmanship don't we? And there's all of that kind of stuff going on. And so we become confident in that.

We become proudful, prideful of the fact that that's what I'm doing and I'm okay because that's what I'm doing. I have confidence in my flesh. This is, these are all religious things.

You know, we can get into the flesh, the stuff that we're really familiar with. Um, but these are all just religious things. We'd get into the other, but I'm afraid it'd be too convicting.

So we'll try. He said, um, as far as persecuting the church or in regard to the law, a Pharisee, in other words, you want to talk about a law keeper, brother, I'm a law keeper. I'm under the law and I am a keeper of that law.

And, uh, and you just look to see how well I keep the law. I go to church on the day I'm supposed to, and I haven't murdered anyone recently. And, uh, I haven't stolen.

And I, all of these things, I am a law keeper in regard to the law. I'm like a Pharisee. I'm top drawer as for zeal, man, zealous for the Lord.

I go out and witnessed everybody at walks and a few that don't. And, uh, I, I just, I just have a zeal for God. Every time I look at somebody, I say, praise Jesus got a real zeal for God.

Where's the focus on all this stuff, guys? It's on me, me, what I'm doing for God. It'd be like a branch saying, boy, haven't you seen how much fruit I got hanging on me? I mean, I am one producer of fruit now realizing that that branch could not produce a thing if it were not for the branch abiding in the vine, a branch cannot produce fruit. A branch can only bear the fruit of a producer.

And the producer is not the branch. The producer is the vine. And so is there anything for us to be bragging about? Not really.

Do we? Absolutely. We have what confidence in the branch. You guys may get on thrall if you want to with that vine, but I want to tell you, I'm a pretty impressive branch.

And so we need to keep our eyes on the branch. And that's the way we think that's confidence in the flesh, very subtle, but very true. A Hebrew of Hebrews zealous for God.

And not only that, but I persecute people that aren't like me. I mean, if, if, if I'm a, I'm this law keeper and somebody in keeping the law, the way I think they should keep the law, you're going to hear from me and you're going to hear from me real good because I'm a, I'm a keeper of the law and I'm going to make sure that you're a keeper of the law. As for legalistic righteousness, as far as being righteous in the sight of God, Paul said, I was faultless.

I have people like that. Have you ever run into somebody that never thinks they sin? Do you know there are people around that say that I never sin? How many of you have ever known anyone like that? I hope none of you have been that way, but how many, how many have known somebody just literally say, I've never, I never said how many in the hands going to see not too many in here. How many of you don't know anybody? Maybe you've never broached the subject.

When I ran into somebody that says, I never sin, I say, let me talk to your wife. And I had a guy on the radio. One time I was the dummy.

Let me talk to her. It kind of entered that conversation in a hurry, confidence in the flesh. And Paul is saying as far as confidence in the flesh, I probably got more confidence that I could put in a place in any of you, but verse seven, whatever was to my profit.

In other words, whatever I thought was profitable for me, I was doing these things because I felt they were profitable to me. It was, it was doing something for me. It was making me more acceptable in the sight of God.

And that's the reason I was doing them is, uh, the, the law said to do this and I was obeying the law and the law said to be circumcised. And I was circumcised. It didn't have anything to do with that, but my parents did.

I was a Jew of the Jews. I was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. And so I, I was out.

It was beneficial for me to act like a good Hebrew beneficial for me to go out and act like a good Christian. It always kills me when I hear that good Christian. I always do compare that.

I guess that's the comparison to a bad Christian, but you just wonder why people use that word good Christian. As a matter of fact, what did Jesus say about that word? Good. He said, when they called him good, good teacher, remember they tend to him.

He said, hold on a minute. Why do you call me good? Only God is good. So if you're going to call me good, call me God.

And if you don't want to call me God, don't call me good because only God is good. Now, if he's saying that only God is good, what does that say about you and me? How many times do we say, oh, he's such a good person. But have you ever been around him when he's mad? You ever been around her when she's mad? See, we can be nice people.

Can't we? And sometimes, but to be good people, we need to get that out of our vocabulary, guys, because the Bible says there aren't any of us good. We just think we are. Basically, isn't that what you always hear? Basically, I'm a good person.

I just killed three people and raped 10, but basically I am a good person. And you hear that constantly. Hear it constantly.

If you have ever gone and worked in prisons, you will hear that constantly. Yeah, I did that, but basically I am a good person. Well, you see, if I'm a good person, what do I need a savior for? If I'm such a good person, what do I need forgiveness for? I don't need forgiveness if I'm a good person.

I need forgiveness because I'm not a good person. Don't I? You see, we don't want to admit that. We don't want to see truth.

We don't want to be set free with truth to see ourselves as God sees us and therefore see our need for salvation in Christ Jesus. And so all that other is doing what? Putting confidence in the flesh. Paul says, I don't want you to have any confidence in the flesh.

We who are the true believers put no confidence in our flesh. In our flesh, he said, is no good thing. And we have to understand the truth of that.

You say, well, why did God, why did God do this the way he did it? I mean, that's something that really we all ought to think about sooner or later in a Christian experience. Why did God do this? God could have saved us in such a way that he just eradicated the flesh. And so I didn't have any flesh in conflict with my spirit.

I just was born again. And now I am perfect and there's no conflict at all. He could have done that, but he didn't.

And it says God can't look on sin. Then how in the world does he live in me? And how in the world does he live in you? If God can't look on sin, can anybody answer that question? So all of those kinds of things, every time God sees sin, he turns his back and he flips around. You kind of envision after a while God on his chair that, you know, you sin round ago and you just confess it and I twirl back around again and just twirling around up there.

Can you believe how many people there are in the world today and how many sinners are in the world today and how much spinning he must be doing? But we teach that. God shows for some reason to come

and indwell us in the midst of the fact that even as I come to indwell you, I'm going to indwell a person that is also indwelt by sin that has still something called flesh living in you. And that that's going to be a conflict until the day that you die between the flesh and the spirit.

They're in conflict with each other. The flesh doesn't do what the spirit wants to do and the spirit doesn't do what the flesh wants to do. They're in conflict with each other.

How many have found that to be true in your Christian experience? That is the conflict that you're in where you say, why did God do that? He didn't have to do that. Is there a benefit to my having flesh? Paul said, it's a weakness. You know what he said to do with your weakness? Rejoice in it.

Say what Lord? Yeah, rejoice in it. How can I rejoice in my weakness? It's a thing that keeps me off balance. No, no.

He said it shouldn't keep you off balance. You should rejoice in your weakness because your weakness is what's going to keep you dependent upon Christ. If I did not have any weaknesses, I would forget Jesus in a New York minute.

And so would you. Adam and Eve didn't have any weaknesses prior to the fall, but they still fell. And so we have to understand the truth of that, that as long as I am in this flesh of mine, as long as I'm indwelt by Christ Jesus, which is forever, there's going to be a conflict between those two.

So I tell people, if you really want to get down to the point where you're sinless, pray for death, because that's when it's going to occur. The day that you and I are absent from this body and present with the Lord is the first time that we will see him as he is and become like him. Until that time, we're going to be in the conflict of Paul in Romans 7. The things you want to do, you don't do.

And the things that you don't want to do, you do them anyway. Wretched man that I am, who will free me from this bondage of sin and death? And his answer to it is praise be to God through Jesus Christ, my Lord. He set me free.

He set you free. So where should our emphasis be, on the branch or the vine? You see, the flesh puts the emphasis on the branch, and the spirit puts the emphasis on the vine. So Paul says, whatever was to my prophet, I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

I put all those things behind me. They have no meaning to me anymore. And what is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake I lost all things.

Well, what's he talking about losing? All the accolades that come from being a person who was circumcised on the eighth day. All the accolades that come from being a Jew from Israel. All the accolades that come from being a tribe of Benjamin.

The accolades of being called the Hebrew of the Hebrews. The accolades that come from being a law keeper. The accolades that coming is what a zeal for God this guy has.

All the accolades that come from he's bold as brass, goes out and persecutes the church. As far as legalistic righteousness, boy, he's without fault. Oh, those are things that feel good for people to say about you.

He said, it's all flesh. Forget about what people say about you. As a matter of fact, forget about what people think about you.

I say, if you're worried about what people think about you, forget it. They're not. They're thinking about themselves.

And yet we spend time constantly preoccupied with, I wonder what they think about me. Forget it. The only issue is important to us is what does God think about you? And if you're in Christ, he thinks a lot about you.

As a matter of fact, he thinks so much of you that he calls you my son, my daughter. That ought to satisfy our hearts. As I said, everybody wants to be accepted.

Why God made us that way. God made us in such a way whereby the three strongest desires that we have in all this world or will ever have is the desire to be loved unconditionally, the desire to be accepted. And there's a difference between being loved and being accepted unconditionally and to have meaning and purpose to life.

Well, if we don't understand that, that that's there, don't try to take it away from me. It's part of me. It's part of being a human being.

So you're saying to yourself, well, where do I go to get that need met? And if we don't go to where God created you to go, and that is to him to meet that need, we have no option except to go someplace else. And where do we go? To each other. And so we try to get that need for unconditional love met in our mate or in our children or in our parents.

If I would have just had more loving parents, I'd really be okay. No, I can take you to people that grew up with the most loving parents you'd ever want to see in your life that I miss. So we've got all these excuses.

If, if, if, if I would have just, if this, they say, no, that there's an influence that's there, but don't blame the way you are today on that influence. You had choices and it's the choices that you made to determine whether you're walking in victory or not today. So he says, I consider everything as a loss compared to this surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

He sees this born again experience where he got to know Jesus personally. He sees that as probably the most important thing that ever took place in his life. And as a matter of fact, he calls this surpassing greatness, how great it is to know that you're what he is.

Now, guys, we forget about that. Don't we kind of take it for granted. At least that is my experience.

Sometime it's kind of whole home. Well, that's pretty nice stuff. I forget about many times, especially the longer you're in Christ is how lost you were when you weren't in Christ.

And that's some benefit to coming to Christ later on in life is because like I had 36 years of experience as to what it is to not have the Lord living in you. That's, that's pretty good amount of time. But a lot of people never got that time said I came to Christ when I was nine.

I said, did you ever stop to think that you had to do all your sinning as a Christian? That's a real encouraging thought in it. But guys, don't take it for granted. Paul said, said, said, he said, I see this, that I would consider everything that's ever happened to me as loss compared to that surpassing greatness of

knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whose sake he said, I've lost all things.

I consider them done. I consider them nothing but a waste that I might gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness on my own that comes from the law. And there again, mentioning that he does not have a righteousness that comes from the law.

You see, we try to gain our righteousness through the law. The law was given to us by God to show us our unrighteousness. And we have misused the law to our benefit.

We think it's to our benefit by taking the law and using it as a means of gaining righteousness. When the only reason that God gave you the law was to show you your unrighteousness and the law was not given for the righteous. It was given for the unrighteous to show you your condition so that you would turn to Christ Jesus for your salvation.

The law is a mirror. You look into the mirror to see what your condition is and the mirror shows you that your face is dirty. And when religion tries to wash your face in the mirror and to get the mirror to get you looking good, where you look into the law and see I am dirty.

And then you hear the tapping on the shoulder and you turn and there's Jesus. And he said, Bob, what did the mirror show you? Which showed me my face is dirty. Did you ever try to wash your face in the mirror? Yeah, I did.

How does that work? No, it doesn't work. Are you ready for me to cleanse you? Yes, I am. And Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness.

Now the law did its work and Christ did his work. And so this righteousness, he said, I want to emphasize the fact that I have gained Christ and I was found in him not having a righteousness of my own. I found this truth out in him.

Now, guys, what is he talking about there? I found this out in him that I don't have any righteousness. What does that show you? Again, that Christ came to amplify the law. The law showed you that you're unrighteous.

And Christ came to prove that to show you firsthand that you have no righteousness except through him that comes through the law. But that I stand and I have been found in Christ to have a righteousness that is through faith. The righteousness that comes from God, not from me, and is by faith in the one who gave me his righteousness.

Now it comes out there. Then how much sense does it make for you and me to go out and to try to prove to the world or to yourself how righteous you are? I mean, if any of us have any righteousness and do we have righteousness? I mean, do we possess righteousness? Who gave it to us? We're clothed in the righteousness of Christ Jesus. Now, if that's true, I don't have to go out and prove that to somebody, do I? In other words, there isn't anything for me to brag about, so I may as well just quit talking about it.

That's something that God has done for me. That is something that God had to do for me in order to make me qualified to go into the presence of a holy, righteous God. There's nothing for me to brag about.

There's nothing for me to talk about except to say, thank you, Lord, for what you accomplished. And thank you that I have been found just like the apostle Paul with no righteousness of my own, but only as a

possessor of a righteousness that came from God and a righteousness that came as a result of putting my faith in God. No confidence in the flesh.

Paul said, I want you to know Christ, not just to know about him, but I want you to know him. And guys, you can't get to know Christ when you're preoccupied with you. You see, I cannot press on when I'm holding on.

When I'm holding on to my own righteousness, I cannot press on to the high calling of Christ Jesus. It's an impossibility. When I'm hanging on to the law to be sure that my obedience to the law is what is pleasing to God.

And that's why I'm hanging on to it so that I'll be pleasing to God. And we hear that all the time. I'm obedient.

And I like the way we emphasize the E, the obedient. I'd like to know just how obedient you are. I'd like to follow you around all day long.

You follow me around, just see how obedient we are. And yet we brag on that. We're people of obedience.

Oh, really? How are you doing the love department? Are you always patient? You're always kind. Do you ever keep records of your wife's or your husband's wrongs? Do you ever bring up something that he did 15 years ago? No, just 25. Guys, we are so deceived into thinking how wonderful we are.

That is all flesh from the beginning to the end. That is all flesh. That is not saying that I have found myself, found myself and I wouldn't trade it for anything in the world.

I have found myself not having a righteousness on my own that comes through the law, but I found myself with a righteousness that came from God, not me. And so get our eyes off of how good we are and how well we're doing and recognizing what God says is the only thing that counts. He didn't say one of the main things that counts.

He said, the only thing that counts is what faith that expresses itself through what love period. You say, how do we live this life that God gave to us? You live it the same way you got it by faith. As you receive Christ Jesus, the Lord, so walking in him.

How did you receive him? By faith. How do you walk in him? By faith. Faith in who? Me and how I'm doing or faith in him and how he's doing.

But you see, that is hard for us because they say, Bob, are you saying that you're a branch and you're not supposed to do anything except hang on to that bind? Yeah, that's what I'm saying. Well, that just doesn't make sense. How am I going to give praise to the branch? Well, you're not.

Well, what motivation then do I have? You don't have any, except the fact that you're in Christ. Let's say it's so hard for us because we want to be what headed on the back. We want to draw attention to who to us instead of to him.

And so he's saying to us, don't put your confidence in that flesh. I want you to know Christ and I want you to know the power of his resurrection. Now, guys, why does he say the power of his resurrection? Because that's where power comes from is recognizing that I was dead and now I'm alive.

And it says in the scriptures that I pray that you may have power together with all the saints to do something. Do I grasp something? What's he want you to grasp? How long and high and wide and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge? How come so that you might be filled to the measure with all of the fullness of God? I want you to know the power of this resurrection. I want you to see that there's more to salvation than just the cross.

Thank God for the cross. But that is what prepared us for this salvation. This is what prepared us for power to live the Christian life because the power comes from the powerful one.

I am raised from the dead because the life of Christ raised me from the dead. And how did he do that was becoming and living in me. That's powerful, isn't it? And so he says, I don't want you to know the power of his resurrection.

I want you to know the power of the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death and somehow to attain the resurrection from the dead. He's saying that you and I have been raised spiritually from the dead and there's going to come a point in time when you and I will be raised from the dead physically. You say, well, when is this somehow to attain the resurrection from the dead? Well, it could be a point in time in the future when they say the Bible declares that at least we interpret it that way, that there's going to be a massive physical resurrection from the dead.

Some people think that's what happens at the rapture is that the bodies of all believers are raised from the dead. I look at some of those things and say, I'm not saying one way or the other, but I'm saying there's certainly is a very logical explanation that that may not be true. That is far as you and I are concerned.

One thing we know, and we really kind of know a span of years that it's going to occur and that's our death. I don't think there's too many people out here that think I'm going to live to be 150. And I'd say to you, what in the world would you want to for all your friends are going to be dead.

Not even 120, maybe a hundred, but very few people. So you and I have a pretty good idea that at the best, the best of longevity, we only have so many years that we've got left. And at that a hundred year list, I got about 25 years left, but I don't think I'm going to last that long.

I hope not. Like I said, all my friends will be gone, but we do have a timeline, don't we? A pretty good indicator of how long it's going to be. Well, what's going to happen when I die? My body, this physical body of mine is going to go into the grave.

Is it not? And when it goes into the grave and it is going to go into the grave, or if I die in a shipwreck, it's going to go into the ocean, going to be eaten by whales or sharks or fish. If it goes to the ground, it's going to be worm food. If I'm in a plane crash and it burns up, it's gone.

And this body came from the dust and it says it's going to return to the dust. And we're told in the scripture that flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God. Now that tells me something about this body of mine that is made up of flesh and blood.

It ain't going to heaven, not the body. The body is a temporal house. It's temporary.

And so it's going into the grave. The real you is the invisible you. The real you is who in there when you look at a corpse.

I'll never forget of going the first time of seeing my dad in a coffin. Hadn't been many days before then I was talking to him. In the coffin, it wouldn't have made a difference how much I was talking to him.

He wasn't going to talk back. If I tickled him, he wasn't going to laugh. He was gone.

And the first thing that came into my mind when I saw my dad in a captured casket was dad isn't there. Body's there, but dad isn't there. He's gone.

Now the issue is where did he go? And the scripture tells us that if we're born again, that we go immediately into the presence of God. Absent from the body, present immediately with the Lord. That's what the scripture tells us.

Absent from the body, present with the Lord. Now Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you. And we all envision these mansions.

Great big mansion to live in. You know, gold appliances, all kinds of stuff. And I don't think that that is the case at all.

I think where he's gone to prepare a place for us is our body. I think it's a glorified body that we're going to live in. And I personally believe that we get that at the very moment that we're absent from the body and present with the Lord.

I really do. I don't believe that we have a body, a house to live in here. And the minute we die, we're homeless.

So I think we get a glorified body at that time. Now that can be debated. And if you have a different thought than that, that's okay.

I've thought that way for a lot years as well. I'm not dogmatic on it. I'm just saying, I lean more toward that than I do the other.

A lot of times people will talk about, well, what about the rapture? And of course the big question at the rapture was that when the Lord comes and we believers are going to go into the presence of the Lord, what about those people who died before the rapture? Where are they going to go? How are they going to get there? And we're told that they are preceding the people who are left at the rapture. Well, is the rapture that these bodies that we just got through talking about are never going to inherit the kingdom of God, that these bodies all float up into heaven if we're never going to inherit the kingdom of God? Or does God do some kind of a magical deal in killing this thing off on the way up and getting you a new one on the way up? Because you said otherwise it'd be here. Or could it be that at the rapture that the Christians go into the presence of God, their bodies are left here, and the lost people have to bury us by the millions? And it could not make sense that the Antichrist could say, see there, I told you God's judgment was going to come upon these troublemakers.

Look at them. There's all their bodies strewn all over the place. God's judgment came upon them.

Now you follow me. Does that make sense it could happen? Yeah, could happen. Do I know that that's going to happen that way? No.

But it could. So I'm not going to get dogmatic either way on it. But I am saying there's two things that are there.

One thing I do know, my flesh and blood isn't going to inherit the kingdom of God. That means to me that it ought to stay here. And if that's the case, that eliminates his body floating into the air at the rapture.

Now it may be bad interpretation and that could be, but I'm just saying don't close your mind to something because it could be that way. But in either case, does anybody really care? No, I don't care. It doesn't make an ounce of difference to me.

I'm not going to bury you anyway. I'm not going to be here to bury anybody when that occurs, whether I go one way or the other, I'm going to be in the presence of the Lord. But at my age, my chance of being in the presence of the Lord by natural death is a lot more easy to understand and waiting on the rapture to occur.

I'm not saying it couldn't occur, but I'm saying that the older you get to realize that probably the next event, major event in my life is going to be being absent from the body and present with the Lord, not at the rapture, but at death. And there's where I want to go meet the Lord. So he says to there that I want you to attain this resurrection of the dead.

Paul said, not that I've already obtained it or have already been made perfect. Now, again, the scripture says that we have been made complete in Christ. But I think what Paul is saying here is the fact that yes, you are complete in Christ.

As a matter of fact, if you go over to verse 20, in the same chapter three, he says, our citizenship is, it doesn't say will be, but it says our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a savior from there. The Lord Jesus Christ, who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that there'll be like his glorious body.

So we know that's going to occur and we're going to get a new body. Our lowly bodies are going to be transformed in such a way that we're like his glorious body. So we know that's going to occur.

So Paul's talking about his completeness, but he says in essence that I haven't been made perfect. All of these things have not happened yet. So the completeness he's talking about is not my completeness in Christ, but in my experience, this has not occurred yet, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me and brothers, I don't consider myself yet to have taken hold of it.

But one thing I do very important for us to remember, forget what's behind and strain forward to what's ahead. Press onto the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. Guys, forget the past.

I'm amazed at how prone we are to dig up the past, especially if there's something wrong. If somebody did something wrong in the past, how easy it is to keep little things, just bringing it up as if it happened to you, you wanted to remember it. When Paul tells me to forget my past, I'd like to forget it.

I mean, I don't know about you, but I don't know too many people that have a past that was so wonderful that they would just like for everybody to see it. Everything that I ever thought or said, I just love to see on that screen that I hear about it. Guys, it is not pleasant.

If you have had an unpleasant experience in the past, or you've done things in the past that just dumb, stupid things that you've done, it isn't pleasant to bring them up. It isn't pleasant to think about them. We kind of think, well, yeah, the more you think about them, the more you want to do them again, very opposite.

That isn't the grace of God teaching you to say no to unrighteousness. It's using the law of God. And so he's saying, we need to learn to put our past behind us.

We can't change it, can we? There isn't a thing in the world that I can do to change my past. I wish I could sometimes. There are some things that I would definitely have changed, but I can't.

It's gone. It's over. It's like trying to take back words that you've said to somebody, go give it a try.

It's just not going to work. And so he says, the only thing that I want you to do is to forget the past, forgetting what's behind you. It's over.

It's done. But you see, because as we talked a little bit last week, because we're made in such a way that our emotions are going to predictably respond to whatever we're thinking. The only time I can feel something is right now, but I can motivate this now feeling by thinking about what I did in the past.

So when I'm thinking about the mistakes that I made in the past, my emotions don't know whether that's past or present or future. They're just responding predictably to whatever I'm thinking. So I can make myself totally miserable today by being preoccupied with my past.

Can't you? So he says, forget it. And it says love doesn't keep bringing it up. So if God is saying for you to forget your past, he's telling your mate to forget your past and vice versa and quit bringing it up and let people live in peace.

So Paul is saying, forget what is behind, straining toward what's ahead. I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. And all of us who are mature should take a view of these things.

And if on some point, some of you think differently, that too, God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Let's not live up to imagination, but live up to what we have now attained in Christ Jesus.

Well, guys, I hope this has been helpful to you. Let's, let's pray together. Father, we're extremely familiar with the attitudes of the flesh.

We've exercised them, massaged them, given into them, justified them. And Paul is saying to forget them, put them behind. Don't put any confidence in them.

But put your confidence in the one who came to save you from the turmoil of life, the Lord Jesus. I pray that as we continue to contemplate these things, that we'll come to realize that apart from you, that we can do nothing, that we are nothing. And there's not one thing that we can accomplish on your behalf that you did not accomplish for us, came to die for us, to take away from the eyes of God forever, not to sit and contemplate them in maudlin introspection, to take our sins away from the eyes of God forever.

And as Christ has forgiven you, so forgive one another. You came to be raised from the dead so that that life that raised you from the dead can raise us from our state of spiritual death. Praise be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

He has set us free and it's in his wonderful name that we pray and thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Amen.

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