

(Colossians) the Body and the Head

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen's sermon emphasizes the significance of Christ as the head of the church and the church's role as His body in fulfilling God's mission.

Duration: 1:00:37

Scripture: John 4:34, Colossians 1:18

Topics: "Church Growth", "Personal Calling"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reads and discusses John 4:34-38, where Jesus talks about doing the will of God and the harvest being ready. The speaker relates this passage to their own experience of being called to preach on revival and how God has given them a vision for ministry. They mention that their church has a reputation for being focused on missions and planting churches. The speaker also shares a personal testimony of how God challenged them to grow up and take their calling seriously.

Transcript

I'd like you to turn with me to Colossians chapter 1, and I want to read to you verses 15 through 20. He, Jesus Christ, is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers.

All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence.

For it pleased the Father that in him all the fullness should dwell. And by him to reconcile all things to himself, by him whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of his cross. Now in these verses there's so much that's stated here concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, and we're going to spend a few weeks really analyzing what it is that's being said here.

But today I want to just for a moment look with you at the first portion of verse 18, and then I want to leave off teaching and I want to share some things with you, some personal things. And so in verse 18, and he is the head of the body, the church. The church, the word church is an interesting word.

It's an English word of course, but it comes from an Anglo-Saxon word that came from a corruption of a Greek word. And the word church actually implies something that belongs to the Lord. That's the meaning of the word.

The word that's translated church in the Bible, the Greek word, has a different meaning than that. The Greek word means those who have been called out. And so the church is a company of people who have been called out.

We've been called out of sin. We've been called out of this world system. We have been called out of our natural state in Adam, and we've been called into Christ.

There is the church collectively, which is made up of every born again believer on the face of the earth. It's spread throughout the entire world. There are members of the church in heaven today, those that have gone before us.

And then there are members in the more local sense, like we have right here this moment today. We have a local expression of the church. We are gathering together, and we are the church, not the building.

You know, so often people make those kinds of references. Oh, there's that church over on the corner of Fourth and Vine, or something like that. Well, there's a building on the corner of Fourth and Vine, but the building isn't the church.

The building is the place where the church congregates. See, the church are the people. The church, the people of God, are spoken of in a variety of ways in the Scripture.

There are many different analogies that are used in the Scripture to help us to understand just what the church is. One of the most common is that of the body, and so right here we have a reference to the body. The church is the body of Christ, and it functions just like the human body functions.

It functions as a result of its connection to the head. You know, it's really a fascinating picture. It's an incredible picture when you think of the body of Christ, you think of the head, and you think of the human body, and you think of how it is that your human body actually functions.

Our brains are responsible for every function of the human body. There's nothing that your body does that does not stem from your brain. It all comes from there.

Now, there are certain things that, you know, we're conscious of that. Okay, you know, I'm finished. I'm going to step off of this platform, and I will think for just a moment as I approach the edge of the platform.

I will think about what I'm doing. Okay, I'm going to step down. So my brain is, you know, coordinating this whole thing, telling me how to do it so I don't fall over.

But then there are other things that I do that my brain is actually telling me to do, but I'm not really that conscious of it, like doing what I'm doing right now. I'm talking to you right now, but I'm not thinking, I'm not consciously thinking, okay, talk, say these words, formulate them this way, lift your hand right now, and turn it a certain way. You know, I'm not doing any of that.

I mean, that's all just, my brain is causing all this to happen, but it's, I am not conscious of it. But then there's a step further. There are other things that are happening in my body that my brain is responsible that I don't even think about, understand, or anything at all.

Those are the involuntary functions of the body. The beating of your heart, the circulating of your blood, the intake of oxygen, and all of those kinds of things. But yet, every one of those things is being controlled by your brain.

Fascinating, amazing thing. The church is the body of Christ, and all of its activity is to be inspired by, under the control of, the head, the church. Your brain causes your body to act through your central nervous system.

You have this nervous system that runs through your body, and you have these nerves that go out to all points, and the central nervous system is the conduit, if you will, through which the brain brings to the body the instruction for what it's supposed to do. The Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the church. The Holy Spirit is the central nervous system, if you will, and we, each of us, are members of the body of Christ, and the Lord is the one who directs the activity of the body.

This church, Calvary Chapel of Vista, this is not my church. I am not the head of this church. If I was the head of this church, none of you would be here today.

I can tell you that for sure. This is the Lord's church. Now, there's times when we, you know, we're not thinking through all of these things technically, and there are things when I, when I will even, at times when I will even say, you know, at my church, you know, and it's mine in a sense, and I'm part of it, but it's, it's not mine in the sense that I control it.

It's the Lord's church. It's his church, and all of the activity that's going on here presently, and all the things that have been taking place over the years, most of these things, hopefully all of them, are things that have been happening as a result of the head communicating through the nervous system, the Holy Spirit, to the body to produce the kind of activity that we're seeing. This church, this fellowship, this local expression of the body of Christ had a beginning, and has matured, and grown, and become something quite beautiful.

It's wonderful what the Lord has done here. You know, it's a special time for me right now, because we're celebrating, I don't know if that's the right word, because we're not having a party or anything, but, you know, we're acknowledging, remembering that it was 13 years ago this month that the Lord brought Cheryl and I down to this area, and we came at that time to a small fellowship that had fallen upon hard times, and, and there were just, you know, a small number of people compared to what we see here today in the fellowship at that time. And we had been up in Costa Mesa, I was there as an assistant pastor, and involved in various ministries there, and yet we felt like God was calling us to take a step.

We felt like the Lord was wanting to move us on to something else, and we didn't really know what that was. I just had a sense of restlessness within me, and as I was kind of looking to go in the direction that I thought maybe I should go, the Lord had other plans. Now, I was thinking that the Lord wanted me to go to Hawaii.

Truly, I was really thinking that. And we had gone to Hawaii on a little bit of a vacation, and there was a church in Hawaii that just happened to need a pastor, and they were open to me being the pastor. I was 25 years old at the time, I think.

And they were open to me being the pastor, and I was certainly open to being the pastor. Oh man, church in Kauai, of all places. And so we thought about it, and prayed about it, and started to commit to it, but you

know, we felt like that's not the Lord.

So we came home from that trip, and sensing that there was some change coming, I was suddenly stricken with a mystery illness that I've held on to for the past 13 years, actually. But I was stricken with an illness that put me flat on my back, a time of trial, a time of temptation, a time of affliction, a time of everything I believed being challenged. And yet, as that time began to pass to a certain degree, there was the sense that God wanted to do something, something different than what he had been doing.

And so I received a call to come to this fellowship here, and to fill in for the man who was pastoring a little church called Calvary Chapel of Tri-Cities. He was going on vacation and wanted someone to fill in for him. He had an entirely different plan that I was unaware of at that time.

But anyway, we came, and we spent three weeks here in May, and we shared with the little flock that had been there at the time, and some of you were there. Some of you were part of that, a few of you. And we had a great three weeks.

It was wonderful. Enjoyed it thoroughly, but went back home and never really gave another thought to it, at least for 15, 16 hours or so, until I got a call the next morning from the pastor who informed me that he had just resigned and suggested that I take over the church. Now, I was on staff at Calvary Costa Mesa, so the first thing I did was I went to my boss, who happened to be my father-in-law, and I told him what had happened.

And his advice at that moment was to go ahead and, you know, sell the building, because there was a \$400,000 debt that was owed to my father-in-law and his church. And because the church had just kind of seen one problem after another, he said, well, let's just sell the building. The handful of people that are there, they can find their way into other churches in the community, and we'll just be done with this problematic situation that's been there.

So that was his counsel, and yet I had this feeling inside that the Lord wanted me to come and to take the church. And so I said to him, I said, you know, I understand what you're saying, and if I had \$400,000 lent out, I'd probably be saying the same thing, but I feel like the Lord wants me to go do it. I feel like the Lord wants us to go and take the church.

So he agreed. He said, okay, go down and check it out and see what happens. So he began to send me down here, and we came down, started coming down three days a week and staying up at Costa Mesa for another three days a week.

And it was the first Sunday in June of 1983 that we became officially the pastor and his wife--talking about we--of the church there. And, you know, it was great. We came down, and what I knew is what I learned at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa, and so I just basically took what I learned to teach people the Bible, to feed them the Word of God.

I took that, and I just began to do that. And back in those days, if you would have asked me, well, what is your vision? My vision was simply this--to faithfully feed the people that God brings and to reach out evangelistically to anybody that God would bring across our path. That was the extent of my vision at the time, and looking back, I think that that was right.

I think that was the vision that I needed to have at that moment. So, you know, as time went on, the Lord began to bless. The church began to grow a little bit.

We moved down here in September of 83. Gaylord had been helping out in the ministry, and right away, you know, he came on. I asked him to be the assistant, and we were working together, and the church was growing a little bit, and there were some young people we sensed a need for some youth ministry.

We called upon a young man that we both knew up in Costa Mesa, Rob Salvato, and Rob came down and became our youth pastor. And so here we were, you know, it was just us three, and we were in the position of leadership in the church, and we were just working with this, you know, this handful of people that God had brought to us, and we were just faithfully ministering and teaching the Word, and the church began to grow. And after a year, maybe we had 150 people or so, and after a couple years, we might have had 250, 300 people or so.

And one day, as I was standing on the porch of the church there, a lady who had joined the fellowship with her family came up to me, and she said, Brian, the Lord has given me a vision. And she said, the Lord has shown me that this church is going to expand and touch the world for Jesus Christ. And I got to be honest with you, when she told me that, I thought, this lady is way too Pentecostal for me.

You know, I mean, she was always having visions and, you know, hearing the Lord, and I just did not take her seriously. She was a sweet lady. There was nothing, you know, strange about her.

She was a very precious lady. We were good friends, actually. But, you know, it was just such a far-fetched idea, just such an absurd idea, really.

You know, what? This little adobe building over here and, you know, this handful of people that are here right now, we're going to impact the world for Christ. Well, you know, I just didn't, I didn't think a whole lot about it other than I thought that was strange. But time went on, and we grew, and more people came, and we came to the point that we outgrew the facility that we were in.

That really shocked me because I never even knew that a church would grow. I didn't really think in those terms. It was back before the big, you know, megachurch thing hit.

And I was quite shocked and surprised, pleasantly, that, you know, we came to a place where we had more people than we knew what to do with. So we began to look and pray and seek the Lord. And so finally, you know, the Lord led us over to this building here, and we remodeled it, gutted it, and, you know, built it as it is.

And we've been here since 1987, and the Lord's done much in those years. And we were going along, you know, just fine, 1987, 1988. And I was in the process of recovering from the illness.

I was still battling with it quite a bit, but between like 86, 87, and 88, I began to feel considerably better. Not back to normal, but maybe 70, 75 percent improvement. You know, we were just moving along, and God was blessing.

Church was growing, new families were coming in, things were happening in the community, and, you know, just a lot of neat things were going on. But, you know, quite honestly, my heart was hard. I was kind of in a routine, you know.

I was thinking that because God was blessing the church, everything was great with me too. But it wasn't really. My priorities were not right, and I was just kind of in a routine, you know, living for self, serving the Lord as it was convenient, doing my job, being faithful to, you know, the job, so to speak, the nine-to-five

deal.

But, you know, my heart had just grown hardened. And it was in 1989 that the Lord, for the second time, leveled me, laid me out, and began to speak to me. And He began to tell me that He had plans for my life.

He had a work that He wanted me to accomplish, but I needed to grow up. I was still playing around. I was still wanting to, you know, it was the full Peter Pan syndrome, you know.

I was just wanting to be a boy forever. And so, in my spare time, you know, the moment that I didn't have to do something, I would grab my surfboard, and I'd run down to the beach, and I would be out in the water just, you know, trying to perpetuate this teen lifestyle that I'd been living. And in all of this, God began to deal with at that time, began to speak to me, say, Brian, I've got much more for you.

I want to use you, I want to work in and through you, but you're going to have to change. And so, through His help, and boy, through His chastening, the Lord began to do a new work in me. And many of you know about that.

You don't know all the details, but you saw me go from being a boy to being a man. God was gracious. He was good.

And since that time, the Lord has really given a new vision for the ministry, and He's done things far above and beyond anything that I could have ever asked or thought. Now, we are a fellowship that has, we have too much vision. We have more vision than we know what to do with.

God has just given us vision. And it's an interesting thing to me, although we never set out to have any kind of a reputation or become, you know, a church that's known for this, that, or the other thing, God has given us a reputation. And the reputation that God has given this fellowship is that we are a fellowship with vision for sending out missionaries and for planting churches.

That's the vision that God has given to this fellowship. That's the distinction that we have among the Calvary Chapel churches, which number up to close to 700. When you talk about missions, generally speaking, Vista is the point of reference.

You want to know about missions, go to Vista. That's kind of the mentality within the Calvary movement. This is something that God has done.

This is the work of the head, the head of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ. He has done this in our fellowship here. And now, I believe God is calling us to take a new venture of faith, a new step, a bigger step in missions.

When I returned from England, I shared with the body here, because there were many rumors about that we were going to immediately pack our bags and head back to England, I shared with the body here that we were not planning to move to England, but we were planning to be open to the will of God. And whatever God might will, we plan to do that. And since that time, and since I made that announcement, through much prayer and an agony of soul, and really searching to try to discover what it is that God might have for us, Cheryl and I have come to the conviction, we've come to the belief that God wants us to move to England and to actually pastor the church that we began there a couple of months ago.

This is something that's so difficult. I've preached a lot of times in this pulpit. There have been times when I've practically had to be propped up because of my infirmity.

But this is the hardest day of my life. But it's something that we feel that we need to share with you. And I've shared it, obviously, with first and second service.

We need to share with you what we believe God is calling us to do because we need your support. We need your prayers. We need your encouragement.

And we want you to know firsthand what God is doing. We don't want you to hear it from some other source. We don't want to be secretive about it and then suddenly spring on everybody that, oh, by the way, we think God is doing this.

But we've come to that conviction. And with that conviction, we're taking steps to see whether or not this is the will of God. We believe it is.

But there are, of course, obstacles in our way. And so we're looking at these obstacles as really a fleece that we're putting out before the Lord. And we're simply saying, Lord, if you want us to go, then you open these doors.

We're going to take the steps. And that's what I feel strong about today that I want you to know. As I said before, we're not planning to go.

Well, things have changed and we're taking steps now to see if this is truly the will of God by knocking on the doors that are before us. And so this week, we're going to be applying for visas. And it's not an easy thing to get a visa into the UK, especially as a missionary, because Britain still considers itself to be a Christian nation.

And no Christian nation feels that they need missionaries. Because what do we need to be evangelized for? So we've got a strike against us right away. I've pulled no punches on the visas.

What are you coming here to do? Preach the gospel, teach the Bible, plant churches. Those are all the things that get you turned down for a visa. It's not an easy thing.

It's not a pleasant prospect in one sense, because this is our life. You are our life. This is our heart and soul.

This is where we've been for 13 years. And we were young. I was 26 and Cheryl was 22 when we came here.

And this is where we've grown up as a family. Three of our children have been raised here from birth. And it's not something that we're taking lightly.

It's not something that we're just going about haphazardly. We're just sensing from the Lord that this is what he wants us to do. So we're taking those steps.

And we want you to be aware of that so you can be praying with us and you can be seeking the Lord with us that God might perhaps send us out. We've sent many missionaries out. I never thought I myself would be one, but that's what we're feeling at this time.

Now, I want to give you kind of an overview of what has happened in regard to England and why I feel this way. And I want to share with you something that I sat down and wrote out last night, and it's just a brief history of the things that have transpired up until just before we went on the long trip. And so I'll pick up there, but let me begin here.

It was just over a year ago that I took my first ministry trip to England. That trip resulted in the conviction that we needed to start a Calvary Chapel in London. But all of this goes back much further than that.

In the summer of 1986, Cheryl and Kristen went along with her parents to England for a couple of weeks. Charlo and I stayed at home. When Cheryl came home, she told me about an experience she had while in London.

While standing at speaker's corner, she suddenly had the strong impression that I would come to London someday and preach the gospel. When she told me about this, I listened with amusement, but didn't think much about it other than that would be neat. On throughout the years, Cheryl would on occasion say, I think we will serve the Lord in England someday.

I occasionally had similar thoughts, but didn't pay a whole lot of attention to them, having plenty of other things to think about. Throughout those years, and especially after the Lord sent me to Europe on a few church planning ventures, I really desired to go to England, but I felt strongly that the Lord was not wanting me to go at that time or ever, for all I knew. But then about two and a half years ago, just as certainly as I had felt God telling me I couldn't go, I began to feel that he was now calling me to go and spy out the land, so to speak.

This all began to stir in me as a result of seeing a semi-truck several days in a row with English coat of arms and England written in letters two feet high across the side and the back of the truck. It was actually the truck that got me praying about going to England. After having prayed for some time, I felt we should take the next step and contact the Calvary Chapel affiliates in the UK to see if they would be interested in having us come over with a team to do some ministry.

After some time passed without any response from them, I began to wonder about whether or not we should just embark out on our own and see what the Lord would do. It was right about that time that we were finally contacted by a man named John Vickrey. John is a pastor, one of the Calvary Chapel affiliates in Britain.

It appears that John had been in prayer and had been pleading with God to send someone over to help with the work of spreading the gospel and planning churches in the UK. During prayer, my name came into his mind. As he finished praying, he went to his mailbox and there was my letter asking if we could be of any assistance.

John had been trying to reach us for some time without success and finally got through just as I was returning from a trip to Moscow. Needless to say, I was quite excited about all of this and began making plans to go to England. As the time drew near to finalize our plans for that first trip, I was experiencing a great wrestling in my soul.

I had felt that the Lord had spoken to me and had said that I was to go and he would do a similar work to what he had done in other places that he had sent us. But now my mind was plagued by doubt. It was a Sunday morning and whereas I usually spend my preparation time praying for the services, I was so

restless on this particular Sunday morning I could do nothing except cry out to God that he might show me whether he was leading me or I had fabricated the whole thing in my mind.

It was in that state that I went to church. After the first service, a dear friend who faithfully prays for me during first service approached me and said, can I talk to you for a moment? I said yes, and he proceeded to ask me a series of questions that didn't seem to make a whole lot of sense. Finally he said, I think the Lord wants me to tell you that the things you're planning to do are from him and you need to do them.

At that moment I was freed from the doubt and knew I was to go to England. That was our first trip in April of 1995, and as I've already said, it was on that trip that the Lord impressed it upon my heart to plan a church in London. But there was another very significant thing that happened on that trip.

I was scheduled to speak at a certain church on a Sunday morning and arrived late Saturday evening into the village where the church was. When we finally got to our room, it was late, I was tired, and yet I needed to study a little for the next morning's message. Before I fell asleep, I decided that I would preach on revival.

After all, that's what England needs. At 5 a.m. I woke up and was unable to get back to sleep, so I got up and began to pray over my message. I suddenly began to feel that this was not the word the Lord had for the day.

The Lord then showed me that if I preached on revival, I would be adding to the problem instead of bringing the solution. You see, the problem with many of the churches in England is that they're looking for something that will bring immediate results. Thus, over 5,000 churches have embraced the so-called Toronto Blessing.

It was there and then that the Lord showed me that the only way the church could be rebuilt in Britain is for men to begin to teach the power of the Holy Spirit, just as we have done in America in the Calvary movement. So instead of speaking on revival, I spoke on the reasons God gave us the Bible. England needs men empowered by the Holy Spirit to teach and to preach the word.

As we began to make plans after that initial trip to go back to England and to do this church plant, there were two things that were very different from anything that I'd ever done that stood out to me. The first one was that I was to go for an extended period of time, six weeks, which I wrestled with for months and months. I just thought, no, I can't.

It's too long. I can't leave the church for that long of time. It's not healthy.

It's not right. I wrestled with it, but I felt convinced that that's what God wanted me to do. The other thing, I'd never felt this about any other church that we'd ever planted overseas.

I felt that the person who pastored this church had to be someone like myself, someone who has experience, someone who has been proven to be able to teach and preach and pastor. And this was a very unusual thing because up until this point, we had not had that kind of a qualification for any of our overseas outreaches. Of course, we looked for godly men.

We looked for men who were able to teach. We looked for men that we thought could do the work, but we never had that criteria of someone who's actually been proven to be able to do it. This was so strong on my heart, I couldn't shake it.

And with this on my heart, this drove me to prayer. And I had times of wrestling with the Lord in prayer over the man that he would send. And there was one particular evening where I was groaning literally in prayer.

And I'm not saying that to make you think I'm spiritual. I'm just telling you the facts. The spirit of God was so stirring me inside.

As I was praying, I was groaning. I was crying out, Lord, raise up a man. You see, I understand this, that to get a work started is fairly simple.

To maintain it and bring it to maturity is, that's the task right there. So I was confident we could go get something started, but Lord, you have to carry it to maturity. You have to bring it to fruition.

And in order to do that, there has to be a man. God, raise up a man. And I somehow strangely had the conviction that this fellowship that we would plant in London would be much more than anything we've ever done, that it would be much more significant.

So as I'm praying this, as I'm pleading with the Lord on this particular evening, as I'm in prayer, I suddenly have this very eerie feeling that I'm praying for myself. And I did not like that feeling. And I immediately stopped praying, and I said, no, I won't pray that.

I'm not praying for, I'm not going to London. I'm not going to England. Lord, Lord, understand me, Lord, we're praying for a man to go.

I'm not a candidate. But yet I had that experience shortly thereafter, we went to England. And during the time that we were there, beside the many, many, you know, different things that happened, I had this continual sense that God was saying to me, you're supposed to do this work.

I came up with a long list of people that could do it. But every person on my list, I found some reason why they couldn't do it. And I always came back to myself, but I didn't want to come back to myself.

I didn't want to come back to myself, but I would find myself constantly, I would wake up five, six o'clock in the morning, I would lie in bed and just roll for an hour and a half, just wrestling, just praying, Lord, you got to send the man. I think of a person, all the things, and then no, back to myself. No, no, we must.

All this going on in my mind, just constantly the whole time I was there. So when I came back from England, this wrestling was still going on. And some of you know this, some of you probably sensed it.

You know, as we came back, people said, are you glad to be home? And it was hard to answer that question. It was really hard because we love it here. We love you.

We love this body. But yet I felt like I left my heart in London. I felt like I left a baby.

We had a child and we left the child there in London. And so after two weeks of going through this, you know, intensity in my heart, once I returned the following week, I was to go back to England to do a pastor's conference that we had planned a year ago. And so as I was leaving, I said, Lord, on this trip, I want you to either confirm to me that you are truly calling me to go to England, or I want you to confirm to me that you're not so I can shake this, concentrate on the ministry that you've given me here at Vista that I'm sure you've called me to do and help this work in England to become established.

That was my prayer in going over. As we got to England, as we went through the pastor's conference, there were many, many things that happened from the very teaching that was going on from the pulpit to prophetic words that were given and so forth. But by the time I arrived back home, I knew in my heart that it's me that God is calling.

And I said to my wife, I said, we're going to England. I believe the Lord is calling us. And so we're going to apply for visas.

We're going to knock on the door and we're going to see what the Lord will do. If we're wrong, praise the Lord. You see, because you have to understand, I don't know what you think about London, but if it's anything except sin, think again, because it's not a vacation spot.

It is a big, wicked city. And I hate the place. I truly do.

But I love it too. I hate it for the sin, but I love it for the potential for salvation for millions and millions of people. And as I walked through the streets one day by myself, Sheryl had gone home.

I was walking along and I was looking at the whole place and I was just saying to myself how much I hate this. And I had this thought, but there's millions of souls here that I love the Lord speaking to my heart. And so it's with these kinds of convictions, these kinds of things that are stirring.

And as I said, I could go on and spend all day telling you the different miraculous kinds of things that have happened in regard to all this. It's with these kinds of convictions that we step out, we apply for visas, and we go to see what the Lord will do. And so we're wanting to go out as missionaries, if this is what God is calling us to do, to take a sabbatical, if you will, to take a leave of absence, to go for a year, two years, maybe even longer.

We don't know. Perhaps we will come back. Perhaps we won't.

We don't know, but we just feel that we need to go, that God is calling us to go. And I wanted you to know that straight from me so that there would not be any question, there wouldn't be the opportunity for rumors to rise. And also I wanted you to know that so that you might join us in prayer, that you would pray for us, that you would seek the Lord on our behalf and that you would ask God to give us wisdom and show us his will.

And if he is indeed leading us out to go before us, that's what I'm hoping and praying for. That is the response that I hope you can give us. Pray for us.

Please don't respond in the flesh. Please don't become angry. You can be hurt.

You can be emotional. You can cry. We've done that, and I know we're going to cry a lot more.

And that's fine. We don't expect anyone to not become emotional about this. We're very emotional.

I had a hard time last service. I'm doing better this one. But that's what we would ask from you, to pray for us.

Now you might be saying, well, you know, that sounds okay, Brian, but what about here? If you're talking about leaving, what does that mean for Calvary Chapel of Vista? Well, this of course is a great concern of mine. And let me tell you something else that I've never told anyone publicly. I've told a few people this,

but I'm going to tell you this now, that I've been praying for two and a half years for the person who would take my place at this church.

Two and a half years ago, my father-in-law approached me, and he told me that he believed I was the one to take over his ministry when he retired. And I thought that he was possibly right about that. And so as he was a man who was seeking God and seeking the Lord's will for the ministry that he spent 30 something years in, and he had to have the right man to take his place, I felt the same way.

If I'm ever to leave this church, there must be a man that can take this church. And not just any man could do it, because this church is unique. There's something special here.

This is different than a lot of the churches that I've been in. And so there were so many factors in my mind. And the three things in my mind were these three things.

Lord, who could come in here and who could work with the existing leadership? Who could blend in with the staff? Who could become a person that the board and all the people that have been involved for years, who is the person that they could rally around and follow? It has to be a person like that. It has to be someone, in other words, that the core leadership of this church knows and respects and will follow. That was the first thing on my list.

Secondly, it has to be a man of vision, because God has made us a visionary church. We're a church with vision. And we're moving ahead.

And I know that God has great things in store for this fellowship. I believe that God wants to build this church numerically. I believe that He wants to build it literally in a new facility at some point in time.

I believe that God wants to continue to raise up people through the college and the school and the different ministries. And this will be a church that will continue to send people out and do just what we've been doing. So in other words, Lord, it has to be a man with vision, somebody who just comes in and has their own agenda and is content to just say, oh, I've got a church of this number of people, and I'm happy with that.

So that was a very important issue for me. And then thirdly, and please don't misunderstand me on this, but Lord, it has to be somebody like me. You know, every church in some way or another is fashioned by the personality of the pastor.

There's all kinds of factors that go into it. There's the Spirit of God, of course. There's the Word of God, and that's the primary thing.

But the personality of the pastor does have much to do with the congregation. And God, I believe, suited you to me and me to you. And I'm here because, you know, partially because of who I am in the natural sense of who God made me, my temperament and all those things.

So Lord, it has to be somebody like me. Who is that person, Lord? And two and a half years ago, as I began to pray that, immediately a person came to my mind. And I've been praying for that person for two and a half years, having no idea whatsoever that this day would ever come, the day that I'm standing here sharing this with you, but thinking that someday the other might come.

In that two and a half year period, there have been other people that have been candidates, other people that have come to mind, and I've thought about them, and I've prayed about them, and I've sought the Lord and said, Lord, could maybe this person be it? But every time I come back to this individual, this is the individual. I shared this with my staff Tuesday. There was 100 percent agreement on the staff.

I shared this with the board Wednesday night. And when I told them what I felt God was calling me to do, they were devastated, as perhaps some of you are. But when I told them who I felt God would have to replace me, many of them responded and said, well, that eased the blow.

The person I've already mentioned is a person who grew up in the ministry here, was on our staff for eight years, but for the past four years has been in Salem, Oregon, planning a church and building a church, laying a foundation for the Calvary Chapel up there. That's Rob Salvato. Rob has been under my discipleship since he was 16 years old, and he's probably about 32, 33 years old right now.

And when I looked at those three things, a man who knows the leadership, can work with the leadership, can be respected by the leadership, and could understand the idiosyncrasies of Calvary Vista, and be able to allow them to remain the way they are and work with them, he was the only one that I thought qualified. When I thought of a man of vision, he's a man of vision. He's a man of faith.

He's a man who stepped out four years ago and said, I feel God's calling me to Oregon, and he went out not knowing really what he was doing, where he was going, went up and raised up a church. And then finally, out of all the people I know, he's the most like me. People often accuse him of being like me.

No, you're just like Brian. You think like him. You talk like him.

Even look like him, kind of, some people say. And so as all of these factors were there, and in the prayer, the Lord just spoke to me clearly, this is the person. This is the man.

And I've taken him to Oregon to prepare him. Rob has called me two or three times in the last four years and said, Brian, can I just come back to Vista? Can I just come back and just be an assistant there? I just love the ministry. I love you.

And I'd say, no, can't. Sorry. God's got you out there, Rob.

He's working in you. He's training you. He's preparing you.

Rob would say, I don't know if I'm called to be a senior pastor. I said, you're absolutely called to be a senior pastor. I know it.

I bear witness to it fully and completely. And you need to just stay out in the wilderness because God's grooming you for something. At that time when we would counsel, I didn't know what it was that God was grooming him for.

But I believe that if God is sending us to London, God is also sending Rob to Vista. And that just as certainly as God has a blessing for London through us, God has a blessing for this church through Rob, and he will be the person to take it to the ultimate place that God would have it to go. Some of you know, Rob, some of you are already comforted by it.

Others of you don't know him at all, but you know, the Corinthians wanted Paul to come to them on an occasion and Paul was unable to come. And he wrote to them and he said, I'm sending Timothy to you.

He has my heart.

And in essence, what Paul said is, I know you want me. I can't come. I'm sending Timothy, but in getting Timothy, you got me.

And that's what I can say about Rob Salvato. In sending Rob, you've got me, you've got my heart, my vision. He's got, you know, of course, he's his own man.

He's got his own vision of things and he'll do things differently than I do them in some ways. But that's necessary. That's right.

That's important. That's the way it needs to be. And so these are the things that are on my heart.

And these are the things that I felt compelled today to share with you. And I ask you to pray with us, to seek the Lord with us, to ask God to show us his will. And if I've somehow missed it, if I'm not hearing the Lord clearly, if I'm, you know, somehow just, you know, off a little bit and the Lord wants to clarify that, then that's fine.

As I said earlier, Southern California is a much nicer place to live, but that's not the issue here. It's not where do you want to live? It's what does the Lord have for us? So please pray for us about that. And I want to share one final thing with you.

We, of course, have shared this with, we began with our family first because that's where we felt the priority was. And we shared with Cheryl's parents last week. And please keep them in prayer as well.

And then we went out to lunch with my mother who came to visit us last week. And we took her out to lunch to share with her and, you know, it was difficult. And we took her out to lunch and Cheryl sat there weeping, knowing that we were just about to ruin her life over lunch.

And so we were sitting there and suddenly, you know, I just knew that I had to break the news to her. And I said, Mom, I got something to tell you. And I said, I believe, I've come to believe that the Lord wants us to go to England and we're going to apply for visas to see whether or not, you know, this could be His will.

And she sat there for a minute and suddenly she broke out into a smile of all things. She didn't break into tears, she broke into a smile and she opened a little diary kind of a thing that she had. And there my name was written.

And there she had written a scripture underneath it, John 4, 34. And she said, the Lord already told me, and this is the verse that He's given me to give to you. And so I read the verse and then I read it in its context.

And let me read it to you. John 4, 34 through 38. Jesus said to them, my food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.

Do you not say there are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest. And he who reaps receives wages and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true, one sows and another reaps.

I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored. Others have labored and you have entered in to their labors. You know, as I read that, I just had a confirmation in my heart because that is exactly what I believe God has called us to do.

For many, many years, people have labored that haven't seen the fruit. Many that labored in prayer for revival for years have gone since to be with the Lord. But there have been many in England still to this day laboring, laboring in the work, laboring in prayer.

I believe that the harvest time has come. And I have not labored, but I believe that God has called me to be a reaper. In the work that he's going to do there, and that's our conviction, and that's what we leave you with today.

And we just trust that the Lord will minister to you and bless you and encourage you and help you to pray for us and and help you to see his hand in all of this and help you to understand that he is indeed the head of the body, the church, and this is his church. I'm not one inkling worried about this church because it's his church. He built it.

My wife can tell you that I didn't build it. It's not because of me that this church is what it is. To some degree, it's in spite of me.

But it's the Lord's church, and it will remain his church, and it will go on and experience the fullness of his blessing. I'm sure of that. I mentioned this before I left for the first trip.

I mentioned to you that I was listening to a tape by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a man who had a passion for revival and never lived to see it. But on that particular tape, as maybe you'll remember, he stated that there could be someone listening to him at that moment through whom God would bring revival. And as I heard that, I had this strange feeling inside that maybe God was speaking to me.

I wasn't saying he was for sure, but it was one of those moments where, you know, there are times when God speaks to you, and then there are times when he speaks to you, and you just take note. Your ears perk up. I think I was probably daydreaming, and suddenly I tuned in to what he was saying.

And I remember sharing that on one Sunday morning before we went, and perhaps God would bring revival. So we went to England, and we did what we did. And I remember coming home.

I remember coming home. A thought came to me, and it was a mocking thought. I'm sure it was the devil.

And the thought was about revival. And it was, oh, you really brought revival to England, didn't you? Look what you did. You left a church of 20 people.

Oh, wow. Twenty people in a city of 10 million. What an accomplishment.

You know, all these kinds of things were darting through my mind. And, you know, my spirit sunk. I just sat there and just thought, you know, well, I guess, you know, my thoughts on it were a little bigger than God's.

But, you know, as that thought passed, another thought came to my mind, which I believe now is the Lord. And it was simply this, you're not finished yet. And I took courage with that.

I said, okay, Lord, we're not finished yet. I've said to my wife in the past few days, I've said it to some friends, I've either lost my mind, or God is showing me things that are just so glorious that I could never humanly conceive of them. All the things I'm talking about, from getting a visa, to being supported, to living there, to not to mention the spiritual mountain that has to be moved, every one of them poses a great problem.

Humanly, it's all impossible. But remember, there's nothing that's hard for the Lord. So if the Lord's in it, He'll do it.

And that's what we're resting in. That's what we're trusting in. And that's what we pray that you will be able to join us in seeking the Lord for.

God bless you. We love you. Many of you we know very well personally, and we've already, you know, shed some tears, and I know there are more to come.

Others we haven't gotten to know that well. But as we look at this, we feel that there's at least a six-month time period before we would actually leave. If we get our visas and through that we just get the confirmation, then we will bring Rob down, and he will be here for two or three months with me, and we'll make a transition that way.

But again, we're just knocking on doors. We're doing what we feel we have to do. And as I said, if we're wrong, praise the Lord.

We're happy right where we're at. But if we're sensing that God is truly leading, then praise the Lord too, because we want to be in the center of his will, and we want you to be in the center of his will. And if God was leading us to go and we stayed, then all of us would be out of God's will, and that wouldn't be good.

So please pray for us, and we'll pray for you. Father, we thank you for your love, for your grace. We thank you, Lord, for your call, the call to heaven, the call to sonship, and the call to service, Lord.

And what a privilege it is, Lord, to be your children and to be your servants and to be able to lead people into a knowledge of the Savior and to be able to build people up in the faith. And Father, I pray for this body, and I pray for every person that's been in these services today, and those that haven't been able to make it. I pray, Lord, that you would bless and comfort and strengthen and encourage each one of them.

I pray, Lord, that this might be a time in their lives when they would go deeper with you, that this, Lord, whole thing that I've been sharing about would be an occasion for revival right here in our midst, Lord, because we need it also. We need to be revived, Lord. We need to be shaken out of our comfort zone at times.

We need to reevaluate what we're doing and why we're Christians and what we're called to do here on earth. And so, Lord, I pray that all of this news would only serve to help that to happen, Lord. And Father, we pray together for London.

We pray for England and Scotland and Wales. And Lord, we pray you'd pour out your spirit. We pray, Lord, that you'd save many, that you'd bring many people into the kingdom, that you would bring a new day.

Oh, God, we think of that power of Islam that's trampling that nation under its foot. And Lord, we pray that you would raise up a standard, and Lord, that you'd turn the enemy back, and Lord, that you would rescue many from the snare of the devil. Lord, we pray you'd bless those men that have been laboring.

We pray you'd pour your spirit upon them. We pray you'd encourage them. We pray, Lord, that you would use them mightily.

God, we just pray for your work to be wrought in our lives as a body. We pray for your work to be, Lord, wrought in our lives individually. And we thank you, Lord.

We thank you that we're part of your family, and even if we're separated by a few miles, we're still one in Christ. We rejoice in that part. We praise you, and we thank you in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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