

# (Deeper Waters) Session 1 - the Purpose of the Cross

by David Ravenhill

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*The purpose of the cross is to restore us to God's original plan and to serve his purpose.*

**Duration:** 1:09:26

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, John 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Hebrews 2:10

**Topics:** "Gods Purpose", "The Cross"

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## Description

In this sermon, James emphasizes the brevity and uncertainty of life, comparing it to a vapor that appears for a short time and then vanishes. He urges listeners to acknowledge the will of God in their plans and not solely focus on their own desires. James highlights the danger of seeking worldly achievements and possessions, emphasizing that true fulfillment comes from living for God's purpose. He concludes by reminding the audience that they are not their own, but have been bought with a price, and encourages them to glorify God with their lives.

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## Transcript

Turn with me, if you will, to the Epistle of John. And I want to speak to you tonight on the purpose of the cross. My wife and I celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary in August.

We met in Bible school, got married, and began our ministry in 1964 in Teen Challenge in New York City with David Wilkerson, and have been going ever since. So I am now in my 41st year of ministry. I say all that to say this, I am convinced after 40 years of ministry that we do not really understand why Jesus Christ died.

That may sound very basic, I am a sort of meat and potatoes type preacher. We're going to do some excavation work tonight, and I'm going to check your foundation. Because if the foundation is not right, ultimately everything is going to fall apart.

Jesus gave the story of two men at the end of Matthew 7 that built houses. One built his house on the rock, the other built his house on the sand. When the storm came, the house built on the sand, of course, fell apart.

And if you go to your Webster's dictionary and look up the word sand, it simply means loose integrated particles of rock, I think is the definition. In other words, we try and build on just little tiny proof texts, if you like, rather than the whole word of God. And as a result, people don't make it.

We hear on a daily basis of men and women that are failing, falling. I am just completing a book now called Surviving the Anointing. Somebody said many years ago in a church where I was attending, made this statement, very few people survive the anointing.

And anyway, I don't want to get off onto that, let me get back on track here. So, I want to look at the cross and I want to lay a foundation, first of all, so this portion of Scripture 1 John, the epistle of John, chapter 2, verses 12, 13, and 14, John is addressing here three levels of spiritual maturity. He says, I write to you children, I write to you young men, I write to you fathers.

We begin the Christian life the way we begin the natural life, we begin as babies. Every single person in this room entered this world as a five, six, seven, eight, nine pound little boy, little girl, whatever the case may be. And the wonderful thing about a baby is it has no past.

And the wonderful thing about a baby in Christ is it has no past. If any man be in Christ, he's a new creature, all things have passed away, all things have become new. So, he says here in verse 12, I'm writing to you little children, because your sins have forgiven you for his name's sake.

That's where it all begins, the Christian life begins with the realization I'm a sinner, only the blood of Christ can cleanse me and forgive me. And then he says, I've written to you children in the latter part of verse 13, because you know the Father. Like every child, he comes into a relationship with his mother and father, at least in a normal natural home.

And likewise spiritually, we come into this relationship whereby we can cry, Daddy, Abba, Father. It isn't too long after we are born again that we realize that we are in a conflict. We have an adversary.

That adversary is out to undermine and destroy our Christian faith, our walk. The enemy's there to sabotage the work of God, to bring unbelief and doubt and fear and so on, trying to lure us back into sin and bondage. And so he says, I write to you young men, because you've overcome the evil one.

Verse 14 again. And so he says, these are young men that know the word of God, because of knowing the word of God, they're strong, because of being strong, they're able to overcome and live a victorious Christian life. And then he says, I write to you fathers.

I write to you fathers, he says, because you know him that is from the beginning. I've always been disappointed in John's sort of revelation here, because here he's sort of building, write to your children, you know the father, your sins have forgiven you. Write to you young men, you're strong, the word of God abides in you, you've overcome the evil one.

And now he speaks about father's sort of full-blown maturity, so to speak. And all he says is, I write to you fathers, because you know him that is from the beginning. In other words, he reverts back seemingly to what he says about the children, you know the father.

Now, if I was writing it, I would put something like this, you know, I write to you fathers, because you know, you've raised the dead, you've been on 340-day fast, you've memorized, you know, the Book of Romans and Galatians and Ephesians or something, and you know, something that seems to have a little bit of

umph to it and a little bit of spiritual maturity to it. And all he says is, again, you know the father. Well, there's a big difference between knowing the father and what he says to the children, or sorry, knowing him that is from the beginning and what he says to the children, you know the father.

Children know a father from a very selfish point of view. At least my three kids did. We have three daughters, grandchildren of course by now as well.

But most of my life, I existed for my kids' sake. It was daddy do this, daddy do that, daddy buy me an ice cream, daddy push me on the swing, daddy buy me a bicycle, you know, daddy read me a story, daddy do this, and on and on, and of course as they got older, the toys got more expensive, daddy I'm off to college, I need a Honda, you know. But you know, my role in life was to minister to their particular need.

And thank God that God condescends to our level of maturity and He's there to bless us and meet every need that we have. But knowing the father and knowing him that is from the beginning is, there's a big difference. Fathers understand the big picture.

Fathers see the beginning and the end of things. The reason a father disciplines his child is because he's not looking just at the immediate, he's looking down the line of ways, 2, 3, 4, 10, 20 years or whatever. He says, if I don't deal with this now, I'm going to reap the consequences.

And so he's always thinking in terms of the big picture, whereas children live in the immediate realm, don't they? You give them a toy, they're happy, brother or sister takes it away, they burst into tears, I mean everything revolves around the present. Anyway, I've said all that to say this, the beginning of things is absolutely essential. John, more than any other writer, talks about the beginning of things.

He begins his gospel, in the beginning was the word and the word was with God. He begins his epistle, what was from the beginning, what we've seen and heard and our hands have handled concerning the word of truth. That's what we declare to you.

He gives us the book of Revelation, he talks about Jesus Christ being the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the ending. And so he uses this word beginning over and over again. Now we will never understand the cross or the purpose of the cross unless we go back to the beginning, because the cross, if you like, is God's medicine for man's sickness.

But we need to know what was God's intention for man before he got sick. In other words, what did he look like when he was well? If you went to the doctor because you had some sort of a pain of some sort and the doctor prescribed some sort of medication and you take that medication and you get through taking it for 10 days and you're still feeling exactly the way you did when you started the medication, you'd go back and say, listen, doc, this is not working. This medication is not working.

I've still got this pain, I've still got these throbbing migraines or whatever and this back pain and so on and so forth. In order to understand the cross, again, we need to go back to the very beginning and see what man looked like when he was whole, when he was healthy, so to speak. So, turn with me to the book of beginnings, the book of Genesis, and for a few minutes here, I want us to try and get into the mind of God, the understanding of God as to why he created man.

And so, let's look at man originally. You see, you cannot restore something to its original condition unless you've seen it in its original condition, isn't that right? Imagine if I demolished this podium, took it all apart, every single last piece of wood and so on, and we stack it up somewhere and I call somebody in, a

carpenter, and I say, listen, would you restore this for me? And I walk out of the room. And I come back a few days later, there could be any number of things that he's made.

I come to end up with a coffee table, a bookcase, a casket, you know, whatever, because unless he's seen it originally, he can't restore it to its original condition. The cross is to restore us to God's original plan, God's original purpose. And so, we need, first of all, to look at what man was like originally in order to know what God is wanting to do in our lives.

So, Genesis 2, verse 15, this is before there was any sin, before man rebelled and went on doing his own thing. This is the way God originally intended you and I to be. Verse 15, the Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it.

Three words that we can sort of extract from that verse, the word submission, the word location, the word vocation. First of all, the word submission, the Lord God took the man. Man was totally compliant, subservient, yielded to God as Lord.

Not simply God, but the Lord God, the master, the creator, the owner. And he was able to take man again without any resistance or any objection on man's part and he was able to place him in a geographical location. In this case, of course, it was the Garden of Eden.

And in that geographical location, he revealed why he placed him there. In other words, this is your vocation. Your vocation is to look after this garden and so on, to serve me, to serve my interest, to do what I want you to do.

In other words, you're under my authority, I'm going to tell you what to do. In the case of Adam, of course, I want you to cultivate and keep the garden. Now, I'm convinced that if God has his way in our life, if we fully understand the cross, God is wanting to reach into your life and my life without any resistance or any objection on our part, place us in a geographical location of his choosing, not our choosing, and in that geographical location, reveal why he's placed us there, obviously to serve him and serve his purpose.

Now let's look at some other scriptures. Again, we're trying to get into the understanding of God here. The book of Colossians, Colossians 1, verse 16, for by him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created by him.

Let's pause there. I trust you don't have a problem with that. The Bible makes it very, very clear, Old Testament, New Testament, book after book after book verse after verse, God is the creator of all things.

I believe he could create something this very moment that could have a billion years of age to it, isn't that right? After all, he created Adam with vintage, he created wine with vintage at Cana of Galilee, and so he could create a rock right now that is a billion years old. And so I don't have a problem with the fact that the earth may be a billion years old, even though it may be only 6,000 years old, all those things have never worried me because I believe the word of God. God is God.

He can do whatever he wants. But it says here, not only were all things created by him, but all things were created for him. In other words, Paul sort of tweaks it a little bit now, and he takes it out of this sort of general area of, you know, God is the creator of all things, and now he tells us why.

Everything was created specifically not only by him, but for him. Which includes, of course, your life and my life. God created us for himself.

Revelation chapter 4, verse 11, Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and because of your will they existed and were created. King James says, and for your pleasure they were created. So God created everything, but he created everything for his will, for his pleasure, for his purpose.

Again, which includes your life and my life. God has a purpose for you, and that is why he created us. Over into the book of Hebrews, Hebrews chapter 2, verse 10, For it was fitting for him, speaking of Christ, for whom are all things and through whom are all things.

Let me put it in the order of the verses we've been looking at. For it was fitting for him, through whom are all things, in other words, everything came into being through him and for whom are all things. Over into the book of Romans, Romans chapter 11.

If I said to you Romans 12 and verse 1, how many could recite that? I beseech you therefore, brethren, now how many can recite the rest of it? Most of you. If you back up one verse, it says, For from him and through him and to him are all things, to him be the glory forever, amen. This is one of Paul's great revelations.

Everything he says comes from God. He is the author, he is the creator of all things. But he says not only is it from him, but it is through him.

In other words, he is not only the creator of all things, he is the sustainer of all things. In him we live, we move, we have our very being. And so it is from him and through him and then to him are all things, therefore, I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present back to God that which is from him, that which exists through him, and that which belongs to him as your reasonable offering of worship.

In other words, Paul is laying a foundation here. It's one of the worst chapter divisions I know of in the Bible, because it sort of blows it. You know, everything is from him, everything is through him, everything belongs to him, so the least you can do is give back to God that which he created, that which he sustains, that which belongs to him.

So he is the originator of all things, again he holds all things together, but he is the consummator of all things as well. Now God's original plan obviously was thwarted by man's sin. Man chose to rebel against God, Isaiah 53 and verse 6 puts it this way, all we like sheep have gone astray, we've turned everyone to his own way.

Obviously in opposition to God's way, all of us. And from the moment we are born, self occupies the throne of our life, isn't that right? Doesn't take long, there's a little baby back there, doesn't take that long for that little one to know how to get its own way. You know, it emerges out of this womb after nine months and comes into the limelight, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, mom and dad and neighbors and so on wanting to come and see this beautiful little creation and, you know, can I hold her, isn't he cute or isn't she cute and so on, the baby gets passed around and it thinks, boy, I'm the center of the universe.

Pretty soon it gets exhausted from all the attention, falls asleep, mother tiptoes into the bedroom, lays it on the bed, you know, puts the light out, goes, shh, baby's sleeping. Baby wakes up three or four hours later, thinks it's back in the womb again, all its fan club is gone, you know, all the admirers have disappeared

and so on, what's going on, lets out a bellow and, of course, all of a sudden, center of attention again. Mother runs in, you know, fusses with the baby, turns on the light, you know, sits in the rocking chair and, ah, this is what life's all about, me.

And we perfect from birth virtually how to get our own way, don't we? All that baby has to do is wake up in the middle of the night, it knows that a certain bellow of some sort will get a certain response, it may not be hungry, it may not be wet, it just simply wants a little bit of attention. And so it lets out a scream and, you know, within a matter of seconds, mother's in there, father rolls over, pretends he doesn't hear another, you know, hear a thing, honor to whom honor is due, been there, done that, but, you know, mother rushes in again, turns on the light, turns on the music box, sits in the, you know, after all the Bible says, train up a mother in the way she should go and when she's old she'll not depart from it. And so that little one wraps that mother around her finger basically.

Now as we get older again, we perfect the art of selfishness and so when we hear about the cross, we immediately respond from a selfish point of view. Let's imagine there's a big cross here, if you can, and you look at that cross and you say, what's in it for me? After all, that's what your life has been about for the last 10, 15, 20 years, whatever, you know, how do I get ahead, how can I calm this person or can I have my way and, you know, get what I want and so on. So here is the cross, what's in it for me? What has Jesus Christ done for me? And out of that comes, of course, the teaching that Jesus Christ died on the cross for you so that you don't have to go to hell, you can go to heaven, not only can you go to heaven, but you'll get a mansion over the hilltop if you, you know, do a few good deeds and that appeals to our selfishness and we think, why, what a great deal, you know, how can I refuse this offer of the evangelist, he's made it so simple, all I've got to do is line up with the rest of the gang up there at the front and go through a little sinner's prayer, walk down the Roman's road and hey, my mansion is secure.

And so that's the basis on which most of us get saved. Now, I don't want to belittle that totally, but I do want to show you that there is another side to the cross, a side that we no longer proclaim, a side that we have, you know, gradually sort of eradicated from our theology and certainly from our teaching. But before we look at these scriptures, let me give you an illustration because I want to sort of set the mood here for what I want to say.

All right, let's imagine that my wife and I have only been married for one year. And let's say we started our married life with a number of debts and we have agreed together as a married couple that we will not buy any sort of luxury items at all until we've paid off every debt. And at the end of the year comes and we have paid off every debt that we have, we now have accumulated \$1,000 between the two of us, we've been working hard, taking extra jobs and so on, so we have \$1,000 in the bank, all our bills have been paid.

Let's also assume that in the year in which we have lived in this particular community, we have established a reputation in the neighborhood as being Mr. and Mrs. Clean. Everything about our lives is immaculate. You know, even though we don't have much in our home, if you come into our home, everything is perfect, windows are always nicely, you know, windxed and so on, the lawn is beautifully manicured and so this reputation has gone around that we are known as the, you know, perfectionists if you like, Mr. and Mrs. Clean.

I say to my wife one day, I say, darling, you know, this is getting embarrassing not having a car because we have done without a car, we've been relying on people to pick us up and take us places and so I say,

you know, we really need a car and she said, boy, it would be great to have a car. I said, well, why don't we buy one? She said, well, we've only got \$1,000. I said, I know.

But let's believe that God can do a miracle and give us something that is reliable for \$1,000. She said, well, if you think so. So I said, well, listen, this is sort of my department.

You pray and I'll go out looking for a car. And so I hit the streets and look around, spend most of the morning driving cars and finally come across this car for \$995. Get a \$5 change.

And I buy this car, it's 25 years of age, it's filthy, but the engine seems to be running reasonably smoothly and so I think, you know, this thing has got a little bit more life in it. I drive that car home and I take it to the back of the house and I begin washing that car. I spend hours cleaning, excuse me, cleaning that car.

After several buckets of soapy water, I take some solvent to remove all the grease and grime that the water has not removed. I then cut and polish the car and pretty soon the color comes back almost like brand new. I do all the chrome work, that's when cars had chrome.

I blacken the wheels and finally I tackle the inside. Take the vacuum cleaner, clean all the carpets, the upholstery, take some upholstery cleaner, do the upholstery cleaning, shampoo the carpets, armor all the dash, you know, and so on. Then I take all this cleaning material into the house.

I've got paper towels, I've got rags, I've got sponges, I've got this huge bucket of absolutely filthy water. I take the contents of the vacuum cleaner and I shred it and I shake it out on the kitchen table and here is this huge mound of, you know, dust and dirt and so on. And then I call my wife from prayer and I say, darling, here, quick, quick, quick, quick, you got to see what I've got.

And she comes in the kitchen and I point and I said, I bet you never dreamed that when I left this morning I would get that much dirt for \$1,000. And she looks at me like you're looking at me. And I'm all excited, I say, you know, I bet you only thought I'd get about this much dirt.

But look at that, I mean, look, all of that, I mean, all that filth, can you imagine what an incredible deal that is? I mean, a thousand, I bet you never dreamed I'd be that successful. She's going to take my temperature and put me to bed or something and otherwise she's going to explode and say, you're crazy, you know. Don't you know we're known as Mr. and Mrs. Clean and you're absolutely ruining our reputation, I've never seen so much filth in my entire life, get it out of here.

You see, the reason I bought the car had nothing to do with the dirt. It had everything to do with the car. I didn't go looking for dirt, I went looking for a vessel for my purpose.

As a byproduct, take that with a grain of salt, in order to protect my reputation, I had to wash the car. Because that car is going to be an extension of who I am. And therefore, it has to be clean, otherwise there goes my reputation.

If I drive around in a filthy car, people are going to say, you know, those Ravenhills, they fooled us. You know, everybody thinks they're Mr. and Mrs. Clean and perfect and so on, have you seen what he's driving around in, that has got to be the filthiest car I've ever seen in my life. But the real object of my payment had nothing to do with the sin in that sense, it had everything to do with the car.

Isn't that right? Some of you aren't quite sure. All right, so let's look at some scriptures with that in mind. All of these scriptures deal with the atonement, they all deal with the cross, they all deal with the death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so let's look at why Jesus Christ died. Romans 14, verses 7, 8, and 9, for not one of us lives for himself, no one dies for himself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, if we die, we die for the Lord, therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

So whether you're alive or dead, some of you are on your way out, I know it's late, but you are the Lord's. Verse 9, for to this end Christ died. Let me say that again, for this end or this reason Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of the dead and the living.

Why did he die? To reestablish Lordship. Remember, in Genesis, the Lord God took the man, that's the reason he died, it says, not just to take away your sin, or again, I don't want to, you know, belittle that, I just simply want to put it aside because we are so familiar with that dimension of the atonement. But it says here, he died for this reason, that he might be Lord of the dead and the living.

Over into the book of Titus, Timothy and then Titus, Titus chapter 2, verse 14, he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed. All right, let's pause there for a moment, again imagine a cross here, there are two sides to the cross, there is man's side and there is God's side. Jesus Christ died as much for God's sake as he did for man's sake.

Now don't get me wrong, God did not need redeeming, but there was a reason that Jesus Christ died for God's sake as well as man's sake. We don't know about that because we are selfish and all we want to know is what's in it for me. So let me tell you what's in it for you because this is the side of the cross we're familiar with, man's side.

It says he died for all or he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed. In other words, we are cleansed, we are washed, every sin, every iniquity has been cleansed by the blood of Christ. On this side of the cross, we are justified by faith.

On this side of the cross, we have the peace of God, we have peace with God. On this side of the cross, we are taken out of one kingdom, the kingdom of darkness, brought into the kingdom of God's dear son. We are born into the family of God.

Spirit of God witnesses or testifies to us that we are his children and we can cry daddy or Abba Father. Now that's the side of the cross again we are familiar with, the forgiveness of sins. But then notice what Paul says here writing to Titus.

He says not only did he give himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed but it says and purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good works. Now that's the buying of the car. Purify for himself a people.

In other words, God is not really interested in your sin. How do we know that? Because of what he does with it. The Bible says as far as the east is from the west, I don't know if it's this way or that way, I'm confused.

But anyway, as far as the east is from the west, so far as he what? Removed our transgressions from us. One of the minor prophets, I always forget which one, says he's taken our sins and he's buried them in the

depths of the sea. Corrie ten Boone used to say and he's put up a little sign, no fishing here.

Thank God for that. Your sins are in the sea of God's forgetfulness. In other words, God is not interested in your sin.

He gets rid of your sin, he buries it in the deepest place in the entire world, the depths of the sea. It's gone. You see, your sin has no value to God.

Your sin cannot pray, your sin cannot witness, your sin cannot evangelize, your sin cannot tithe, your sin is useless, hopeless, and God does not have a great big sin collection. You know, he doesn't gather around with some of his cherubim and seraphim every once in a while when there's peace on earth, which isn't very often, and you know, he's got a and he reaches up into his great vast library of heaven, pulls down on these big leather volumes and says, listen, have I ever showed you my sin collection? You know, look at this. You know, I've got some of the rarest sins in the entire world here, you know.

In fact, this one here, you know, there's only one that I know of in the entire world. I just got it on eBay the other night. You know, God is not interested in your sin.

What he is interested in is what he created for himself, that he might redeem for himself a people for his own possession. Over into 2 Corinthians chapter 5, again all of these verses now dealing about the one theme of the cross, verse 15. I think this is the best single verse in the Bible as to why Jesus Christ died.

It's time we gave John 3.16 a little bit of a break, isn't it? You know, I've knocked on doors from California to, or from San Francisco to Nova Scotia, down the Caribbean, the Pacific Islands. I was seven years in Youth with a Mission right back in the very early days when it just began. There were only about 20 of us at that time.

And you know, you go up to a door with your partner and say, my name is David and this is Mary or John or whatever, and we're here to share with you what Christ has done in our life, and so on. Of course, the door many times would close faster than it opened. Or you would get a statement like this, who do you think I am, a heathen or something? In other words, everybody believes, don't they? Including the devil.

But that doesn't make you born again of the Spirit of God. So John 3.16, you know, the word believe needs to be redefined and it is, of course, in the Greek to trust in and rely on and so on and so forth. But here's a good verse to replace it with anyway.

Verse 15, he died for all, but they who live should no longer live for themselves. In other words, prior to accepting Christ, you are motivated by selfishness. You live for yourself.

The essence of all sin is selfishness, isn't it? That's why when Jesus said to somebody, you know, if you're going to come after me, he didn't say here's a list of 800 or 1,000 sins and I realize it's the 20th century and you know, I'm going to lower the bar a little bit and grade on the curve and so if you can get, you know, if you're willing to give up 80%, you can be my disciple. No, he simply took the axe and laid it at the root and said, if any man come after me, let him die to self. Because everything springs from selfishness.

The reason I cheat, the reason I lie, the reason I smoke, the reason I sleep around or whatever it is that I'm doing is because I want to gratify myself. And so Jesus simply took the axe again and said, if any man come after me, he's got to die to self. Take up his cross and follow me.

So here it says, he died for all that they who live should no longer live for themselves. But for him who died and rose again on their behalf. In other words, the cross is to radically change our entire reason for living.

Prior to accepting Christ, we are motivated by self, we live for ourself. As a Christian, we are to live for him. 100%.

Well, not on Sundays for an hour or so, if you're a little more spiritual, you know, Wednesday night for an hour, but 24-7. We are to live for him. He is to be our motivation.

He is to be our life. When Christ who is our life shall appear. Paul says, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

So he wasn't just writing things, he was living it out. Over into the book of Revelation. Revelation chapter 5, verse 9. This whole chapter, of course, is this wonderful, at least the climax, is this incredible anthem to the Lamb of God, worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing and so on.

But we go back to verse 9, they sang a new song saying, worthy art thou to take the book and to break its seals for thou was slain, referring again back to the cross, and its purchase for God with thy blood, men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Notice what he purchased with his blood, men, women, of course. In other words, not sin.

He purchased for God. That's why I say when Jesus Christ died on the cross, he died as much for God's sake as he did for man's sake. Why? Because he went to purchase for the Father what the Father created for himself.

He wanted to give back to God that which, again, had gone astray. That's what a shepherd does. He goes out seeking for the sheep that have gone astray and he brings them back.

And so he purchased with his blood, men, not sin. The car is what he's after, not the dirt. The dirt has no value, the car does.

You have value, your sin has no value. Oh, thank you. 1 Corinthians, chapter 6. As you're turning to this, let me give you just a brief word of testimony.

You heard a little bit about my background. I was raised in a Christian home. My father started preaching on the streets when he was 17.

He died at 87, so he's got 30 more years of ministry than I have. But he was a hellfire preacher, especially in his younger days. As he got older, his voice was not as powerful as it used to be, although he could still bring a fair measure of conviction.

But as a kid, I was dangled over hell more than once. Hell is not popular these days, you know, from John Stott to some of the other theologians. I understand Jay Packer has gone the same way now, they've done away with hell.

But that's what you get when you sit in a swivel chair instead of working on the streets, I guess. But anyway, my dad believed in hell because he believed in the word of God. And I've been to hell and back on more than one occasion in a meeting.

As somebody said, you know, when my dad was preaching, you need an asbestos suit in the first five rows. And so I knew as a preacher's kid where I was going. I knew that I was damned.

I knew that I was lost. I knew that my own, you know, churchy righteousness, and I was a good kid. Never smoked a cigarette in my life.

I've never been drunk in my life, never had a drink in my life. The only alcohol I've ever had is in a brethren communion service. But, you know, never slept around, never been involved sexually with anybody in my life apart from my wife, and that was after we were married.

Of course, she wasn't my wife before we were married, but even before we were married, there was no sexual activity. Should be in Guinness Book of Records, they just have not discovered me yet. Even before I was saved in a secular high school in Minnesota, we moved to the States as a family when I was almost 15.

And so I graduated from high school in Minneapolis. I remember going through the line, taking my tray from the cafeteria, approaching a table and hearing kids saying, Shh, Ravenhill's coming. I wasn't even saved.

But they knew my reputation. They knew that I would not listen to the jokes that they were telling and so on and so forth, their exploits over the weekend. But I battled with God from about the age of 14 to 18 over this one issue of lordship.

That is the reason I never gave my life to the Lord. There were many, many nights that I tossed and turned. I would have loved to have known the fact that I was saved, born again of the Spirit of God.

But I knew God was after more than my sin. How I knew that? I guess just years and years of sitting under my dad's preaching and so on as a child in Sunday school and so on. I'd come to some sort of subconscious realization, I guess, that God was after more than just my sin.

He wanted me. I had two brothers. My older brother is a missionary in Argentina, been down in South America most of his married life.

My younger brother was in Africa for 15 years. Both of them are brilliant. My younger brother had an earned Ph.D., became one of the chief curators at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., in African art, hobnobbed with the Rockefellers, wrote books for Oxford Press and articles for the Smithsonian.

My older brother was equally as bright, and I was the dummy in the family. I brought home Fs on my report card on more than one occasion. My mother would sit up with me night after night after night after night.

We sort of graduated together. At least she should have been awarded the diploma. And I loathed school.

I mean, I hated school. The happiest day of my life was when I graduated. But I had one ability my brothers didn't have.

I was gifted in the area of art, and I wanted to go into the field of graphics. That was where my abilities lay. I wanted to go into advertising, that whole creative thing, and somehow I knew that God had other plans.

And so from the age of 14 to 18, I literally fought with God. I mean, there were literally hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of times when I could not even hold a hymn book. It would just tremble in my hands, knowing that God was trying to draw me to himself and yet refusing.

Now, I didn't want to refuse him as Savior. I needed him as my Savior. I recognized my need of him as a Savior.

I did not want him as Lord. Until finally, at the age of 18, I came forward in a meeting. Before any counselor came, my prayer was something like this, Lord, you know that I'm a sinner, the worst sort of sinner, because my righteousness is as filthy rags in the eyes of God.

Oh, I'd never raped and murdered and so on and so forth, but I certainly had that pharisaical, you know, looking down the nose at everybody else. God, I thank you that I'm not like this person, that person, which is the worst sort of sin because it's based in pride. Pride in what I've done and what I've achieved or what I haven't done.

And so my prayer was, Lord, I need you as my Savior, but Lord, I'm not just here to ask you to forgive me of my sin. I'm here to give you my life. And Lord, I lay down tonight all my goals, all my dreams, all my ambitions, all my plans, and I surrender everything to you.

Here's my life. Take it. Use it in whatever way you can.

I was very shy back then, very nervous, very introspective, never did anything publicly in school. Few sports running the mile, but never got involved in drama, anything like that. I was right off when it came to any sort of public speaking.

And I thought, God, you know, here I am, you know, not much value, but, you know, I'd be much better if you let me do what I want to do. You know, do some art, have a little studio somewhere, you know, become another Thomas Kinkade or something. But I gave my life to God.

I went home, and I think it was the next day I opened my Bible to this verse. It's become my life verse. Again, dealing with the cross, 1 Corinthians 6, 19 and 20.

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own, for you have been bought with a price? Therefore, glorify God in your body. Notice, do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? You have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body. Nothing to do here with sin.

Seems to me God's after my body, not after my sin. Seems to me he can't be glorified with my sin, but he can be glorified through my body. Seems to me that what he bought here, according to this verse, is you have been bought with a price, not your sin.

In other words, I was the object of his suffering. Isaiah says he will see of the travail of his soul and be what? And be satisfied. Can you imagine somebody being satisfied with the thing that they detest the most? Let's say that Chad back there has a couple of weeks off and offers to help me paint my house.

Happens to be brick, so it doesn't need painting, but anyway. And he comes and he's there at 8 o'clock every morning. He leaves at 5.30 in two solid weeks and we have finished the house.

And I say to my wife, I said, you know, we're going to be finished at least by lunchtime tomorrow. And you know, Chad has just gone out of his... I can't believe that he's given up his vacation and he spent hour after hour. You know, we need to... I know he's not expecting anything, but we need to give him some sort of gift.

And we put our heads together and we say, you know, I wonder what he hates the most. And so we find out what he hates the most and we gift wrap it. And we present him something that is abhorrent to him.

Can you imagine that being a reward for all that he's done? The Bible says he will see of the travail of his soul, his suffering, and he will be satisfied. You think God is satisfied with the thing that he hates the most, sin? I don't think so. I think the thing that he's satisfied with is what he created for himself.

And now he's redeemed it for himself. You are not your own. You were bought.

2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ purchased you. Forget about your sin for a minute. It's your body that he's wanting to be used to glorify him.

You see, when Paul wrote this, you could go to any marketplace in any major city and after buying your vegetables and odds and ends, you could buy yourself a slave. As you could, of course, in this country up until a couple of hundred years ago. And once you bought that slave, he had no rights.

You could beat him to death, love him to death, starve him to death, feed him to death, work him to death. He was yours. He was just a chattel that you purchased.

But he was there to serve you. That's why you bought him. He didn't get up in the morning and say, you know, it's a little cold.

I think I'll just sleep in for a while. Or maybe the sun was streaming through the window and he thought, boy, you know, if I get up now I can do a little bit of fishing before breakfast. He had no rights.

He had to report to his master on a daily basis and his master said, this is what we're going to do today or this is what I want you to do. You know, we're going to mend the fence in the back 40 or we're going to bring in the cattle or we're going to do this or we're going to dip the sheep. He was there to serve his master.

Paul understood that. He referred to himself as a slave of Jesus Christ, a bond slave. Don't want to get into that.

I think most of you are familiar with it. In fact, when Paul got converted on that Damascus road, remember what came out of his mouth, the very first words, Lord, what would you have me to do? Not save you. Thank you for taking away my sin.

It feels great. Oh, he says that later on, writing to Timothy. He says, formerly I was a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor and so on.

But on that particular moment, when he had an encounter with God himself, he said, Lord. And you cannot say Lord without saying, now what do you want me to do? Otherwise, he's not your Lord. And of course, God spoke to him immediately and says, get off your feet, go into such and such a city and I'll tell you.

And so the prophetic word that came over Paul at that particular time was, I have appeared unto you for this reason. I've appointed you. I've got a call upon your life.

You're going to suffer. You're going to do this and that. And of course, God sort of told him exactly what his calling was.

You see, the moment you say Lord, then God's eternal purposes can begin to work in your life, that which God has for you, the calling that he has for you, the purpose that he has for you. Now, we've taken all those scriptures. But let me take two more before we close, because I want to show you now how far we've drifted.

Hebrews says that we can drift. Hebrews uses the word, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? I will never forget one of our chapel services in Bible school, man by the name of Harold Brockie, said the Bible does not say, how shall we escape if we reject so great salvation? But how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? He then proceeded to tell the story. I've never forgotten.

He said, if I went into the hardware store to buy a rake, it's the time of the year when we need one. And he said, I look at the various rakes. There's a big plastic one there.

It doesn't look very well made. And so I put it back. I reject it.

I pick up another one. It's too expensive. I reject that one.

I pick up another one. It's too short. I reject that one.

And finally, I find the rake that is the right price, right quality, and I buy it. I take it home. I use it for a season.

And then I put it under a tree, get a telephone call or something, and I forget about it. And the next morning, it begins to snow and so on. And a few months later, I happen to be out there in that part of the yard, and I see that thing out in the winter, the rain and the sleet and so on.

He says, I have not rejected it. I've neglected it. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Hebrews also talks about drifting.

Let me show you now how far we have drifted or how much we have neglected the atonement. Chapter 2 of 2 Peter, verse 1. False prophets arose among the people. That's past tense.

I was never very good at English grammar. But that's past tense. False prophets arose.

In other words, Peter is saying we've had a problem with false prophets. They've come into the church, caused all sorts of havoc. Then he says, just as there will be false teachers among you.

So now he's issuing a prophetic word of warning. He says there is coming into the church false teaching. We've had problems with false prophets.

That's over. The next thing to come in are false teachers, and they will come in secretly. When something is done secretly, you are not aware that it takes place.

My wife and I were missionaries in New Guinea from 71 to 73 with Youth of a Mission. Had a church there. We were involved in the Youth of a Mission base.

Had about 15 or 16 young people that were with us. We lived in a house the first year. In the neighborhood where we lived, there had been a lot of break-ins.

Most New Guineas are riddled with crime. But a lady had been raped just a few doors down. So every single night, I made sure that we locked the house before we went to sleep.

Got up in the morning, and I walked down the hallway from our bedroom, and the front door of the house was wide open. I was convinced that I'd locked it, and I thought, you know, this is strange. Looked around.

Nothing seemed to be out of place. So I went into the kitchen. Kitchen door was open.

And I realized, obviously, that we'd had an intruder. In fact, I noticed at the same time that they'd cut through the mosquito netting in the kitchen window, removed all the louvers, come into the house, left both doors open for a quick getaway. My immediate response was to check our children's room.

We had two girls at the time, two little ones, and they were okay, thank God. Looked around the house, went into the bedroom, and I noticed that some things were missing. We'd gone to bed listening to a tape, and they'd unplugged the tape recorder right under about this far from my wife's head, reached under the bed, unplugged the tape recorder, taken it, gone to my side of the bed, removed my wallet.

A number of other things were missing, but it was all done secretly. We were unaware that it had taken place. So Peter is warning the church, this is going to come in secretly.

False teaching. Then notice, He says, Not this end. Here's this word bought again.

You're not your own, you're bought with a price. Jesus purchased with His blood men, denying the Master. This word in the Greek, I'm not an expert in Greek, but this word in the Greek is the strongest use of the word Lord or Master.

It means a despot, one who has got total and absolute authority. And we deny Him access to our life. Let me ask you a question.

Why was Jesus Christ put on the cross from man's point of view? Most of you, I'm sure, have seen The Passion by now. We are familiar with why heaven sent Jesus Christ, so to speak. God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son.

So we know why God was sent or why Jesus was sent by the Father. But why did man crucify the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, Jesus told the story. He said there was a certain king, referring to himself, who went to establish a kingdom for himself.

And after setting up the foundation of that kingdom, he went away and the inhabitants got together and they said, we will not have this man rule over us. So let's get rid of it. In other words, we don't want him as king.

He came unto His own and His own received Him not. That was the second time. They replaced Him as a Jewish nation.

The first replacement theology was when the Jews said, we don't want God as our king. We want a king like the nations. That was where the first replacement theology came in at least.

But then when He came unto His own, His own received Him not. We will not have this man reign over us. Now, isn't it fascinating or at least interesting? Sad, really, I guess, more than fascinating.

Here's the cross again. I come along. I'm a sinner.

I see what Jesus Christ has done for me. And I say, Jesus, I need You as my Savior. Your blood and Your blood alone can cleanse me and free me from sin.

And so, Jesus, I want You to come into my life as my Savior. Wash away my sin. And then I go to this side of the cross and I say, but Jesus, let's get one thing straight.

I will not have You reign over me. Now, we don't say it in so many words. We just sort of leave out that whole dimension of the cross.

We are interested only in man's side of the cross. But you see what the blood cleanses on this side, the blood claims on this side. You're not your own.

You were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body. One other portion of Scripture and then we'll close.

The book of James. James chapter 4, verse 13. Come now, you who say, today or tomorrow, we shall go into such and such a city, spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.

Let me paraphrase it. Come now, you who say, we'll go to college station, go to the university, get a degree and go into business. In other words, here is somebody simply planning their life.

This is what I'm going to do with my life. They live in some little town where there's no university. They know there's not much opportunity.

They don't want to flip burgers at McDonald's for the rest of their life. They want to get a degree because if I get a degree, I'll get a better job. If I have a better job, I'll have a better lifestyle.

I'll be able to have a better car, a better house, better clothes. And therefore, it behooves me to do as well as I can, to educate myself because ultimately it's all about me anyway. And so somewhere between the age of let's say 10 and 20, hopefully, we make up our mind what we'll do with our life.

I'll be a doctor. I'll be a dentist. I'll be a lawyer.

I'll be a school teacher. I'll be a mechanic. I'll be a pilot.

I'll be a teacher. I'll be a nurse. I'll be an architect.

I'll be an artist. And then somewhere along the line, again, according to statistics, we accept Christ to the, I think, something like 80% of people accept Christ before the age of 20. Statistically, it gets lesser and lesser as you get older.

But really nothing ever really changes. We still do what we decided to do when we were six or seven years of age. And so here is somebody, let's go back, who's simply making plans to do a certain thing.

They're going to get involved in business, make a profit. Nothing sinful so far. They're not talking about going down to Columbia, joining the cartel, smuggling drugs.

You can make a lot of money that way if you don't get caught. They're not talking about getting some sort of high-speed printer and going into the counterfeit business. They're not talking about opening up some sort of striptease place.

They're not talking about joining the mob in Chicago. They're simply saying, this is what I'm going to do with my life. The mistake they make, if you like, is that they come to Brother James, the pastor, to tell him about it.

And I can see them sitting here. I wonder if I can embellish this a little bit. Maybe a young couple.

Maybe they met in the youth group in the church, got married. They were drawn together because of a similar passion. Let's say they wanted to be veterinary doctors of some sort.

And they have just been accepted in the most prestigious school of medicine for veterinary medicine. And they're here to announce to the pastor they're going to be leaving the church because they're off to the big smoke. And so they come in.

They're all excited. And they've made this appointment. And here it is now.

They're sitting in Pastor James' office and just rattling off about all these incredible things they're going to do. And isn't it amazing? We both got accepted. We got a full scholarship and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

And pastor, we've only got two weeks left before we have to begin. And listen, we'd love you to pray for us and acknowledge us before we leave church. Maybe next Sunday is going to be our last Sunday, and we'd love to have your blessing.

I've done that. Most pastors have. And after maybe five or ten minutes of sharing, James gets a chance.

And he says, hey, kids, let me tell you something. Verse 14, you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You're just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.

James says, listen, let me tell you what life is really like. Here's an old man, maybe a nice white beard. And he says, you know, kids, before you know it, your life is going to be over.

It's only like a vapor. Appears for a little while, and before you know it, it's gone. It's like waking up in the morning, there's a bit of a mist, and by lunchtime, it's burned off, and that's what life is like.

Instead, you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that. In other words, James says, you know, for the last ten minutes, I've heard you talking about all the things you plan on doing, but I haven't heard a thing about the will of God. Life's too short.

You're going to have a wasted life. As it is, you boast in your arrogance, and all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to the one that knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it's sin.

You see, I don't really think the church understands what it means to be born again, truly born again. From God's perspective, from God's point of view, he redeemed you for himself. That they who live should no longer live for themselves.

I'm not going to live to be a doctor. I'm not going to live to be a mechanic. I'm not going to live to be a veterinary vet.

I'm going to live for the glory of God. Life's too short. Let me close with a crazy illustration.

Let's suppose you walk into a large kitchen, like at the university where, you know, these huge pots. And here is the cook, and he's stirring a pot of soup, gumbo or something, and he's using a violin, nice paddle shape. Now imagine if that violin could talk.

That violin would say, Listen, there's got to be more to life than this. I'm sure there's got to be another purpose for which I was created. Somebody walks in, recognizes the value of that violin, offers the cook a certain amount of money, takes that violin, cleans it up, restrings it, begins to play that violin, and if that violin could now speak, it would say, you know, this is what life is all about.

I knew there was a greater reason. I'm fulfilled. I know that this is why I was created.

You see, the enemy of the world would have us believe that education and getting a degree and doing our own thing and so on is what it's all about. But you were created for something greater. God created you for himself, for his purpose.

And the Bible says if you seek to save your life, you're going to lose it. But if you lose it, you'll find it. And you can get all the degrees in the world, and I'm not knocking education.

And you can achieve, you know, the mansion and the car, the Beamer that you've always wanted, and the cruise ships, you know, for vacation, and the beautiful blonde, tall, dark, handsome, whatever. You know, and have your three kids, and the lifestyle that you think would really bring happiness, and it's all going to be wasted at the end. When I was a little boy, we used to sing a song.

I noticed somebody gave me John Piper's book the other day. Something about don't waste your life or something. And he quotes the little song, and at least part of it.

I don't know if he knows the rest or not. But it says, the little song was this, Only one life, it will soon be passed. Only what's done for Christ will last.

That's all he quotes. My father used to quote another verse, And when I'm dying, how glad I will be that the lamp of my life was burned out for thee. Only one life, it will soon be passed.

It's just a vapor. Only what's done for Christ will last. You're not your own.

You've been bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body. I dare say 99% of you, if not 100% of you, have surrendered your life to the Savior and said, cleanse me, forgive me, wash me.

But have you ever consciously given Him your life? The age of 18, 43 years ago, when I came forward in that meeting, I gave God my life. I've never ever regretted it. I put my hands to the plow that night, and by the grace of God, I've never looked back.

I said, Lord, use me in whatever way you can. I want to live to serve you, Lord. Jesus said, I finished the work.

Thou gavest me to do. I wonder if at the end of your life, you can honestly say when it comes, Lord, I finished the work you gave me, not the work I chose, not the profession I wanted to do or fulfill, but I finished the work you gave me to do. It begins with surrender.

It's sort of like getting married. You know, it's I do. You don't know how many kids you're going to have, where you're going to live, and so on.

I can't predict and tell you what the future holds for you in that sense, but it begins with, like Ruth, whether thou goest, I'll go. Your God will be my God. Your people will be my people.

Will you die? I die. Will you lodge? I'll lodge. In other words, a total selling out of everything.

I can think of no better time than tonight, so let's pray. Let's take a moment, and let's just reflect for a moment, and I'm going to ask you just that very simple question. Have you given God your life, not your sin, your life, where you can honestly say, God, here I am.

Send me. He may send you into the world of business. That's his prerogative.

On the other hand, he may send you to Africa, never to be known, apart from being known in heaven. He has the right to do whatever he wants with you. He's the potter and you're the clay, but he's waiting to hear the word Lord.

Lord, what will you have me to do? If you want to come, find a place up here, not because it makes any real difference, but I think sometimes just to step out, lie down, sit down, do whatever you want, but make it an altar, a real altar, and say, Lord, I'm putting myself on the altar as a burnt offering. Lord, you can redirect me. I don't care if I'm in my final year of college or my first year of college.

You have the right. If you want me to pursue what I'm doing, make it clear. If you don't, begin to give me some sleepless nights, but over the course of the next few weeks, next few months, I want you to begin to lay your burden, your desire on my heart because, Lord, I don't want a wasted life.

I want to stand before you one day and hear you say, well done. Thou good and faithful servant. Only slaves hear the word servant.

Only those that serve hear the word servant. Well done. Thou good and faithful servant.

I know it's radical. You're coming to a funeral of your own and you're saying, Lord, here I am, but if you want to do that, that's where revival begins. That's how we change the course of history.

God's looking for men and women that are radically and totally committed to Him, that have no agenda of their own, no plans of their own, no goals of their own, no dreams of their own. They count it by dung, as Paul says, that I may know Him. It's one thing to sing about it.

It's one thing to read books about it. It's another thing to actually do it. I won't beg the hours late.

If you want to come, just come. You're not going to be prayed for. You're here to meet with God.

You're here to say, Lord, take me and use me for your glory.

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