

Judging Angels

by Carter Conlon

The sermon explores the concept of the blessing of God and how it is fulfilled through the body of Christ, with a focus on the significance of Jacob's vision and the role of angels in God's plan.

Duration: 51:47

Scripture: Genesis 28:10

Topics: "Angels"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by encouraging the congregation to let go of old debts and grievances and experience the freedom that comes from forgiveness. He then moves on to the main message of the sermon, titled 'Judging Angels,' based on Genesis 28:10-19. The preacher emphasizes the importance of seeking truth and asks for God's grace to deliver the message effectively. He highlights the power of faith and the ability to speak things into existence, using Mark 11 as a reference. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the purpose of believers on earth, which is to bring the message of Christ's sacrifice and forgiveness to all people.

Transcript

This morning, if you'll go to Genesis 28 with me please, in the Old Testament, this is message number 11 in the series called The Corinthian Problem that I've been speaking on. It's the second last message. Next Sunday, Lord willing, I'll be speaking the last message.

It's entitled The Broken Body of Christ. And this morning's message is called Judging Angels. Now for those who have not been following this series, it's about the Apostle Paul coming to Corinth, making various trips, writing letters to a church that was probably the most problematic in the New Testament.

A church that lived in a very materially affluent society, very central society. And the people of that particular church didn't fully make the break from the society around them. And because of that, it was influencing them and it was allowing into the door of the church various influences that Paul knew was going to take away the testimony of Christ.

He was a passionate man for this church, these people that had been, as he said, espoused as a pure bride to Christ. Let's pray together, let's believe God that this morning, as I speak this message, that the work that's been done in the previous ten could begin to be brought home in many of our hearts. This message is entitled Judging Angels.

Father, I thank you, Lord, for the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Thank you for the strength and the power that you're always willing to give to those who are walking in humble obedience to you. I thank you, Lord, that you've always taken me far beyond any natural ability.

God, you've given me your thoughts, you've animated this physical, frail frame. I thank you today, Lord, that you will come with weight and great glory. God, you will so seal this word deep into our hearts.

Lord, this is an hour, O God, where we should not be running from truth, but running towards that which is truth. I pray God for the grace to deliver this, and I ask you, Lord, for the grace for those that are gathered to be able to hear it. I thank you, Lord, with all my heart.

Lord, animate me, Holy Spirit. Give me the strength that I need, and I thank you for it. In Jesus' mighty name.

Genesis chapter 28, let's start at verse 10. And we'll read from there right down to verse 19. And Jacob went out from Beersheba and went toward Haran.

And he lighted upon a certain place and tarried there all night, because the sun was set. And he took the stones of that place and put them for his pillows and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and, behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven.

And, behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father and the God of Isaac. The land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed.

And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south. And in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land.

For I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of. And Jacob awaked out of his sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

And Jacob rose up early in the morning and took the stone that he had put for his pillows and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel, but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. Now, this is a message for those who are truly seeking the life and blessing of God.

And if you are today, if you are among those that say, Lord, I want the true blessing. I want the blessing that's spoken about in these passages of scripture. The blessing is not something to be consumed upon myself.

Remember the word of the Lord to Jacob is that I'll make you and I'll make your descendants a blessing in all of the earth. Now, we know that's fulfilled in Jesus Christ. And subsequently, from the day of Christ and his redemption, it is continuously now being fulfilled through the body of Christ, which we call his church on the earth.

And so the purpose of your life and the purpose of my life is that this blessing of God that was promised to Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob fulfilled in Christ is now yours. And it's mine. My life is to be a blessing to you.

Your life is to be a blessing to somebody else. It's an extension of this grace of God that he was willing to pour out to a certain people called his church, that people throughout the whole world might be blessed. Many, many nations and many people.

If you're seeking this blessing of God as Jacob was, he was, he was, he was looking for the blessing. He wanted the blessing. Of course, you know, through history and the Bible that he tried to get it in a way that God says you can't have it that way.

He tried to get it by deception. He tried to press his way into the blessing in a sense, but without a changed nature. We studied this last week.

He was a man. His very name means I want to be first. And by virtue of that name, he could not really fully know the blessing of God.

He could have a measure of it, but God says, well, I'm willing to give it to you, but first I've got to take you on a journey. And this journey will not necessarily lead you into an easy place. Amazing.

Here's Jacob kind of presses in ahead of his brother. His father pronounces the blessing of the firstborn son as it is, which is the blessing of Christ onto his life. And the very next season in his life, we see him heading out and his pillows are stones.

It's a hard place as it is. Yet the Bible tells us in verse 18 that Jacob worshiped in this place because he was given the knowledge of God that it's in this place that the blessing of God is found. It says he took his pillows and he set them up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.

Now, in this place, Jacob saw angels. Verse 12 says he dreamed and behold, a ladder was set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven and the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And the Lord stood above it and said, I'm the God of the Lord, God of Abraham, your father and Isaac and the land where you lie.

I'll give it to you into your seed. I'll make your seed is the dust of the earth. And through your seed, all the families of the earth are going to be blessed.

Now, Jacob had this vision and in this vision that God gave him in this difficult place, he literally saw something of how God operates. He saw God standing at the top of what he described to be a ladder, some kind of a causeway as it is between earth and heaven. And he saw these angels coming down to the earth and going back up.

And in other words, it's a type of these are the this is the strength of God being released from heaven to the earth. God coming and touching men like you and me and giving us strength so that we can become what God has destined us to be. And Jacob is looking at this and he sees these angels and he hears these incredible promises coming with it.

I'll give you places that are not yours right now. I will multiply your seed is the dust of the earth. You will spread abroad in every direction and all the families of the earth are going to be blessed.

Now, this is these are the promises of God given to a guy who's laying there with his head on a stone. And that's where you are. I know there's people this morning you're like that.

If you only knew the tough place that I'm in right now. Well, if you only knew that it's in the tough places that you will find this revelation of God. It's not in the easy places.

It's not where the pillows are soft and the way is easy. There's something about this journey that you and I are wise to take into our hearts. Perhaps for the very first time he saw at least a glimpse of where the blessing of God in his life might be leading him.

Look at verse 17 says he was afraid and he said, how dreadful is this place? This is none other but the house of God. This is the gate of heaven. Now, the word dreadful in the Hebrew text, it means it's a very positive feeling of awe and reverence towards God.

But it also means an anticipation of personal harm or that something may go wrong. Have you ever been there? Have you ever been in a church where there's an altar call given or the gospel is preached? And these very words, give your life fully to Jesus Christ and God will use you and great glory will be brought through your life and much good will come to people around you. And in your heart, you say, this is a dreadful place.

On one hand, I know that the awesomeness of God is calling me to something that is far beyond myself. But on the other hand, look at all the things that could go wrong. What if I take a wrong turn? What if I end up standing before some crowd and all of a sudden, halfway through what I thought was a sermon, I go blank and dry.

A lot of things can go wrong in this place. And verse 19 says he called the name of the place Bethel. In other words, this is the house of God.

It's where our all is given for the cause of Christ. Remember David had this revelation when he went to the top of Mount Moriah and a young man with his children gave all he had to stop the plague of that time that was on the nation of Israel. And David had this revelation that this is the house of God.

He also called it a dreadful place. This place where ordinary people give everything they have, not for themselves, but for the sake of others. And in this place, God dwells and God comes down.

How many people in our generation want to talk about anointing? They want the fullness of God. And now in America, running from pillar to post, and every new foolish fad that rises up, they're running to it. Taking buses, chartering jets.

Wanting this touch of God, but not wanting where the touch of God is to lead us. The touch of God ultimately leads us to other people. Leads us to the poor, leads us to the despairing, the imprisoned, those who are captivated in their mind.

Those that have no helper. Those that have nobody to feed them, nobody to call father, nobody to call husband. Those that are all alone and locked up and shut in, and all of society has pushed them to the sides as it is.

That's where the anointing of God will lead. And so many people say, look, I want this life and I want this blessing, but don't want where it's going to take them. And that's the danger that was in Corinth that we're

learning about in our study the last several weeks.

He called this place the house of God at first, but it was called Luz, L-U-Z, at the beginning. And really what that means is a place of almonds. It was the place where God was going to dwell, wanted to dwell.

Jacob said this is an awesome place. It's a dreadful place because he knew it requires something that he himself didn't even fully understand what he was going to have to give to it in the long run. But in the beginning it was called a place of almonds.

You remember when Moses and Aaron were traveling through the wilderness and there was a contest as to who really God was using. Who's really anointed? And the Lord said, I want every tribe to take a man from your house, a chief man. I want you to put a shepherd's staff in that person's hand and take them and lay them all before the sanctuary.

And he said, I'll show you who I've chosen. And the next morning by the supernatural power of God, Aaron's staff. Now these are all every staff is just a dead piece of wood.

That's all it is. It's a shepherd's staff. But Aaron's staff had budded.

It had blossoms on it and it had almonds on it. And folks, that's where we start. The journey to the fullness of this blessing starts with just a little bit of life that you and others around you know about.

That could not be happening apart from the supernatural power of Christ's life within you. That's where it starts. But don't let it stop there.

There's so many people here today. You could say, look, I'm not a blessing in the earth. But if you're truly a Christian, if you truly have the life of God within you, there is there has to have been some kind of a budding come into your dry life.

There's just a little flower. There's just a little bit of fruit. You might not be able to feed thousands, but somebody could come and find something in your life.

And those that are closest to you have to see a change. There's a difference between those that are growing in the grace and knowledge of God and are being led to a place where they become a blessing to their world and those who are not. Those who use religion to their own advantage are a dry stick when they start and they're a dry stick when they finish.

But those who let Christ begin to flow through them. The staff is a type of the cross of Jesus Christ. There is a budding comes into your life.

Folks, I didn't start out preaching to audiences like this. I started out sitting on the edge of my bed in 1978, the very first morning after receiving Christ with just a glimmer of hope that something had changed in my heart. I didn't feel the same.

There was a difference. And over time, people around you begin to say, hey, how come you're not talking the way you used to talk? Why are you not doing the things you used to do? It starts with just a little bit of life in this dry tree. And then if we if we will let our lives be led by the Holy Ghost, then we find ourselves in some hard places.

I've come to know a measure as it is of the anointing of God. But this anointing has not come through the easy places. It's come through walking through hard places.

I've walked through places I don't understand. I've walked through places I'd rather not be. I've dealt with people I'd rather not deal with in everything in the natural has got to be put away.

And I have to know in my heart that I'm being led to something that is going to be a blessing to the heart of God first and secondarily to men and women created in his image throughout the world. We have so many today that are making claims just like Jacob to have an open heaven and visions of God. Oh, we have a plethora now of what I would have to call false prophets are saying.

Oh, yes, I was in my room last night. Heaven open. I had this vision.

Everybody now is having visions of God. But you see, the visions are from a wrong perspective. They see this connection to heaven is something where the angels are coming down just to provide them with everything they want for themselves.

They see as they feel an open heaven and maybe a measure. There is some truth to it, but they failed to understand it. They see God.

They see the angels as it is. They see this provision. But their whole view is skewed.

It's that God has opened heaven to send this provision for me, that I might be more powerful, that I might be stronger, that I might be first as it is, that I might have a reputation, that I might have resources, that I might be known. John 15:1. Jesus places himself in the very place that Jacob was.

It's not arguable that Christ is the fulfillment or let me call him the defining expression of the mysteries or the unanswered questions of scripture, such as in Genesis chapter 28. We look at this where Jacob is laying on a stone and he sees this open heaven. He sees God standing at the top of heaven.

He sees angels ascending, descending on this ladder, bringing down provision to those that are walking with God. And Jesus says to Nathanael, he said, Hereafter you shall see the heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man. Ultimately, it's all about Christ.

It's all leading to Christ. The whole story is leading to Christ. Everything that happened to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is leading to Jesus Christ.

It's all about God having a son, for ordaining him before the foundation of the world to come down from heaven to supply the need that we had for redemption. To have in the earth a body where he could indwell, a people where he could actually live and move and live and walk with this people. Showing the world his willingness to forgive the ignorance of man and the folly of men's sin.

Walking through the earth, doing good to men, even though the majority of society may oppose their own salvation. Jesus said, You'll see this, Nathanael, because you have a good heart. You're going to now understand.

That's what he meant. He didn't mean, Nathanael, you're going to now have the same vision of Jacob. No, he said, You're going to see what the vision Jacob had is all about.

You're going to see that all of God's provision has come down and is being made available now to you. It's being made available to those who will walk with God and truly seek the blessing of God. Now, what did the scriptures and Jesus himself tell us about what angels could do? What could they do? Now, we look at this ladder and we say this is the type of God dwelling with men on the earth.

We begin to think, OK, if we're having an open vision, if we're seeing this provision of God in the earth, what can angels do? Matthew chapter 4 and verse 6 tells us that even Satan himself knew what angels could do. He knew the scriptures as distorted as his mind may be. In Matthew chapter 4 and verse 6, he said, Now, even Satan knew that they could prevent Jesus from suffering any personal pain.

Now, angels could do that. God could do that. God could have a church in the world.

And he does, of course, with you and I. And he could stop all suffering from coming our way. We could be prevented from going through any personal pain. He could create a very clear division between the saved and the lost.

As the lost are losing their jobs, the saved don't lose their jobs. Now, you and I know that's not the case. We've got to walk through the same world as everyone else.

He could have sent the angels down. And Satan knew that they had the power to stop the Son of God from suffering any personal pain. Matthew 24 and verse 31, if you'll turn there with me.

They could come at the command of God. Verse 31 says, God could command his angels. They could gather the whole church.

They could do it right now as I'm speaking. They could keep us all safe from all the difficult days which are to come. Such as the days that Jesus spoke about in this chapter.

Matthew chapter 24. Difficult days Jesus spoke about. Now, we know that God could gather us.

We could leave this world right now. We could go home to be with heaven. He could command the angels.

And they would come down with authority and power to take us all to a place of safety. In Matthew chapter 25 and verse 31. Jesus said, When the Son of Man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then he shall sit upon the throne of his glory.

They could be agents of God in establishing Christ in his church. In a place of reigning and authority right now. They could do this.

Angels could come down. They could push aside every argument. They could settle the issue.

They could establish you and I in a place of reigning and ruling and authority. As is promised to those who belong to Christ in the scripture. Remember Paul said to Corinth, You're reigning just a little too soon.

You've opened your door to theology. You're now sitting on the throne. You're all kings and you're all reigning.

And Paul says, I wish to God you were because if you were we'd reign with you. We're suffering. We're rejected.

We're going through hardship and difficulties. But you're all kings now. We're weak and you're strong.

We're foolish and you're wise. Paul says, You've kind of skipped a great measure of the journey. And you're now sitting and you're all kings and you're all reigning.

Matthew 26 again in verses 53 and 54. He said, Do you not think I can now pray to my father and he'll presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? Angels could immediately and at God's command judge and destroy every power that sets itself against truth. Now these are the things that angels could do.

You see I'm speaking in the context of Jacob and Jacob's vision. And how people see the power of God. Many, many people today they see the power of God as keeping us from all suffering and personal discomfort and pain.

Keeping us from difficult days that have to come to everybody who walks on planet earth. Bringing us to a place of ruling and reigning as it is before the time. And judging and destroying everything around us that we disagree with.

Everything around us and bringing us now immediately to this place of ruling and reigning forever. So angels could do this. And Jesus made it very, very clear they could do this.

What Jacob saw could actually lead to this. And will one day, but why then? Why did they not come this way during the ministry of Christ on the earth? When Jesus walked on the earth, when did they come? If they didn't come for those reasons. Matthew chapter 4 and verse 11 tells us that angels came to strengthen Jesus when Satan fought against him.

Attempting to undermine his confidence in God his father. And turn him from the course of giving his life for a purpose greater than the natural eye can see. Nor do our hearts fully understand.

Jesus is at the place in Matthew chapter 4 where he's been tempted of the devil. And the whole temptation has been to turn him away. Turn him away from the will of God.

Doubt the faithfulness of God. Don't suffer hardship. There's an easier way to do this.

And Jesus refused. He said no, I'm going to obey the will of my father. Knowing that the will of his father was going to send him to a cross.

And folks, where are we in this walk with God? How do we see the provision of God and the power of God? What has happened to the thinking of this generation? That if we can look back in church history and see all the subsequent generations that have come before us. And all the difficulty that so many had to go through. But all of a sudden, we've arrived at a place where suffering is no longer part of the theology of the present day church.

We're not a people called to suffer. Everybody's supposed to be rich and happy. Everybody's supposed to be trouble free until the day that Christ comes and takes us home.

But angels don't come to this. There's no power in this. In other words, the provision of God doesn't come for this kind of theological thinking.

The provision of God, symbolized by angels, came to Jesus when Satan fought against him. But he would not be turned from the will of his father. You know, Satan will fight against you.

He'll fight against what you're hearing right now. He'll fight against the life that is willing to be sacrificed for the cause of others. And for that which is in the heart of God.

Oh, Satan doesn't care if you're a selfish Christian. If you're a selfish Christian, you're no threat to his kingdom whatsoever. You have the same spirit as the world around you.

You will go in God's name. You will have the same pursuits. You'll have no influence.

You'll have no effect. You will not bring the savor of the real Christ anywhere you go. And the devil knows it.

He won't oppose you. As a matter of fact, he'll get behind you and encourage you as you go down Madison Avenue in your Christianity. But I'm telling you, the heart that says, No, I'm not content to see men and women go to hell.

I'm not content to live a life of ease while this generation is dying. The heart that is preparing its own journey, charting its own course, preparing its own comfortable way. Living in measure by what the scriptural knowledge it has, but also living in great measure by what's coming out of the desire of his own heart or her heart for their own comfort.

The moment we get beyond these things, then you will find Satan opposing you with everything he's got. But then you will find angels coming down and strengthening you. You'll find the word of God starting to come alive.

You'll find the strength of the Holy Ghost starting to become your best friend in this whole world. You'll find resources that don't come to natural men. They only come to those that are willing to walk in the supernatural.

Giftings of the spirit begin to manifest through your life. You'll find compassion that natural men don't have. You'll find wisdom that's not given to a natural mind.

You'll find delight in things that don't delight the hearts of carnal men. You'll be heading out and doing the will of God. You'll have to walk through sometimes this gauntlet of even Christian opposition.

Those who have stopped along the way who don't want to walk with God. Who don't want to go to the place of even laying one's life down for the cause of Christ and for the good of others. They don't want to do this.

You'll find opposition. But angels will come and strengthen you. Praise be to God.

You will have the strength of God. Luke 22 tells us that Jesus went into the garden. And in the garden an agony came upon him.

That you and I probably will never be able to fully understand the depth of that agony until we get to heaven. But he was about to be momentarily separated from his father. He'd never been separated from all of eternity past.

He'd never been separated. God is one. Now God the father was going to turn his back on him.

And put the full weight of your sin and my sin upon him. And Jesus was about to do that for you and for me. Praise be to God.

I'm so thankful this morning he didn't turn around and change his mind. I'm so thankful that he didn't call for the legions of angels and said. Well I gave it my best shot.

But I'm just simply not willing to do this. Father send legions of angels. And I believe they would have come.

Because Jesus said they would. But he didn't call for them. He went all the way to Calvary.

Oh God thank you. I pray your heart be stirred. Because if he hadn't gone to Calvary.

We wouldn't be clapping our hands. We would have no songs to sing. We'd have no joy this morning.

There'd be no freedom. There'd be no testimony. There'd be no tomorrow.

There'd be no heaven. It would all be just a religious illusion. There'd be no power in it whatsoever.

If he had turned around and called for the help that could have been given him. God help us in this generation to be the church again. God help us to look the cross square in the eye.

And say God if that's what you have for my life. Then that's where I'm going. If that's my future.

I trust you for the strength. I trust you for the power. I trust you God.

When you set your eye to living for God. When you set your eye to going to the four corners of the earth if necessary. Then you begin to see heaven open.

Then you begin to see the angels of God. Then the power of God begins to be revealed. Praise be to God.

Praise be to God. Then the word of God comes alive. Then your songs begin to have something behind them.

But just natural rhythm. Something comes into your spirit. Praise be to God.

Jesus knelt and the scripture says he sweated. Drops of sweat that were just as deep as if blood was pouring from his veins on the ground. And from his forehead.

And the scripture says there appeared an angel to him from heaven strengthening him. Praise be to God. God says you walk with me.

I'll come to you. I'll speak to you. I'll speak into your ear.

I remember one time. I was a young pastor in Canada. I was new to the ministry.

And the ministry is very exacting. Those who are not in the ministry in the pastoral capacity. You have to just take my word for this.

It can be very hard. And I was at the stage of my life where I in measure was trying to please God. I didn't understand that I fully pleased him and was fully accepted because of Calvary.

I knew it theologically but experientially I was still a little short in it. I ran a lot of roads. Trying to do something to please God.

And in the course of it I lost a lot of physical strength at about the age of 37. And I remember one Sunday I was in the church and even though everything is alive seemingly around me. The worship is explosive.

There's just so much good that is going on. But I got so tired. And I had walked this place of deep fatigue for months.

I was sitting in the front row. And for the first time from the day I said I would follow Christ. I said God I can't do this anymore.

I can't preach today. I can't do it. I could barely raise my hands.

I was so tired I felt like just falling down sleeping on the floor in the front of the church. And at that moment somebody came up to my ear. An audible voice.

Not an impression. Actually I jumped. It startled me.

Somebody walked up right beside my ear and said I've come to help you. Now as God lives I turned. There's nobody there.

But I heard a voice. I didn't imagine it. Somebody spoke into my ear.

I've come to help you. And from that moment onward I felt a strength coming into my body. I got up into the pulpit and preached like I hadn't in a long, long, long, long time.

Folks, this strength of God comes in hard places. This strength of God comes when you and I make choices. To say Lord I'm going to walk with you.

I'm going to go all the way with you. And I realize that sometimes I'm going to have a stone for a pillow. But I'll take all of these stones in these hard places.

And I'm doing the same thing that Jacob did even this morning. I'm remembering these hard places. Jacob took them all and he says he made an altar out of them really and poured oil on it in worship.

And said God, I don't understand it, but you've kept me in every one of these hard places. And in these places there's been a promise that's being fulfilled that you alone can do through my life. And I'm beginning to understand that it's in these difficult times, in these places where it is not humanly possible to go forward, that I begin to know the supernatural strength of God.

He begins to make my thoughts deeper than my own are. He begins to take me farther than I can naturally go. And I've watched this over the years.

Every time I come into a hard place, I know something of heaven is very shortly on the other side. I know He's doing something deeper. I know He's producing in my heart a trust such as I've not had before.

I know that I'm going to have this vision of heaven in my circumstance. And folks, if you're willing to go forward, if you're just always looking for a way out, you're going to be looking just around you at what the world can provide. But if you'll stop and look up and say, God, I'm not looking to run from this.

I'm looking for you to make my life a blessing of the earth. And Lord, you've got to speak to me now. You've got to give me this vision.

I've got to see heaven open. I've got to understand what it is that you are willing to do in my life and through my life. And simple faith just simply begin to follow you.

The point is simply this. Heaven opened and angels came to a man who was given to be poured out in obedience to the will of God and for the good of others. In contrast to this, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6. Let me just read it to you for time's sake.

He says, Dare any of you having a matter against another go to law before the unjust and not before the saints? Do you not know the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Verse 3 says, No, you're not. We shall judge angels. How much more than things that pretend to this life.

Paul's saying, look at the contrast between who Christ is and where you still are. Hebrews chapter 12 verses 3 and 4 tell us that Christ endured opposition to his good intentions towards men to the point of shedding his blood for them. And Paul is saying, yet how many, how many, how many hold to petty grievances and other wrongs over the present and the past.

And you look to unsaved men. It's the court of public opinion to agree with you. How many people are going nowhere in the church of Jesus Christ because they will not forgive.

Culture will not forgive culture. Race will not forgive race. Language will not forgive language.

Country will not forgive country. Everyone holding to grievances of the past and holding to these grievances are wondering why heaven seems closed. And the only thing they can see this ladder of Jacob is for personal provision.

I want to suggest to you that something is wrong. I want to suggest to you that right at the very core of it is an unforgiving spirit. This unwillingness to be the blessing of God to all men.

This unwillingness to be sacrificed as Christ was so that those who spit in his face and those who caused him harm and those who said they loved him and then betrayed him. All of these people might come to the saving knowledge of God through the shedding of his blood. I want to suggest to you that this is the pathway to the power of God.

When you and I are willing to let go all grievances. When we are willing to be as Christ is. This is what Paul was saying to the Corinthians.

You've got the same spirit that's in the world still operating in you. And because of it there are divisions. Because of it there are grievances.

Because of it brother is taking brother to court even among the unsaved. Oh folks, how many people out there are causing division and using the title reverend? How many people in our society are saying no we go to church just to hear one more message about how somebody has wronged us in the past? For God's sake it's time to lay these things down. It's time that we become the body of Jesus Christ.

How am I going to be a blessing in the earth if I have a grievance in my heart against somebody? I've got to lay it down. How do I represent Christ if there's somebody I'm unwilling to forgive? It's as simple as this.

How do I say Christ is in me? How do I say the life of Christ is flowing through me? How do I say the provision of God is mine if in my heart I'm not willing to forgive all who have ever wronged me in the name of God? Praise be to God.

This is what Paul was after. Paul said no you've still got the thinking of the world so deep, deep inside of you. He says how unlike Christ this is.

He says in 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 9, Do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? This is what Paul is saying. It's in the thread of that same thought. Paul says do you not know that this power that is given to those who are called to be a blessing in the earth does not come to those who hold these grievances in their heart? I think of all the useless religion that goes on and has gone on for years in the name of God.

All the running and all the shouting that has at the very core of it a deep, deep unforgiveness to man. And yet it portrays itself as that which represents Christ. Do you not know that the strength of God is not found in these places? Do you not know Paul says that one day you will judge angels.

In other words you'll be in a position of authority higher than theirs is. But first you must follow in the footsteps of your master and be given for others. Who in the darkness of their hearts oppose all that represents God and even their own salvation.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 17, Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. The word liberty means generosity. Paul is saying look as we behold Christ this that is in Christ becomes ours.

As we behold him it becomes ours. Think of Jacob as he beholds God. If he's willing to walk with God the strength of God becomes his.

As we behold Christ as his spirit comes to us this generosity of God in Christ towards all men becomes ours. We start having the power as it is to forgive all men. To walk in this forgiveness.

To desire that men be forgiven. This is the very foundation stone of being a witness for Christ. Why did God leave us here? Did God leave us here to sing songs and make noise and run the aisles in our conventions? Or did he leave us here to bring the message to all men that Christ died.

And that none should perish in their sins but all should come to the saving knowledge of what he has done on Calvary. Mark chapter 11 Jesus said have faith in God. Whoever says to this mountain be removed and cast into the sea and shall not doubt in his heart.

He shall have whatsoever he says. And then he says something after that he said. And whatsoever you desire if you ask for it I'll give it to you.

I want you to think about this just for a moment. The mountain is I think in our generation this inability to want to do the will of God. This sense that this is a dreadful place.

This is asking more of me than I'm willing to give. This is a hard place. Jesus said you could speak to this mountain and tell it to move.

And it will get out of the way. Then whatever you ask for see this provision of God that comes down from heaven will be yours. Then he says something that seems almost unrelated in the next verse.

And he said and when you stand praying forgive. And what he's saying is that forgiveness is the very bedrock of this life of the blessing of God. That we are willing as God was to forgive all men who wronged us.

And the heart desire of ministry. The heart desire of who we are in Christ. Is that everyone finds the forgiveness of God.

Praise God. That everyone finds the forgiveness of God. I know some of you are sitting here now saying this is a dreadful place.

Aren't you? Wow I thought we'd come here to be blessed. But it's an awesome thing. I wish I wish I had heard these truths when I was a young Christian.

I wish somebody had taken the time to dig these things out of scripture. You and I learned them in the hard places. It's my heart's desire today.

That you forgive. This is where it begins. That you forgive everybody.

Who has ever wronged you. We're living in a day of great divide. Jesus said in Matthew that there are going to be great divisions.

And people will gravitate back to their own nations. And in the last times there will be wars. Ethnic culture will begin to rise up against ethnic culture.

In contrast to this there will be a church. A people such as today of over 100 nations gathered. Who have truly chosen to forgive one another.

To forgive means to release the debt. You owe me nothing. I owe you everything.

To release the debt. And then subsequently desire that all people should be forgiven. It starts with forgiveness.

It starts with you and I. The Corinthian church were taking each other to court. Now I know there are times the legal system must be used. I'm not suggesting that if there's a domestic violence situation you don't use the law.

Or things like that. But Paul seems to infer that these were just petty grievances that could have been settled in the spirit. And there was this unwillingness to forgive.

Which seems to be characterizing our world today. It's all around us now. And if we don't get this one truth right it will swallow much of the church in our generation.

Churches will start preaching hate instead of reconciliation. And division instead of unity. And we'll see the same spirit and I think there's been a bit of that for years.

We'll see the same spirit in the church that is in the world. As far as I know I've forgiven every person who's ever wronged me. Now I'm not looking for... And it's open heaven in measure.

But that's where it begins. It's where it all starts. I want to challenge you today.

If you want an open heaven you've got to forgive. Even if you weren't personally involved you may have picked up a cultural grievance against another people. You've got to lay it down.

You've got to forgive. We've got to be the church in our generation again. Praise be to God.

Father I pray for this gathering this morning that you give everybody here the courage. Lord to release the debt from everybody that's ever done them wrong. God I thank you for this Lord.

Lord I thank you that you will. I thank you it's a difficult step and it's a hard place. But you promise that when we do these things that you will open heaven to us as your people.

God I thank you for this with all my heart. In Jesus name. As we stand here in the main sanctuary, the balcony and the annex.

If you need to forgive. If you need to be forgiven as well. But if you need to forgive somebody I'm going to ask you to come.

Let's do this right folks. God promises he'll give you an open heaven. Just come.

Things of the past. Things that you need to lay down once and for all. You're going to put it at this altar and say I'm not picking it up again.

I'm going on with God. Just come. Join these that are coming in the annex.

You can stand between the screens. Balcony go to either exit. We'll sing for a moment.

Then we'll come back and pray together. I know that at this altar there are people who have been sexually abused. There are people from other countries who have lived through genocides.

Some of you have had family members killed in the countries that you've come from. Others, you've taken up a cultural grievance. I know I'm on good ground to say these things because we have over 100 nations here.

And it looks to be equally represented at this altar today. Taught maybe from the time you're young about some wrong that was done. And taken the grievance and you find it so hard to let it go.

And even being at this altar is like having your head on a stone like Jacob. And it's such a hard place. It's such a dreadful place.

Such a terrifying place. God, the thought that you could even call me to be a blessing to the very people that have caused such pain. Not only to me but maybe to my family or to people that I've known or my own culture.

But this is where the strength of God is. This is Christ and His church. This is Jesus.

This is the body of Jesus. Came down to a people who rejected Him and were going to hurt Him and He knew it. But because in His heart that bedrock of seeing us forgiven was there.

He endured it. Went through it. And now sits above the angels.

Where we will be. Paul says you will judge angels but first you've got to go through this path. You've got to follow your master.

Praise be to God. Praise be to God. It will feel good to let go.

To finally just let it go. When you forgive somebody you just let the debt go. You say here you don't owe me anything anymore.

I rip up the list of grievances. It's gone. I'm throwing it on the street.

I'm not picking it up again. It's gone. And if God leads me to be a blessing to you then I'm willing to do that for the sake of Christ in me.

If the devil can keep us in unforgiveness then he knows he's neutralized the whole message of the gospel. We can sing and shout and preach and there's no power in it and he knows that. But the moment we're moved with the desire to see others forgiven and to forgive that's where hell begins to shake.

That's where the kingdom of God begins to go forward with power. Hallelujah. It's hard but it's not impossible.

With God all things are possible. All things are possible. Pray with me please.

Lord Jesus. Thank you for forgiving me. Giving me a new heart.

And a new mind. And a new life. Today I make the choice to walk in your footsteps.

And as you forgave me I too forgive others. I release the debt for those who did wrong to me. And hurt my family.

And hurt my people. I release the debt. And I ask you God to make my life a blessing to all people of all nations.

Unreservedly that I would be given for their good. Oh Lord I thank you. For setting me free.

From all the resentment. And all the anger. And now you promise me.

That I'm going to see heaven opened. And I'm going to know the power of God. I believe it.

With all my heart. In Jesus name. Now lift your hands and just let this.

Just rejoice in God. Let's sing that again. You are holy.

Lord of glory. Now sing this song again. And just watch that.

The freedom. That you're all of a sudden beginning to experience. Because you've let this go.

Let these old debts go. Let these old grievances go. Feel the freedom that comes into your spirit this very moment.

And after we sing this song. I want you to act on it. And go to at least a dozen people around you.

That you're not familiar with. Introduce yourself. Don't give a reserved handshake.

Give a whole hearted handshake. Give a greeting to one another. Let this kindness begin in the body of Christ.

God bless you. See you this afternoon and this evening.

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