

Surrender at the Cross

by David Ravenhill

David Ravenhill's sermon emphasizes the foundational role of the cross in understanding spiritual maturity and God's original purpose for humanity.

Duration: 1:08:59

Scripture: Genesis 2:15, Acts 17:28, Romans 12:1, 1 Corinthians 8:6, Hebrews 2:1, Hebrews 2:10, 2 Peter 2:1

Topics: "Gods Will", "Submission To God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker, an old man named James, addresses a young couple who are excitedly talking about their future plans and dreams. James expresses his concern that they have not mentioned anything about the will of God in their plans. He emphasizes the brevity of life, comparing it to a vapor that appears for a short time and then disappears. James encourages the couple to prioritize God's will and to be willing to serve Him, rather than solely pursuing their own ambitions. He references biblical passages that highlight the importance of submission to God and the need for His people to be vessels for His purposes.

Transcript

It's a real joy to be back with you. I have to let you know I bragged about you in a number of places and said to my wife, I really believe that this is one of the most mature congregations that I've been in and I don't say that just to make you feel good. I think God has done something very wonderful in your midst.

It's very rare to, at least for me, and I travel 47 or 8 weekends per year to go into a congregation where you really sense that you make it into the presence of God. There's a lot of noise, a lot of volume, a lot of worship leaders that are tripping out on their own egos, but not too many that bring us into the presence of God. The Bible says, cast up a highway, and I believe we've done that tonight.

So again, it's my joy just to share God's Word with you. Let's just pray once again, shall we? Father again, we bring this Word to you. He said, we're to pray, give us this day our daily bread.

And Father, we pray that this would be bread. Lord, it would nourish, it would sustain, it would further your cause tonight. Lord, your Word says you were made known to the disciples in the breaking of the bread.

So Lord, make yourself known. Make your ways known, Lord. Give us understanding of your purposes.

In Jesus' name. Amen. I want to speak to you tonight on the cross.

I have been in ministry now for 36 years. I've never had a secular job in my life. I don't know if that's good or bad.

I went from high school into Bible school, and then from Bible school right into ministry. But I'm convinced that we really don't understand the cross. And yet the cross is the very crux, the very center, the very foundation of all that we believe.

And if we miss it here, then we sort of miss it everywhere. If the foundation is wrong, it doesn't matter how great the building may be, ultimately something is going to be out of kilter, something is going to collapse. And so I want to look at the cross, I trust in a way that you have seen it, but for many of you, maybe you haven't seen it this way.

And let's begin in the epistle of John, 1 John chapter 2, reading from verse 12. John says, I'm writing to you little children, because your sins have forgiven you for his name's sake. I'm writing to you fathers because you know him that is from the beginning.

I'm writing to you young men because you've overcome the evil one. John is addressing here three levels of spiritual maturity. He is not literally writing to the children's department of the congregation.

He's not writing to the young people. He's not writing to the oldies. But he is writing to three levels of spiritual maturity.

We begin the Christian life the way we begin the natural life, as babies. And the wonderful thing about a baby is that it has no past. A baby may toss and turn at night for various reasons, but it certainly doesn't toss and turn over the remorse of some sin that it committed, you know, years previously, because there's no history.

And so John says, I write to you little children, because your sins have forgiven you. That's where it all begins the realization, the blood of Christ. God's Son cleanses us from all sin.

We've just sung about the grace of God, amazing grace. But Steve Hill used to say, we don't sing amazing justice, because we sang another song, if I should mark it iniquity, he would stand. But amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

So I write unto you children, because your sins have forgiven you, for his name's sake. And then he goes on to say in verse 13, at the end of the verse, I've written to you children, because you know the Father. Now there is a progression that is taking place here, of maturity.

It isn't too long after we are born again into the kingdom of God, into the family of God, we realize again, our sins are forgiven. That God is now our Father. We have a new relationship.

Spirit within us cries, Daddy or Abba, Father. But not too long after that, we realize there is a battle going on. The enemy is out to destroy, to defeat, to discourage, to undermine all that God is doing in our lives.

He wants us back in his kingdom. He's a battle loser. And so we've got to learn to overcome.

And so he says, I write to you young men, because you've overcome the evil one. And part of our maturity process is the realization that we can't be children forever. We can't just sort of play with our toys and our games and have everybody sort of cater to our needs and so on.

We've got to grow up. Part of the growing up process is learning to stand on our own two feet, learning to resist the devil, learning to fast, to pray, to get a hold of God for ourselves, and to overcome the evil one. He goes into more detail in verse 14.

He says, I've written to you young men, because you're strong and the Word of God abides in you, and you've overcome the evil one. I think if I were to put that in what I think is a more logical sequence, I would say, I've written to you young men, because you're strong. Oh sorry, because the Word of God abides in you.

Because the Word of God abides in you, therefore you're strong. Because you're strong, you're able to overcome the evil one. The only way you and I will ever effectively live as overcomers is to have the Word of God abiding in us.

It's not in natural strength, or human strength, or human wisdom, or capability. It's as the Word of God. Not just the letter of the Word of God, but the living Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. And then he addresses the fathers. Verse 13, I've written to you fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.

Again in verse 14, I've written to you fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning. And I've always been a little disappointed in John's revelation, that it doesn't seem to have the umph that I think he should stress here. After all, we're on a path of maturity.

I write to you children, your sins are forgiven. I write to you young men, you're strong, you've overcome the evil one, the Word of God abides in you. I write to you fathers, I would have thought he would have said, because you know you've completed at least three forty day fasts, you know you've raised the dead, you've cleansed the leper, you've established a few churches, you understand Revelation and Daniel, or you know something that seems to have at least a little bit more depth to it than I, than what seems to be the same statement that he says to the children.

I write to you children, because you know the Father. I write to you fathers, because you know Him that is from the beginning. What's the difference? Well children know fathers from a very selfish point of view, don't they? My wife and I have three daughters, they're all grown up now.

But all my life, at least all my life from their point of view, I was there to minister to their needs. Daddy do this, Daddy do that. Daddy buy me a bicycle, Daddy teach me to ride the bicycle, Daddy you know put me to bed, Daddy read me a story, Daddy push me on the swing, Daddy buy me an ice cream, Daddy you know Daddy, Daddy, Daddy.

And Father existed for one reason alone, my whole existence was to minister to my children's needs, at least that was their perspective. And so, there is a relationship of knowing Him as Father, and that's wonderful, and thank God that He does condescend to come down to our spiritual infancy and immaturity, and minister to us, and take care of us, and protect us, and so on and so forth. But then there is a difference between a father's perspective.

I write to you fathers because you know Him that is from the beginning. A father sees the big picture. If I were to take three words to describe these three facets of maturity, the first one would be regeneration, not salvation.

Salvation is that all-inclusive word that deals with the moment you get saved, till the moment we have a glorified body. But the word regeneration, the new birth, born again. And then the young men, the word maturation, they've begun to mature and grow up.

And then fathers, the word consummation, the bringing together, the tying together, the understanding of the overall plan and purpose of God, the big picture. The reason a father disciplines, he sees beyond the immediate, and he knows if that child is not disciplined, then somewhere down the line he's going to be a nuisance to society, and so on and so forth. And so he sees the beginning of things, or the end of things, if you like.

And it's this word beginning that is one of John's favorite words. John, I think, as far as I know, you can check it out, uses it something like 25 times in his writings. And he seems to have a revelation on the beginning of things.

His gospel in the beginning was a word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The epistle here, what was from the beginning, what we've seen and heard, our hands have handled concerning the word of truth. The wonderful book of Revelation talks about the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the ending.

And the beginning of things is absolutely essential if we are to understand the cross. We need to go back to the beginning. You see, the cross is God's medicine, if you like, God's remedy for man's sickness.

The cross is to restore man. The cross is to bring man back to his, God's original plan and purpose. Jesus said, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up.

Now we can simply take that at its face value and say, you know, Moses lifted up this serpent, and so Jesus was lifted up on a cross, and that's that. But we need to go a little deeper than that and realize that there was a moment when the nation of Israel, at least physically, were well. Their bodies were healthy, they were normal, they had plenty of vitality, plenty of life, and then sin came into the camp.

They began to murmur, complain, and so on and so forth. God had allowed judgment to come, and death resulted. The wages of sin is death.

The serpents came and Moses, of course, cried out to God for a remedy, an answer. And God said, I want you to make this brazen serpent, put it on a pole and lift it up. And whoever looks on that brazen serpent, the moment they look on it, life will be restored to them.

They'll go from death at work in them, to life working in them. They'll go from sickness to health. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up.

In other words, the cross then is to be the counterpart of that. It's to bring us back to our original place, if you like, that God had for us. And so the beginning of things is essential.

You recall that the Pharisees and scribes and so on, were always trying to get Jesus embroiled in some sort of controversy. And on this occasion, they wanted to know where he stood on the matter of divorce. And as you know, there were two schools of divorce in those days, as there are now.

One very conservative, one very liberal. And to back up their claims, they said, you know, even Moses gave us permission to divorce our wives. Oh Lord, would you stand? You know, what school do you

believe in? For any cause, or for, you know, strictly the case of adultery.

And Jesus very wisely took it out of the present debate, and he went back to the beginning, and he says, you don't understand. In the beginning, it was never God's intention. You see, the beginning of things is absolutely essential.

We need to have a beginning perspective. If I were to demolish this beautiful podium here, and take it all apart, and you had never seen it as a podium. And I say, is there a carpenter here, or somebody that's a builder? And you say, yeah, I am.

And so I have you come up, and here we have all these pieces of wood now, pieces of trim, and so on and so forth. And I say, would you restore this? Well, who knows what we'll end up with. If you've never seen it originally, how can you restore it? We may end up with a coffee table.

We may end up with a bookcase. May end up with a casket. We could end up with all sorts of things, a side table, a dresser.

You see, we've never seen it originally, so how can we restore it back to the original plan of the Creator? And we have this theology of trying to bring man to something we don't, we're not really sure what the cross is supposed to look like, when it's all sort of put back together again, as far as our own lives are concerned. And so we need to go back to the We're going to try and get into the mind of God, so to speak, and understand His purpose. Let's go to Genesis, Genesis chapter 2. As you know, Genesis is the book of beginnings.

And here we have man in his original condition, before sin came, before rebellion came, before independence came, before man chose to do his own thing and go his own way. 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.

There are three things in that verse, the word, at least the principle, submission, location, vocation. The Lord God, not simply God, as wonderful as God is, but God as Lord. The Lord God took the man, no resistance on man's part, no objection on man's part.

We don't see man digging in his heels. We don't see man fighting and striving with God. We don't say, see man saying, God, I don't want to do that.

I want to go my own way. No, man is totally compliant, totally submissive to the Lordship of God himself. So much so that God is able to take him again without any resistance and place him in the geographical place of God's choosing and not man's choosing.

He doesn't say to man, listen, I've got a few options. I've just created this incredible garden with all these beautiful fruit trees, this magnificent river. And if you like gardening, boy that's the place to be.

On the other hand, I've got this villa that I've just about finished. You're overlooking the bluff there and incredible sunsets and you know, Adam, just think it over. I'll be back this afternoon and you know, God says, listen, I know exactly where I want you.

This is the location of my purpose for your life. And then in that location, a vocation. Adam, I've got a calling, a specific calling.

In this case, obviously we know God said, I want you to look after the garden, cultivate, keep it and so on, replenish the earth and so on. Now, I believe if we understand the cross correctly, that God wants to bring us back to that place. Where God can reach into your life and my life at any given time without any resistance, any objection.

He can take us and he can place us in the geographical place of his choosing and then in that place, he can reveal why he placed us there. He's got a mandate, a calling, a purpose for our life. Now, that was the beginning of things.

Let's look at some other scriptures. The book of Colossians. You see, we've got to know what the cross is to bring us back to.

Colossians chapter 1, verse 16, For by him all things were created, both in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities. All things have been created by him. Let's pause there for a moment.

I trust you don't have a problem with that. All things were created by him. By faith we understand the world's were framed by the word of God.

I don't have a problem with the earth being 6,000 years old or 6 million years old or 60 million years old or 100 million years old. It doesn't worry me. I believe God can create a rock right now with vintage.

He could have created this earth 6,000 years ago and carbon dated it so it's 100 billion, million, whatever years old. After all, he created wine at Cana of Galilee. It had vintage.

He created Adam with a little bit of vintage. He wasn't running around in nappies or diapers. So, I don't have a problem with creation.

All things were created by him, but now we have insight and for him. You see, we're getting in now. I trust to the understanding to the mind of God as it pertains to your life and my life and all of creation.

And not only did God create everything, we readily admit that, but we needed to understand why he created everything. All things were created by him and for him. That pertains to you and that pertains to me.

Then into Revelation. 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. Once again, a declaration that God is the creator. And because of thy will they existed and were created.

Or the King James, of course, says, and for your pleasure they were created. So, once again, it's easy to acknowledge that God is the creator of everything, especially as believers. We don't stumble over that like the world does.

But then we need to take it one step further and say, well, for his pleasure all of that was created. And since I'm a part of that creation, in fact the crowning achievement, I think, of that creation, I was created for the will and the purpose and the pleasure of God, according to this verse. And then we go into Hebrews chapter 2. Again, all of these verses, I'm giving you two or three or four here, to establish something.

The Bible says, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, let everything be established. You can't establish doctrine on one verse, otherwise we'd be baptizing for the dead. Verse 10, for it was fitting for him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things.

Let me put that in the order of the other verses. It was fitting for him, speaking of Christ, through whom are all things, and for whom are all things. Again, it's easy to acknowledge that through whom are all things, because that doesn't really touch us in any major way.

It just acknowledges, God, you're the creator of the heavens and the earth. But then we've got to take it this step further, and for whom are all things. And then into the book of Romans.

Romans chapter 11, verse 36, for by him, and sorry, for for him, and through him, and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

Here Paul has this wonderful revelation. He says, everything comes from God. Everything has its beginning in God, from whom are all things.

And then he says, and through whom are all things. You see, in him we live, we move, we have our being. Everything is sustained and held together by the word of his power.

So it's not only from him, as though it was some sort of historic fact that took place, you know, thousands of years ago, but it is present through him. You and I, the very breath we breathe, in him we live, we move, we can have that breath, unless it was through him. But then Paul says, not only is it from him and through him, but to him are all things.

To him be the glory. Therefore I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God. You see, there's no chapter division there.

This was a letter. Paul has established something. He goes on to say, therefore, because everything is from him, because everything is through him, because everything is to him, therefore I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you give back to him that which is from him, that which is through him, that which is to him as your reasonable worship.

Makes a lot more sense, doesn't it? See, Paul again, he's understood the mind of God. He's mused and meditated and he understands all of this creation is for one reason and one reason alone, for God himself. And our lives and your life belongs to him.

It's not only from him and through him, but it's got to be to him. Therefore give back to him that which is his. Then over into Corinthians, we have the same thought, 1 Corinthians 8, where Paul can't seem to get away from this little triangle of truth here.

Verse 6, Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist for him, one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through him. Now he's got it in a slightly different order than what he does in Romans, but you have the same thing. From him, through him, and for him, are all things, he says once again.

Now these, all these verses are very, very important. Now we're back in the beginning. We're in the mind of God.

We're understanding, again, this world that you and I are a part of, that doesn't make sense unless we put it in the perspective of the beginning of things. But something went wrong. Man chose to break that sort of relationship with God.

Man chose to do his own thing, to go his own way, to rebel. Isaiah says, all we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way.

We've turned from God's will, God's purpose, God's way, God's desire to our own way. We've wandered again like sheep. And so the cross then is to bring us back, to restore us, to heal us, if you like.

It's God's remedy, God's medicine, God's plan to restore men. Now the problem with us is that we are selfish. From the moment you and I are born, self occupies the throne of our life.

We're born into a sin infested world, a demonized world, and so on, a selfish world. And so we grow up with self occupying the throne of our life. A baby learns within a matter of days, many times, that a certain cry will get a certain response.

And there it is in the middle of the night, you know, maybe the first night, and it's all alone, and it's not used to being all alone. It's been in that warm tummy of mothers for a while. Now it's come out into this world, and everybody's been oohing and aahing, and looking at it, and admiring it, and so on and so forth.

And now all of a sudden all of that's gone, and there's no heartbeat, and no attention being given. It's dark in here, and so it lets out a bellow, and mother comes running in within a moment, you know. Honor to whom honor is due.

Father turns over, pretends he doesn't hear a thing. And mother picks that child up, and all of a sudden that child is the center of the universe again. And mother oohs, and aahs, and cuddles, and changes, and feeds, or whatever the need may be.

And the next night, baby does the same thing. And the next night, train of her mother in the way she should go when she's old should not be popular. And baby learns that I am the center of everything, and as it matures and grows, it begins to hear certain expressions.

Maybe it's got siblings, older brothers, sisters, and they come home complaining about maybe an exam at school, or some test or something. And this little baby is registering, test, exam. That's a bad thing.

And so the day comes when it's five, six years of age, and off he goes to school, and not too long before the teacher announces, you know, tomorrow morning we're going to have an exam. And all of a sudden the computer picks up on that, and says, uh-oh, I remember. That's a bad thing.

Wakes up the next morning. Our mother's been trained by now, and that's all right, Johnny, you can stay home. Johnny gets his way.

Nine o'clock, of course, there is a miracle that takes place. Instant healing. We're selfish, aren't we? And all we do, we further that ability to satisfy and gratify our needs as time goes on.

It's me, it's mine. It's my money, my time, my this, my that. And so when we see the cross and hear about the cross, unfortunately, we respond selfishly.

After all, that's all we've known. And so we look at the cross and we say, well, what's in it for me? What sort of a deal can you make for me, God? And out of that comes a very popular theme. Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sin, so that I could go to heaven when I die.

Have a mansion over the hilltop. I don't personally believe there are any, but you may. After all, I don't think God's going to put us all back in a bunch of little boxes and isolate us.

We're going to be one big family. There's going to be no marriage there, so there'll be no need for the bedroom, and we're not going to have to eat necessarily. We'll have resurrection bodies, so no need for the kitchen, you know.

The Lamb is going to be all the glory, so we won't need television. You know, so you can eliminate just practically just about every room in the house, just on that basis alone. But when Jesus said, I go to prepare a place for you in the Father's house, there were three rooms that the disciples knew of, and one of those rooms was off-limits.

There was only one man once a year that had access into that room. But after Calvary, that veil was rent, and we can be where he is. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, you may be also.

Not only that, but he lifted us up, raised us up, and seated us with him in heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers. I don't think Jesus is running around with a carpenter's belt. I'm frustrated, you know, because there's an end-time revival he didn't plan on, or something, trying to get all the mansions finished, you know.

But you see, we look at the cross, and we say, well God, what's in it for me? And out of that again comes our popular teaching that Jesus Christ died so that you could be free from sin. Obviously there's truth in that, but it's really a very man-centered sort of a gospel. I get to go to heaven, I escape the flames of hell, you know.

All of these things accrue to me, you know. I have a new name, and a new nature, and a new family, and a new kingdom, and a new destiny, and new, new, new. Everything's made new, and wonderful.

It's true, but it doesn't stop there. Now let me give you an illustration, and then we're going to look at a number of scriptures, and I'm going to change your mind, I trust. Let's assume that my wife and I have been married for one year.

We've been married, I think it's 37 years this summer. Yeah, pretty sure. Better find out before August, but anyway.

But by way of illustration, and let's say that we begin our married life with a number of debts, and so we agree together that we are not going to buy any sort of luxury item until our debts are paid off. And so towards the end of the year, we have paid off our debts. Not only that, but we have accumulated now 1,000 pounds.

And during that year, we have gone without transport. I've been taking the bus, something you can't do in America, but you can in England at least, and you know, to work, or maybe a carpool, or something. And so we've been able to get by without transport, but it's getting somewhat embarrassing calling friends at certain times to take us places.

And so I say to my wife one day, darling, listen, I know we've only got a thousand pounds. It's our life savings. It's everything you and I have, you know, put away now over the last six months, but I think we need a transport, we need a car.

And she said, darling, I agree with you. So I said, well, why don't you pray, and I'll go out and look, you will, you know, intercede that we'll get the right car. You don't get much for a thousand pounds, I'm sure.

Now let's also assume that during the year that we have lived in this particular part of town, that we've established a reputation as being Mr. and Mrs. Clean. Everything about our lives is immaculate. The house is always immaculate, the lawns are beautifully manicured, the shrubs are always trimmed perfectly, the windows are always bright and sparkling, so on, and we have this reputation.

We, you know, never go around in dirty clothes, and so on. I mean, that's the reputation we have. And so I go out now, and I take my thousand dollars, and I look around the various car yards, and eventually I find this car.

It's, you know, 15, 20 years old. Engine seems to be running pretty well, but, you know, it's an old car. I paid a thousand dollars, I take the car home, I immediately drive it around the back so the neighbors can't see it, and I proceed to wash the car.

I spend hours washing that car, bucket after bucket of soapy water, then I take some solvent, excuse me, remove all the grease and grime that water has not removed, then I cut and I polish that car, I do all the chrome work, then I tackle the inside of the car. Take the vacuum cleaner and thoroughly clean it, then I shampoo the carpets, I take some upholstery cleaner and do the upholstery, and clean the windows, and everything else. At the end of four or five hours, that car now is absolutely immaculate.

There's not a trace of dirt anywhere, the polishes, you know, brought the color back, it looks beautiful, just like showroom condition. And then I gather together all these cleaning items, and I go into the house and I pile all this filth on the kitchen table, all these rags, all these paper towels, this bucket of soapy, now filthy water, I tear open the canister of the vacuum cleaner and dump all the fluff and everything else, and here's this huge pile of dirt. I then call my wife from prayer.

Darling, come in here quick. And with a big smile on my face, I say, darling, have you ever seen so much dirt? I mean, could you believe we could buy that much dirt for a thousand dollars? I'm going to have trouble. My wife is going to be upset.

She's going to say, you know, are you feeling all right? I mean, what do you mean? You mean, you didn't really buy all this dirt for a thousand dollars? Yeah, that's what a thousand dollars, your lifeblood of my lifeblood, that's what it bought, one thousand dollars worth of dirt. I mean, this is incredible, isn't it? I mean, I've never seen that much dirt, have you, darling? Obviously, that doesn't make sense. You see, the reason that I paid the price that I paid was because I wanted the car.

It had nothing to do with the dirt. The car was really the object of my payment. And if you like, I can take this with a grain of salt.

The washing was a byproduct. Because you see, that car is going to represent who I am. It's an extension of who I am.

I'm Mr. Clean. And so the car, therefore, has to come up to my standard. Otherwise, my name, my reputation is at stake.

If I drive around in this filthy old car, people are going to say, well, I guess the Raven Hills, um, you know, gave up that idea of being clean a long time ago, you know. Oh, you translate that into biblical terminology. Be holy as I am holy.

That God gives to us His righteousness. The blood of Jesus Christ, again, washes us. But the real object of the payment was the car.

Now, let's look at some scriptures. Now, I've got your attention. All right, all these scriptures now deal with the atonement.

Romans chapter 14, verses 7, 8, and 9. For not one of us lives for himself, not one, or no one dies for himself. 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, you fit into one of those categories tonight. Whether you live or die, you are the Lord's.

For to this end, Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord of the dead and the living. Or, if we use the illustration of the car, that he might be the owner of the car. Not that he might be the Savior, but that he might be the Lord.

For to this end, here again, we're getting into the mind of God. Why did Jesus Christ die? To bring us back to God's plan and purpose. What he created, he wants back.

He didn't create sin, and he's not interested in sin. There's no sin in heaven. God doesn't, you know, have a sin collection, like people have coin collections or stamp collections.

If he did, he'd have the best one in the world, I'm sure. You know, he doesn't gather around a few cherubim and seraphim, occasionally, and say, you know, boys, it's been a while, but have I showed you, you know, my sin collection. He pulls down, you know, some big letter volume out of the library of heaven and very carefully opens it up and says, you know, I've got sins going way, way back, but this is my pride and joy right here.

You know, this is the only sin of its kind right here, and I've got it. You know, it was created, it was committed back in the 13th century by an old man up in the mountains of Tibet, and I'm the only one with him. Now God, God doesn't collect sin.

He's not interested in sin. The Bible says, as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us. Another place, it says, when he gets a hold of our sin, he buries them in the depths of the sea.

It was Corrie ten Boom that says, and he puts up a little sign, no fishing here. So glad, aren't you? There's no resurrection of those sins in that sense. So God doesn't store sin.

He doesn't like sin. It's something that God hates. So for this end, Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord, both the dead and living.

He wants to re-establish lordship, ownership, a reason for the cross. Over into the book of Titus, you find Timothy. Titus is the next-door neighbor.

Titus chapter 2, verse 14, he gave himself for us, again speaking of the cross, the death of Christ. He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed. Let's pause there for a moment.

You see, there are two sides to the cross. I want you to imagine there's a cross up here. And let's say this side of the cross represents man's benefit from the death of Christ.

And so this verse says, he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us, or set us free, or cleanse us from every lawless deed, every sinful act, everything that you and I have ever done. We have been redeemed from it, by the blood of the Lamb. It's under the blood.

And so on this side of the cross, we are forgiven. We're brought into the family of God again. We're taking out of the kingdom of darkness, brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

We have a new name again, a new nature, a new destiny. We have a new mind and so on. I mean all these things accrue to us, because of the death of Christ.

Now we are familiar with that side of the cross. That's the basis on which we all accepted Christ. But then it goes on to speak about God's side of the cross, which we don't hear very much about.

Notice, he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from every lawless deed, and purify for himself, for his own possession, zealous for good works. You see, what Jesus Christ really accomplished on the cross was not just, and I don't want to belittle or minimize the blood of Christ and the cleansing power of that blood, but there is another dimension, that he might redeem for himself a people. You see, the car was what he was after.

A people for his own possession. You see, if we only see one side of the cross, man's side, we've fallen short. The cross is null and void in one sense.

Paul says, I write with tears, he says, because those are the enemies of the cross who set their mind on earthly things, whose God is the belly, and so on and so forth. There's been no real transformation. Oh, they've got rid of a few sins, but not too much else.

You see, he wants the people for himself, as his own possession. All of you have got possessions tonight, the clothes you're wearing, the glasses you're wearing, the watch, you know, the Bible you're holding, or whatever. Those are your possessions.

They belong to you. God wants to have that same ownership of your life and my life. 2nd Corinthians chapter 5 verse 15.

He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves. Now, notice why he died. Again, here is the atonement.

This is the very crux, the very center of our faith. We need to understand it. This is why Jesus Christ died.

He died for everybody, that they who live should no longer live for themselves. If we're not living for ourselves, then what? He says, but for him who died and rose again on their behalf. You see, the cross was to radically impact our life.

It wasn't just to, if I can say it reverently, it wasn't just to sort of go through the car wash. On the other end, what the blood cleanses on this side, the blood cleanses on this side. And you are now no longer living for yourself.

Your whole life has been radically changed, and you have one sole reason to live. We're back to the beginning. All things were created by him and created for him.

And then we go over into Revelation. Revelation chapter 5. Again, centering around the cross, this great wonderful song. It talks about the fact that there was a lamb on the throne.

It was all slain. And they begin to sing. Verse 9. And they sang a new song saying, Were thou to take the book and to break its seals, for thou was slain, here again the atonement, and its purchase for God with thy blood, men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and thou hast made them to be kings and priests.

For thou was slain, and its purchase with thy blood, sin. No. God doesn't want your sin.

Not interested in your sin. No sin in heaven. He purchased for himself men from every kindred, tribe, tongue and nation.

Why? Because he's got a destiny that we might be kings and priests. One of the great themes of the word of God. So you see, when Jesus Christ died, he had something in mind.

The Bible says in Isaiah 53 there that he will see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. You think he's satisfied when he gets a big pile of sin? Something you hate? Something you detest? No. He's satisfied when he gets back that which he created for himself.

That's what satisfies him. Sin doesn't satisfy God. You can give him all the sin in the world.

Doesn't satisfy him. He went to redeem for himself again a people. 1 Corinthians 6. As you're turning to this, let me give you a brief testimony.

I was raised in a Christian home. My father was a minister in this country up until 1950 and then started traveling to America. He started preaching at 17, died at 87.

It's pretty good innings, isn't it? And he was a hellfire preacher. Verse 5, 6, 8 rows. You needed your asbestos suit.

And I've been dangled over hell more than once and I knew that there was a hell to shun and a heaven to gain, believe me. But I did not become a Christian until I was 18. I never got into any gross sin.

Never smoked a cigarette in my life. Not that I'd say that's the grossest sin, but never taken drugs, never slept with anybody apart from my wife and that was after we were married. Of course she wasn't my wife until after, but we didn't sleep together before, is what I'm trying to say.

Just in case there's a lawyer out here and he's technical. You know, I've never been to a dance in my life, never been to a movie of any consequence in my life. Should be in Guinness Book of Records, they just haven't discovered me yet.

But I knew I was a sinner. There were times I would toss and turn at night knowing that I was going to a Christless eternity. There's no question about that.

Oh, a good church, you know, preaches kid sinner, but I was a sinner. And I longed to have peace with God. I longed to know that if I were to die, that I'd go into the presence of God.

But it was one reason I didn't accept Christ. And in fact, the night I did accept Christ, my father looked at me, he saw me go forward, Bible school, and we'd moved to America by then, in Minneapolis in the States. And he said to me afterwards, David, what happened to you tonight? I said, Dad, I got saved.

He looked at me, he said, David, you mean you weren't saved? I had a good life. I would take my tray on more than one occasion through the cafeteria in a secular high school of 1,200 students and hear kids say, shh, Ravenhill's coming. Because they knew I wouldn't laugh at what they laughed at.

I wasn't even born again. So I never created any major havoc for my parents, never went through any sort of rebellious stage, but I didn't get saved until I was 18. The reason for that was simply this, because I had one goal, one ambition in life, that was to go into the field of graphics.

I had two brothers that were absolutely brilliant. I'm a middle child. My older brother was straight-A student.

My younger brother earned PhD, became world-renowned in his field, became one of the major directors of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., 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 literally by the hour at night.

Thank God for moms. But the one thing I had my brothers didn't have, I had a flair for drawing, artwork, and it gave me a sense of identity. It gave me a sense of value.

It gave me a feeling that I, you know, wasn't a total sort of writer. And so I couldn't wait to get out of high school and to go into art school, study fine art. And from about the age of 12, 13, 14, those early years, I struggled with God.

In meetings like this, big or small, I would literally shake under conviction of sin. I mean, if I was holding a hymn book, it would be going like this, knowing that God was wanting to draw me to himself, and yet refusing to go, not because I didn't want him as Savior, but I refused to bow the knee to his Lordship. Oh, I wanted to go to heaven.

I wanted to have my sins forgiven. I wanted peace with God, but I wanted my own way. I wanted to do what I wanted to do.

And finally, at the age of 18, I made my way forward in a meeting like this, and long before any counselor came, I was doing business with God, and I said, God, I'm here because I'm a sinner, and I need you to cleanse me and forgive me. I need you to wash me, Lord. I've got all this filth in my life, pride and self-righteousness and so on.

But Lord, I'm not here tonight to give you my sin alone. I'm here to give you myself. And that night, I put everything on the altar, all my goals, my plans, my ambitions, and I died to my will and my desires.

And I can honestly testify tonight that was 40 years ago that I've never looked back. You see, it took me long enough. It took me from 13, somewhere thereabouts, to 18, so I knew what I was doing.

And when I did it, I did it once and for all. It was like getting married. It was a commitment.

I put my hand to the plow, and I said, Lord, from this moment on, I was shy. I was nervous. I was introspective.

I never did anything publicly. I was afraid of my own voice. They said I was one of the most nervous students they ever had in Bible college.

And God stripped from me what I could do with my ability and brought me to that place of dependency. And it was just a few days later that God gave me this verse here in 19 and 20 of 1 Corinthians 6. Do you not know that your body is a 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. Again, the atonement.

You have been bought, not your sin, you. Not the dirt on the car, the car. You have been bought, and you're not your own anymore.

Therefore glorify God in your body, not when you get to heaven, when you've done your own thing here on earth, and there's nothing else to do but to glorify Him in heaven. But no, right now, start glorifying Him. Whatever you do, word or deed, if your life does not glorify God, then you better find out what does.

You're not your own. When Paul wrote this, you could go into any marketplace, and after buying your vegetables and meat and so on, you could buy yourself a slave. And you could take that slave home, male, female, young or old, strong or weak, whatever, and that slave was literally your property.

You could starve that slave, beat that slave, do whatever you wanted with that slave. Feed that slave to death, love that slave to death. That slave had no rights.

When that slave woke up in the morning, it couldn't say, well you know, what a great day, you know, finally stop raining. I think we'll go fishing. No, it had to report to his master.

It lived for one reason, to serve his master's interest. The only reason that slave lived, was to serve the interest of his master. And Paul's favorite expression, Paul a slave of Jesus Christ.

You're not your own, you bought with a price. Let's look at a couple of scriptures now, before we close over into 2nd Peter. 2nd Peter chapter 2, verse 1. While you're turning to that, the book of Hebrews talks about, beware lest you drift.

Very easy to drift, isn't it, in our Christian life. Some of you are fishermen, maybe you've been out, you know, on a lake or something, the winds come up a little bit, and you're absorbed in doing what you're doing, fishing, and all of a sudden you look up, and you realize the current has carried you, and you've drifted, and you're way off track from where you started. Spiritually we can drift.

Let me show you how far now we've drifted. Verse 1, false prophets arose among the people. I was never good at English grammar, but I do know that that's past tense.

Peter says, listen, we've had a problem in the past with false prophets, just as there will be future false teachers among you. So Peter here now is giving a prophetic word, a word of warning, that we've had problems in the past, but he says, I'm prophesying that down the line there is going to come a problem with false teachers. They will come in secretly.

When something is done secretly, we are unaware that it takes place. My wife and I were with Youthful Mission years ago in New Guinea. We headed up the base there in Port Moresby, and we'd had a lot of break-ins in the area.

And so every night we made sure that we closed the doors and windows and everything else. And one morning I got up, and the little house that we had, walked down the hallway into the living room, and the front door was open. I looked around, nothing seemed to be out of place, but I thought I'm positive that I locked it.

But I closed the door, went into the kitchen, and the kitchen door was open. Then I saw that somebody cut through the mosquito netting, removed all the louvered windows, and come into the house, left both the doors open, so they could have a quick getaway. We looked through the house.

First thing we checked on were the two children. Only had two at that stage. They were safe.

But then we discovered a number of things were missing that actually come into our bedroom. Down a long hallway into our bedroom, gone to my wife's side of the bed, and unplugged the tape recorder from right under virtually her pillow, under the bed. Gone around to my side of the bed and removed my wallet, and stolen a number of things.

But it was all done secretly, and we were unaware of it until it was too late. Peter says that in the last days, if you like, false teachers will come in among you secretly. They will introduce destructive heresies.

The King James says, damnable doctrines. I'm taking the liberty of putting in brackets there to the purpose of God. And then notice, even denying the master who bought them.

That's an interesting verse, isn't it? Oh, not the Savior who washed their sin away, but they will deny the master. In the Greek, I'm not a Greek expert, but that is the strongest possible word for master. It's the Greek word for despot, total and absolute authority.

The master, notice again, the atonement who bought them. Not their sin. This is the cross again.

This is the very center, the very foundation, the very crux of everything you and I are supposed to believe. And boy, has this prophecy ever come true. We can have huge altar calls, and thousands of people respond to get rid of their sin.

But you mention the cross and die to self, and you can cut those altar calls down to five percent, because nobody wants to die. We all want to go to heaven, but we want to do our own thing. Then to the book of James, James chapter 4, verse 14, or verse 13.

Come now you who say today or tomorrow, we shall go into such and such a city, spend a year there, engage in business and make a profit. Now here is a, let's say a couple that are making plans. They just got married, let's say, and they are anxious to get out of Horsham, go to London where there's plenty of opportunities, and universities, and so on.

Maybe they've been, both of them accepted in, you know, some school, college, and university there in London. And they said, you know, we're going to leave here, we're going to move there, we're going to go into college, get our degree in business, and open a business and make money. Nothing sinful about that.

They're not talking about doing some sort of illicit trade. They're not talking about joining the cartel in Columbia and smuggling drugs. Make a lot of money that way.

You don't get caught. Not talking about opening some pub and, you know, getting people drunk. And they're not talking about some counterfeit business.

They're not talking about, you know, some striptease place or something. They're just doing what we've all done. This is what I'm going to do with my life.

I'm going to move from here to there. I'm going to go into college, go into business. When I get through, you know, make money.

And I can imagine, if I can embellish this a little bit, that this young couple maybe come to James, this old man of God. And they, like many pastors, have had the experience as an appointment. And a young couple come in and they say, Pastor, we're going to be leaving.

Didn't want to slip out of the church without just letting you know how wonderful it's been to be here over the last five years or ten years or whatever. And next Sunday is going to be our last Sunday. We'd love you to pray for us before the congregation.

Send us on our way. I've done that dozens and dozens of times. And all excited about what they're doing.

You know, we just want to tell you what's happened. You know, I've been accepted into, you know, art school. I've been accepted into medical school.

So we're going to be leaving Horsham and going up there, you know, to Manchester, wherever it is. And, you know, and then after that, we're going to open this business and so on and so forth. Again, nothing sinful.

But notice what James does. Here is this old man, wise. And he looks at that young couple and he says, John, Mary, let me tell you something about life.

It's like a vapor. Appears for just a little while and before you know it, it's gone. Life is a vapor.

Talks about the brevity of life. So many scriptures about the brevity of life. A life is like a breath, one says.

Another says it's like a weaver's shuttle. Before you know it, it's over. So here is this old man looking at this young couple and he says, listen, life's going to be gone before you know it.

Instead, he says, you ought to be saying, if the Lord wills, we'll do this and that. And here's this wonderful old man, James, and I can just see him, maybe in a very fatherly way, saying, you know, kids, I appreciate the fact that you've benefited out of my teaching and being here in the church and so on, but you know, my heart's breaking right now. It's the last 10 and 15 minutes, all I've heard about is what you're going to do, where you're going to go, your dreams, your visions to go into business and have a big house and travel and so on.

But you know, I haven't heard a single word about the God. Not a single word. And life's too short to mess with.

Before you know it, it's over. You should be saying, if this is God's will, if this is the geographical place that God wants me, if I'm doing the purpose and the will of God. But as it is, he says, you boast in your arrogance and that sort of boasting is evil.

He said, you know, kids, you've got the audacity to sit here and tell me that you've been raised in this church, that I baptized you, that I married you, and you've got the audacity to tell me that you're going to go your own way and do your own thing. Haven't you learned anything? It's not about your will, it's about his will. It's not about your way, it's about his way.

Therefore, to the one that knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it's sin. That's what sin is. Sin is independence.

Sin is me doing what me wants to do. It's my way. But if any man come after me, let him deny my way and take up his cross.

And instead of being that sheep that has gone its own way, turning and saying, Lord, I'll follow you. When you turn, I'll turn. When you stop, I'll stop.

Like the cloud, God was trying to teach an entire nation that. If this cloud stops for a day, we stop for a day. If it stops for a week, we stop for a week.

If it stops for a month, we stop for a month. If it stops for a year, we stop for a year. God was saying, I'm going to lead and you're going to follow.

Now we say, God, bless me as I go, do my own thing, you know, help me make lots of money. This is where revival begins, lasting revival. Not just a touch, not just some sort of an experience because of an atmosphere that we create, but it's giving God that which is rightfully His.

All things were created by Him. All things were created for Him. He wants you back.

You are His by right of creation and you're His by right of redemption. He has a double claim. And I'm convinced the reason the world isn't evangelized, the reason we have so many problems is that 80 percent of the church at least have never really fully bowed the knee and made Him Lord.

And so how shall they hear without a preacher? I can't believe it's God's will that nations still don't have the written Word of God, still something like a thousand tongues in the year 2001. Why? Because we are selfishly clinging on to our lifestyle, to our way. We don't want to give it up.

We don't want to learn another language. We don't want to adapt to another culture. We don't want to do this.

We don't want to do that. We don't want to take that money that God has blessed us in business and give it to the kingdom of God. We want to buy a bigger house and a bigger car and fancier clothes.

Isn't that right? Let's close in prayer. Father, we've sung so much about Your greatness, about Your power, about Your name tonight. Lord, we don't want to just honor You with our lips, but our heart not be in it.

Lord, we want to bow before that throne that we've sung about. We want to bow before that majesty. We want to bow before Your glory and give You back, Lord, that which You created for Yourself, that which

You purchased 2,000 years ago that were no longer our own, bought with a price.

And, Father, I pray right across this auditorium You'd get a hold of lives, old and young, rich and poor, educated, uneducated, that, Lord, they would put themselves on the altar, and You'd begin to speak, and they'd hear that voice saying, this is the way, walking in it. This is the plan I have for you. Some will go to the mission field.

Some will go to Bible school. Some will lead into business so that they can make money to further the cause of God. Some will have a call to intercession.

Some will have a cause to teach Sunday school kids, youth, children, all part of Your eternal purpose. Father, let each and every person find their destiny, that we might be a kingdom of priests. And I ask that You stand just quietly, and I'm going to make these altars available.

I don't believe in putting pressure on You. I'm just going to ask that You come and You make this an altar, a real altar, not an altar where You give God Your sin. I'm sure 99% of you have done that many years ago, for many of you, but an altar where, like Abraham, You put Your Isaac on it, whatever that Isaac is.

It may be business, it may be a reputation, it may be Your ambition, but where You truly die tonight, and You hand back to God that which He purchased 2,000 years ago, and You do it willingly, You do it voluntarily. He's not going to make You. He's not going to force You.

There were two types of slaves, as you know, in the Old Testament. There was the one that was taken to the doorpost when he had his opportunity to be free. He came to his master, and he says, Master, I've never had a master like You.

I've never had a man that loved me, respected me, honored me, blessed me as much as You have. And even though I could walk out and have total freedom and liberty, I want to serve You now, not because I have to, but because I love You. That's what he's looking for.

Oh, he could make You. He's God. He doesn't want that sort of relationship.

He wants you to come and say, Lord, put a hole in my ear tonight, that the world will know that I don't serve You because I have to, but because I love You. I've never had a master like You. Lord, I don't want to go out of Your house.

I don't want to go away from Your presence. I want to serve You the rest of my life. Let's just stand, shall we? Why don't you come? Let God have His way.

Don't wait for a counselor. I don't think counselors are necessary. Come, bring with your words, the Bible says.

Don't just be passive. Tell God why you're here. Tell Him what you're giving Him.

Let's find a place where you can get alone with God. Verbalize it. Put your hands to the plow and say, God, I don't know where this is going to lead me.

It's sort of like getting married. You don't know where you're going to end up, how many children you're going to have, and so on, but it's the beginning of a journey, saying, Lord, from now on, I'm Yours. From now on, Lord, begin to speak to me over the course of the next few weeks, the next month, whatever,

however long it takes.

God, begin to put your desires within me. Open up the eyes of my understanding. Show me, Lord.

Some of you, no doubt, are thinking, you know, I don't have very much to offer. I certainly didn't. I never thought God could use me.

I honestly didn't. He's not looking again for your ability, but your availability, a willingness to say, Lord, I'll do whatever you want me to do. I want to hear you say one day, well done, thou good and faithful servant.

You see, God won't say that to everybody, unless he's master. Otherwise, you're not a servant. It's painful to die.

It took me four years. I fought. I resisted.

Nobody likes to die. Nobody likes to lose their identity, lose that which to them is of value, their dreams, their goals, their ambitions. But this nation is never going to be touched, and no other nation is going to be touched, unless God has a people for himself, vessels.

When he came to Paul, Paul didn't say, Savior, thank you for taking away my sin. The very first word out of his mouth, Lord, what will you have me to do? Paul understood from the get-go, Lord, what will you have me to do? The Lord says, go into such and such a city, and then he says to Paul, for this reason I've appeared unto you, to make you a millionaire gnome. You might be a witness, a testimony.

You're going to suffer, Paul. I'm going to tell you up front, it's going to cost you. You're going to suffer.

But you're going to have the joy of taking people out of the kingdom of darkness and bring them into the kingdom of God's dear Son. You're going to be my servant. You're going to be a laborer together with me.

And Paul was able to say, having nothing, but I possess all things. He suffered the loss of everything, counted it madung. But he says, listen, I got in return all things.

All things are mine. So while it's painful, there's nothing greater, no greater joy than serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Doesn't mean you won't have trials and problems and difficulties, you will.

But deep down, it's that deep sense of, God, I'm in the center of your will and purpose. The very reason I was created. I'm fulfilling my destiny.

Call him, brother, call him Hewitt. It's karma.

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