

The Central Fact of Christianity

by Dennis Kinlaw

The central fact of Christianity is the cross, which represents the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and is the means by which we are justified by faith.

Duration: 47:47

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Galatians 2:15-17

Topics: "Christianity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of publicly declaring one's faith in Christ. He explains that becoming a Christian means leaving behind one way of life and embracing a new way of life centered on the cross. The speaker gives examples of missionaries like David Livingston, Robert Morrison, and the man who went to the Patagonian, who faced great challenges and hardships in their obedience to God's call. The sermon also highlights the need for humility and willingness to be humiliated for the sake of glorifying God.

Transcript

One of the famous texts of the New Testament is found in the second chapter of Paul's Galatian letter. It is found at the close of that chapter, and it is a passage that deals with the concept of justification by faith, beginning with verse 15, We who are Jews by nature and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law. For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners. Is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid! For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

The central symbol of the Christian faith is without any question the cross. Wherever you go and find Christians, you will find that cross used to represent what it is that they really believe, and more than that, what it is that they really are. Whether it's the great classical European cathedral built in the design of a

cross, or whether it's the young person today in the Jesus movement with the cross hanging around his neck, wherever people identify themselves with the name of Jesus, you will find the cross.

Now I come from a background where there has been very little emphasis upon symbolism. I remember when I was a young person growing up in a heavily Protestant area, the one thing that we prided ourselves a bit upon was the fact that we did not go in for these external, symbolical representations of our faith. And we would have been a bit horrified if anyone had brought into our rather plain and straight churches much of what is found in many of our churches today.

I remember having someone say to me once, do you want a cross on the altar in the church? And in the first place I said, it isn't an altar, the table you're talking about, it's a communion table. We don't have an altar, Christ is our altar, and so I went along with my regular Protestant feel. But I was in Seoul, Korea, and a missionary friend of mine took me outside of that city to the top of a hill where one could stand and look down over that great Asian city.

It is on the rim of Asia, as you know. You are aware that the great mass of Asia today is not Christian, and it has been a long time since there has been much of any Christianity, any great Christian movement in any of Asia, and in recent days even less. As I stood there, we looked down over the city, and suddenly he said to me, Dennis, do you notice the churches? I said, oh, can you spot them? He said, no problem.

There are more Presbyterian churches, he said, in this city than in any city in the world. Not in the United States, not in the Christian West, but in the non-Christian Orient and Asia. He said there are more Presbyterian churches here than in any other city in the world, and if you look down, not only are the Presbyterians with their roots in the Reformation, and the Methodist churches with their roots in the Evangelical Awakening, and the Roman Catholic churches with their roots in Rome, he said you will notice that every single one of them has a cross on top.

So we stood there and looked down over that city, and I began to count the crosses everywhere. Then I began to notice, as I traveled through Korea, that as you go into the villages, you had no trouble finding the church, because the church was the one with the little cross over it. Very few of them with the artistry, the aesthetics, that we have connected with ours, but there it was.

And as I began to sense something of the pulse of the battle of the gospel of Christ and the forces of Christ in that land, as I moved about, I began to look for that cross, and it began to speak to me. You know, some of my feelings about symbolism began to change a bit, because when you're in a world that is in conflict over the faith as to what they will believe, and there is a penalty attached to being a Christian, and perhaps a heavy penalty, because in Korea there were multitudes of martyrs for the name of Christ. When you put that symbol out there to let the world know, it begins to speak and speak volumes, and my heart was excited at that cross that was there in every place wherever you found Christians.

I spoke one evening in Knox Presbyterian Church in Toronto, Canada, just across the street from the University of Toronto. There were two young people who sat down on the front, and afterwards they said to me, would you like to see a little of the nightlife of Toronto? I said, what kind of nightlife? They said, some of the Christian nightlife. So I said, you have Christian nightlife here? And they said, oh yes, you should see it.

So they took me to Rochdale College. Rochdale College is a free university, sort of Berkeley fashion. Really, it's a ten-story apartment building that has been bought by the hippies in the city of Toronto.

And the city fathers have sort of climbed the walls over that one because they cannot control it, and it's right in the center of, the cultural educational center of the city of Toronto. So I went with them. As we walked in, country boy that I was, I was gawking, and one of the kids turned to me and said, for goodness sakes, man, don't do that or we won't get in.

And I said, what do you mean? He said, if you look anything like the fuzz, the fire alarm will go off as you go in and all the dope will be down the toilets before you can get past the security check and you'll never make it. In fact, you had to know the name of the person you wanted to visit and the room that he was in in order to get in. But we went into that free university.

The most educational thing that I found in the library was comic books, which I thought was a commentary. But you know, they said, what we want to show you is the third floor. And so they took us to the third floor, and as we walked down the corridor in the third floor, I noticed it was very different.

Instead of the things that you expect to find among much of the derelict youth of our generation, on every door there was either a fish, a cross, or an ikthu sign with the Greek letters, or some other symbol. But again and again, there on that third floor was the cross, and the third floor was devoted to Christians. And you know, there was a symbol.

And wherever you go in Christianity, you find the cross. And of course, the reason is, is because it was the central fact in the life of our Savior. That's what his life was really all about.

It was about the cross. From the opening moments of his earthly life until its end, the shadow of that cross never left him. It was always there.

It was across his life, it was across his thoughts, it was across his emotions and his heart. In fact, the story is one that you ought to have been able to have anticipated from the beginning, because there were enough foreshadowings there. From Herod's soldiers, who when he was born said, we have been sent to kill him, because he must be destroyed.

To that day when Jesus' mother and Joseph took him into the temple to present him to the Lord, and an ancient saint lifted up his voice and said, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. And he turned to Mary and said, this one is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. And then he looked a second time at Mary and said, and a sword will pierce your heart too.

Because you see, that was the central fact of his life, that a sword was to pierce him. And those who were closely identified with him were to sense and feel some of that too. You will remember that when John the Baptist presented Jesus as the Messiah and said, this is he, he said, behold, not the King of kings and Lord of lords, and not behold God, but behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world.

Now, you know enough to know that a lamb to an Israelite, to a Hebrew, was primarily a sacrificial animal. And there's almost the sense in which as the cross is assembled to us, the lamb was assembled to Israel, its greatest feast, greatest festival, that of the Passover. Because, you know, the central act of the Passover was the killing, the sacrificing of a lamb.

And when you look at a lamb, you may think of a coat or of a good piece of meat to eat. But when a Jew looked at a choice lamb, he thought of an altar and shed blood. And the first public word ever pronounced about Jesus was, here he is.

You've made your sacrifices and killed your lambs, now God is ready to kill his. So his presentation to Israel was the sentence of death. Shadow was always there.

You will remember that from things like when Nicodemus came to see him in the night and he said, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. This he states of his death. To the feeding of the five thousand where he said, you've missed the point, it's not the bread and fish that I give you that's important, it's my body and my blood.

And except you drink my blood and eat my body, you can have no part in me. And this he spoke of his death. Or whether it was his discourse on the Good Shepherd, where he said, I am the Good Shepherd, the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

The shadow was always there. He knew that for which he came. And he would not be talked out of it, nor would he let anybody else deny or dispute the purpose of his coming.

When Peter in that moment of great and glorious insight saw the nature and the real personage of Jesus and cried out, thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God, you will remember that Jesus turned and said, yes, and now we go to Jerusalem, there I will be sacrificed at the hands of evil men. And Peter said, not so, Lord. The Christ is to reign and to be triumphant.

And Jesus said, get thee behind me, Satan, that's the thing for which I came. The church has always been ready to accept the Christ divorced from the cross, but Jesus said the two can't be separated. If he's to be the Christ, he has to take a cross, and if there's to be Christianity, there must be a cross.

So there it is, from the beginning to end in the life of Jesus until those last moments when he cried out, it is finished, and his spirit departed until the end, that was the central fact of his existence. Now, if that's what Jesus' life was all about, as he came and as he died for our sins and provided a way for our redemption, it's interesting that Jesus also said that that was to be the way of the follower of Jesus. Now, most of us are like Peter.

We glory in the insight that he's the Christ, but when he says, oh, by the way, there's a cross connected with the Christ, we say, not so, Lord. But you will remember that when Jesus spoke to those who were to follow him, he said, take up your cross, your cross, and follow me. And again and again he said, except a man give up his life, he cannot save it.

If you save your life, you will lose it. You remember in that passage in John 12 where he said, except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it dies, it will bring forth much fruit, and so with you, except you forfeit your life for me, it will be sterile.

But if you do come to that cross and forfeit your life for me, it will be fruitful. Jesus very clearly said, yes, there was a cross for me, and there's to be one for you. You will remember he said about Peter, your end will be one that you do not want, but they will take you and lead you where you do not want to go.

And this he spoke, John said about his death, and you remember tradition tells us that they crucified Peter upside down. And Paul caught the thrust of this so that when he was talking about salvation, he said concerning himself. When he came to a point of justification, he said, I am crucified with Christ.

And interestingly enough, he coined a new word. He made up a Greek word when he said that. It is found nowhere else in Greek literature, but here he took the preposition with and hooked it on to the word

crucified and said there is something about the essence of being a Christian, yet that can only be described in terms of an identification on the part of the believer with the Christ who is crucified, whereby the believer enters in in some mysterious way to that same experience.

And he says, I am crucified with Christ. Nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me. Now, it is interesting that this is to be the character of your life and mine, if we are to be Christians, the same way it was to be the character of Jesus' life.

Why is it that we do not come to grips with it? And why do we try to paint it in any other way? When Christians were dying for Christ in Communist China and the Communists could not understand their courage, and so they, in their ignorance, slit their chest open to find out what it was that gave them that courage. And one missionary that was there told me, she said, if they had had eyes to see, they would have found the cross. That's what makes a Christian, isn't it? You say, what do you mean? All right, let me illustrate.

I believe the Christian life begins, as far as this life is concerned, and ends somewhere adjacent to the cross. I don't believe that any man ever comes to Christ without having come by way of the cross, not just Christ's sacrifice for him, but also his sacrifice for Christ. Christ died for my sins, and the Scripture indicates that I should die to my sins for Christ.

Christ gave up his life for me on that cross somewhere. If I am to be his, I have to give up my life for him. You know, I read the New Testament for decades before I saw that the text, Galatians 220, is in a justification by faith passage.

I always thought that the crucified life was the deeper life. But the interesting thing is, Galatians 220 is in the middle of a passage that talks about how to find peace with God, how to find forgiveness of sin. And that's where it starts.

And I don't believe there's any other way. Because what is the Christian? The Christian is a person who has turned from his way to Christ's way. And to do that, something has to die.

We have in our town an old fellow by the name of Dr. E. A. Seamans, who's one of this generation's saints. And one of the things that, one of the stories that I've always loved out of his experiences in India is that of the Hindu merchant who came to him one day and said that he wanted to become a Christian. So he said, we gave him instruction so that we knew that he understood what the Christian faith was.

And then after we were sure that he knew the Christian faith and was a Christian, we talked to him about baptism, and he said, yes, I'd like to be baptized next Sunday morning in church. Dr. E. A. Seamans said, you know, I don't believe that's where you ought to be baptized. And he said, oh, where should I be baptized then? Well, he said, you're a merchant.

Everybody in town knows you as a merchant. Next Tuesday is market day. All the Hindus in this part of India will be here next Tuesday.

You know that pool in front of your marketplace? I'd like to baptize you on market day in that pool in the middle of the town square. So the Hindu's eyes popped out and said, man, I'll starve to death if we do that. Dr. Seamans looked back at him and said, what do you mean? He said, why, every Hindu in this part of the country will know that I've become a Christian if we do that, and then they won't trade with me.

And he said, oh, are you going to keep it a secret that you're becoming a Christian? He said, well, no, I wouldn't want to do that. Well, he said, why don't we just get it known all over all at once? So he said, let's have the baptism next Tuesday on market day down in the town square in front of your place of business. And the guy said, that'll kill me.

He aced him and said, yeah, that's right. But when you die, he begins to live within you. You know, I believe that's the reason that Billy Graham uses a public invitation.

And I believe that that's the reason that the public invitation was established out throughout of the American camp meeting. Because it was in the American camp meeting that multitudes of people came to know Christ, and the invitation was given to publicly identify themselves that they were turning from their ways to Christ and let the world know whose side they were on. And you know, that's hard, never easy.

I've sat and talked with a man and his wife not too long ago who had just been awakened to the fact that they were not Christians. He was a preacher's son. It was interesting to watch the two of them as they came to a very clear understanding of what they had to do.

And they said, if we become Christians, we'll have to let it be known, won't we? She looked over at me and said, what gets me is this public stuff. She said, why do you have to weep and cry around a bit? I said, well, the weeping and the crying bit isn't what's important. But the public thing, that's another matter.

You've got to go on record to where you know and the world knows that you belong to Christ. And what that means is that one way of life has stopped and another has begun. And there's a bit of a cross in that.

I dare say there's somebody in this crowd who's never really come to know Christ. Or maybe you've known Christ and you've turned away. And your life now is not characterized by the things that Christians' life should be characterized by.

If you are to be redeemed, there has to be a cross. You've got to pick it up and you've got to go. And something dies when you do.

Now, the beauty, of course, is something comes alive. Now, if that's true of conversion, it is also true of something deeper. And this is the reason we speak about the crucified life as the deeper life, the sanctified life.

And you know, really, I believe that this is at the heart of being spirit-filled. You know, I do not believe that you can be spirit-filled without a death to self. Because you see, if I'm filled with his spirit, my spirit has been replaced.

And you know, there's something about my spirit that doesn't like to die easily. And one of the things a man finds after he becomes a Christian is that there's a bit of warfare within him. And the old nature within does not capitulate easily.

And so there is that warfare within the Christian's life, that conflict within the Christian's life. And that's the reason that in practically every effective Christian leader's biography that I have ever read, there is the story about how after his conversion he came to a place of the cross, in which he died to his own self-interest, and his own right to himself, and his own way, and let Christ crucify that old self within him to where Christ could reign supreme within. Because you see, if you're to be filled with the spirit of Christ, you've got to die.

The old spirit's got to go. Now, this is the most important thing, I think, that a Christian has to come to grips with. Because all of your growth and all of your fruitfulness will hang here.

If you've never read much Christian biography, that's too bad. You ought to find the lives of some of the greats, like Hudson Taylor. Read his *Spiritual Secrets*.

The life of Samuel Brangle, read that story. Read the life of Jonathan Goforth or of Jonathan Goforth's wife, Rosalind. You will find in their lives how after they became Christians, that conflict focused at a point where they came to the cross, and there was a death within.

Norman Grubb said that he was, who wrote *The Life of C.T. Studd*, magnificent thing. He said he had been a missionary in Africa for a number of years. He said he was riding a dugout canoe down a river, his heart hungry.

Christian? Of course he was a Christian. He had given up a position. His brother was the Lord Mayor of London.

Another brother was commanding officer of the Dragoon Guards, those fellows with the big hats that guard the queen and so forth. He now was in the midst of Africa with all of its bugs and disease and heat and everything else. Of course he was a Christian.

But he said, there was defeat and despair within me. He said, I finally pulled that dugout canoe over to the bank of the river, pulled it up on the shore, got out on my face before God and said, Oh God, there is a need for me to come to an end and you to have total possession and control. He said to seal it, I found the only thing I could find.

I had a postcard in my pocket. He said, I pulled out the postcard and drew a tombstone on it and put Norman Grubb and the date and said, died here today. He said at that point, Christ, God, full control.

You look at his life, see the influence that it has had, the impact that it has made. Jesus said, yes, there's a cross for me and it means the end of my life so that yours can begin. And he said, there's a cross for you, which means the end of yours so that mine and you can begin.

Now what happens when this takes place? I want to just run down very quickly just a few things that make a world of difference. You know, when you come to that place of inner death to your own way, then you find that you don't have to have your own way and that fetish is gone and you're never free until you get to that place. I appreciated what Paul Leaning said this morning about people who'd rather be right than righteous.

You're never free until you can give up your own way. Never forget the girl sat across the aisle from me in French class, most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. All my family were dirty blondes and she was a magnificent brunette.

French class is a good place for that kind of thing. Good clean kid, greatest passion of my life. Lord said, yes, but she's not a Christian.

I said, Lord, just give me her and you can have anything. You can have everything. He said, we don't bargain.

If it's going to be my life, I'm going to run it. And that's one you can't have. And I died.

She became an artist model. Now none of these young people will look at me and believe that. You never know though when you look at the outside of some of these old fellows.

I remember I went with Elsie after we started courting shopping one day and she went to buy a coat and we went in a dress shop and there on the manager's desk were 16 pictures of the girl that I took to the junior senior banquet. After we got married, two of my sisters, one of whom is in the crowd here, sent us a box of candy with her picture on the cover of it. My wife didn't think that was funny at all.

I said, Lord, just give me her and you can have everything. He said, we don't play it that way. If it's going to be my life, I run it.

And so I had to say, all right, Lord. You know, I wouldn't trade Elsie for a million of the other kind because Elsie was the right one for me and God knew that and he was waiting. But I would admit, if I had had my way, you're never safe until you've given up your way.

You don't have to always look good. Have you ever thought what a relief it is to get to the place where you don't have to always come out of everything looking good? Think of how much sweat most of us live with, keeping up a front. If I'd had to look good, I'd have never been a preacher.

I would have never preached the first sermon. I was so scared as a kid, I walked the back street, keeping bumping into people because if I bumped into them, I'd have to speak to them. I became extremely friendly, you know.

Not because I liked people, but I found that dogs that wag their tails didn't get kicked as often. I remember when I was a senior in high school, we commemorated the 200th anniversary of the conversion of John Wesley and I had a part in the program. I was an exalted high school senior.

My home church, which was a county seat home church, you know, the largest Methodist church in the area. Plenty of pride. My father was a lawyer.

I had a poem. I had to walk all the way down the middle aisle to carry a candle, walk up in the pulpit to say my piece, and walk over and put the candle in a candelabra. I started down the aisle and as I got down the aisle, that thing began to do this.

And the farther I went, the worse it got. And when I got into the pulpit, I looked down at that thing and I started in on the second line instead of the first and backed up and tried to find the first and couldn't get it and looked for the third and it was gone. I walked over and put it down in the candelabra and walked off in total humiliation.

The Lord said, I want you to preach. I said, you made a mistake. I said, there's no point in humiliating you like that.

And he said, Dennis, I don't think it's my humiliation that you're concerned about. Are you willing to be humiliated? I said, wait a minute, Lord, I want to glorify your name. But how can you get glory out of something like this? And he said, do you love me enough that you're willing to stand there and shake and be embarrassed and be a failure? Will you let me make a failure out of you? You're never free till you can fail.

Go right ahead. But Robinson said he came out of the service and he said one person turned to him and said, what a great service. As he walked out, he heard two ladies talking.

One of them said, did you ever hear anything as bad as that? He walked off. He said, thank you, Lord. I didn't get puffed up when I heard the first one.

No need to get puffed down on the second one. You're never free until you're out of that business. You've laid your reputation, your status on the line.

You can fail. You don't have to come out looking good. You don't have to have the last word.

Paul got to that this morning, so I don't need to develop it. What a slave, the person who has to have the last word. I pity the woman whose husband has to have the last word.

The only person I pity as much is the wife, or the husband whose wife has to have the last word. Or what about a father who has to have the last word? Or what about a son who has to have it? It's wonderful when you can get to the place where you're involved in bigger things than that, where you don't have to defend yourself. My, what a massive amount of mental energy is saved when you don't have to always be defending yourself.

Just put that in the Lord's hands and forget. If you don't have to come out looking good, you won't defend yourself. You can give all that to God.

You don't have to please the crowd. You're free now in the Spirit of Christ and in his power to be different. You're not free until you can do it.

But let me say something more. You don't have to flaunt your difference after you become different. Did you ever see people who could flaunt their difference? You see, you can just leave all that to God, because you've died to your way, and your interest is not how you're going to look coming out of this, but whether you've done the will of Christ.

And when you come to that place of crucifixion where that's true, then you're ready to live. Now that usually, that comes, I think, in that fullness of the Spirit, where that sanctifying Spirit comes in a second crisis in a person's life and cleanses him. And the mark and the proof is not anything external.

And here is one of the places where we must be very careful. No gift is an evidence of the fullness of the Spirit. Let me remind you that the Corinthians were not Spirit-filled, but they were the ones with the gifts.

You can have the gifts, but not be Spirit-filled. But you know, the thing about it is you'll use the gifts for false purposes unless you are. So don't say, I have the gifts of the Spirit, or some gift of the Spirit, therefore I know I'm Spirit-filled.

The gifts are never an evidence. You see, it's that death to self, where your spirit has come to an end and his spirit has filled, that's the evidence. Now, you know, I believe that should be not just the character of our lives in conversion and in that deeper experience, I think it should be the characteristic of our obedience and of our service to him.

Because if he calls you, he'll call you to follow the way of the cross. You don't think it was easy for David Livingstone to leave England and go to black Africa, do you? You don't think it was easy for his wife to follow him through black Africa, do you? You don't think it was easy for Robert Morrison to go to China and

spend most of his life before he ever saw a single convert? The man who went to the Patagonian starved. The ship that was supposed to bring him food from England, his friends back home had forgotten him.

Two weeks after he died, the food came. It wasn't easy. When they found him, he was sitting at his table.

He'd been writing. Do you know what his last words were before the pen trailed off the page? Oh, the goodness of God to me, the last words. Because, you see, he'd prayed whether by life or by death he might win those Patagonians.

His life was already on the line, and what he hadn't been able to do in his life was done through his death. And all of England was challenged by it, and the work advanced more in his death than could have ever happened in his life. You give your life to Christ, he will call you to go on the way of the cross.

You say, well now, wait a minute, that sounds horrible. You mean it's a bloody painful thing. Well, Jesus felt it was a little rough.

You know, I always thought that Jesus was so good that all his father had to do was say, Jesus, this is what I want you to do, and he'd jump and run do it. That was true of everything except the cross. When it came to the cross, he went and got out on his face and sweated that were drops of blood and said, Father, if it's possible, let this one pass from me.

I don't want it, but if there's no other way, I'll take it. Took him three times to do that. When the Greeks came and reminded him of where he was going, he said, What shall I say, Father? Save me from this hour? No, much as I'd like to pray that, this is the thing for which I've come.

But you see, the salvation of the world came out of it. Do you think he has any regrets? The glory of heaven is going to be the fruit that he has out of the cross. Let me ask you something.

Do you think you'll ever have a regret if you take up your cross and fall on Christ? The only regret you will ever have is if you fail. Because you see, when you take the way of the cross, you find that it is the fruitful, meaningful life. One of the books that influenced me the most was the life of Samuel Brangle.

Brangle was a graduate of DePauw University. Went to Boston University School of Theology when very few preachers had a theology degree. While he was at Boston University, he heard William Booth.

He listened to Daniel Steele, and he began to sense that he had never really been filled with the Spirit. So he began to seek. He was a great orator.

He began to surrender. He came to his voice. God said, Yes, that's the big thing.

Can I make you stutter? He said, Stutter? I want to be a preacher. The Lord said, I thought you wanted to be what I wanted you to be. If I want to make you stutter, is that all right? Stammer? He said, Well, Lord, that's the one big gift I have to give to you.

I'm a good speaker. That's the one big gift I have to give. And the Lord said, Well, why don't you give it to me? You see, most of us, when we say I want to give to God, mean we want to keep it and use it for him.

The death in his life was at that point. He said, I came to the place where, yes, I said, Lord, if you want me to stammer, and if I never speak correctly again, that's your will. God came in glorious power and filled him with the Holy Ghost.

You know what he did with him after he filled him? Sent him to England to join the Salvation Army. When he got there, you know what General Booth did with him? He was the only man in the Salvation Army with two degrees. I assume he was the only man in the Salvation Army with one.

Converted bums, prostitutes, embezzlers, the rest. General Booth said, We'll find out what's in him. He made him the boot black for the Salvation Army camp.

Bringle found himself in an unfinished basement, half covered with water, cleaning boots of people that couldn't read or write, no education, butchered the king's English. They were sent out to preach while he, the brilliant orator, was in the basement shining their boots. He said, You know, a voice came to him and said, Bringle, if I ever saw a fool, I'm looking at one now.

He said, Oh, God gave you a great gift and you buried it. You know what God does with people that bury their gifts? He said, You know, a bit of hell swept over me and I looked up and said, God, did I make a mistake? He said, A second voice came and said, Bringle, don't you worry. I washed their feet.

You're not too good to shine their shoes, are you? And he said, Suddenly the presence of the divine Christ was there and he said, That's as close as I've ever been to heaven. His friends thought he'd buried himself. Salvation Army? How could you ever influence the world there? I sat in a Princeton Theological Seminary classroom, listened to a man with two PhDs, former atheist who had been converted, brilliant philosopher, say, Gentlemen, I want to read you a testimony that has influenced and transformed my life.

And Amiel Kaye pulled out Samuel Bringle's testimony and read it and said, This is one of the profound influences on my life, gentlemen. This can happen to you. You know, the wonderful thing is that when God buries you, there are such nice resurrections that take place.

But you know, when you back off from the tomb, you find a living dead. But when you say, Lord, if that's where you want to take me, it'll take eternity to find the good things that'll come out.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/20/SID20900.mp3>

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