

The Radical Character of Paul's Discipleship

by Dennis Kinlaw

Dennis Kinlaw's sermon explores the radical nature of discipleship through the lens of time, corporate worship, and historical examples of transformation.

Duration: 57:33

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 16:21-23, Acts 3:22-24

Topics: "Radical"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of giving our full attention to God during church services. He highlights that the most important person in our midst is the Lord, and we should earnestly and passionately focus on Him. The speaker also mentions the need to expect something to happen when we turn our attention to God, as transformation and change come from His presence. He shares the story of Dwight L. Moody and how his preaching led to many young men committing their lives to evangelizing the world. The speaker concludes by mentioning a story from F. B. Meyer's life, where he preached in a city with limited time, but still had a powerful impact on the congregation.

Transcript

These are remarkable days in which we live, and my own conviction is that God wants to do some new things and is going to do them whether we are a part of it or not. And if we're sensitive enough to know what He's about, we may be able to get in on it, and I'd like to be able to get in on what God is going to do in these next few days, in these next few years. The world is different from what it was three years ago.

The Church of Christ is in a different position from what it was three years ago. Our opportunities are radically different from what they were three years ago, and it is my conviction that God is the one who's turned the key and opened the door, and it's because He intends to do something. I've been spending some time over the last four or five years working my way through, I started to say back, but really it's the first time within a depth, working my way through some of the data dealing with the Reformation, and particularly the Anglican Reformation.

But for a long time I thought that Martin Luther and John Calvin were the keys to what happened in the 16th century. But there were some fellows who came along like that before him, like John Huss, but you don't know much about John Huss, because they burned him at the stake. But when Luther and Calvin came along, there were certain political concomitants that were in their advantage, or to their advantage, and one of them was that the Holy Roman Empire was breaking up, and because the Holy Roman Empire

was breaking up, Martin Luther and John Calvin had a better chance of surviving.

And as that empire broke up, the Spirit of God was able to put a new configuration in the world. So in my head, one of the questions that I have in my mind is whether we're living in a day that is more like the 16th century than any period since the 16th century, and if that's true, then we need to be extremely sensitive to what the indications are as to what the Holy Spirit's game plan is, so we can be at the center of the action, or as close to that as we can get, rather than be off on the margin when God is in big business. So I find myself excited about the chance to just spend two days, 48 hours, like this.

Now the second thing is, I get excited about the possibility of two days, because so much of our religion is on the hour, an hour and a quarter, or two-hour stint. I'm convinced that nothing very significant is ever going to happen on a Sunday morning church service that's going to be very profound and make a long-range difference. It is things that happen other places that determine what's going to happen in that hour between 11 and 12 or between 9.30 and 10.30, whenever your church service is.

I'm convinced that we need time to spend before God, and we need time to spend with each other, that it is when we spend time that something happens to us significantly, and particularly when we spend time together. It's interesting how differently the Christian looks on time than all the rest of the religions of the world, because the Christian values time in a special way. You're aware that we believe in eternity, too, and the eternal is what concerns us most.

But isn't it interesting that the doorway into eternity for all of us is through time, and it's what happens in time and what happens with time that determines how we relate to the eternal world and how much of that eternal world gets involved in our lives. So we believe that time is significant, but one of the interesting things biblically is that we believe that some times are more important than other times, that all time is not of equal worth. There are some moments that are incredibly touched by God and mean infinitely more than other moments, and so we need to recognize that there can be a qualitative difference between hours, between days, and between minutes.

I was influenced earlier in my life by Emile Cahier at Princeton in a course on Blaise Pascal, and it was the first time I had ever been introduced to his memorial. You will remember that Pascal was one of the greatest minds of all time, and certainly could be listed as maybe the greatest mind in the 17th century. He was a free thinker, had nothing to do really with Christianity, and then one day something happened to him and his life changed.

You will remember they did not know for sure what had happened to him or why it took place until his death when his valet was preparing him for the funeral, and he sensed something, felt something crinkle in his jacket, and he sliced the inside of it and pulled out two sheets that had on it what we know as Pascal's memorial. I'm not going to read that to you, but just to remind you of it, it tells you the day, it tells you the year, it tells you what day it was on the church calendar, it tells you who the saints were that were recognized on that day, and then he says from about 10.30 in the evening until about 12.30. Fire, fire, fire, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. One of the most significant influences in Christian history came out of a two-hour slot.

Now that doesn't mean that there weren't things that led up to it, but if it hadn't been for those two hours, you and I wouldn't be talking about Pascal today, and we'd have never had a course on him at Princeton, and there would be a lot of other things in the history of the Christian church that wouldn't be there. Those two hours made a radical difference in that man's life and through him than a radical difference in the

world of which he was a part. Now we recognize that because you will remember that there were 80 years of prelude to it, but it was those minutes or however long the time was when the bush burned that really brought things into focus for Moses.

There's a sense in which you could count everything up to that from a human point of view failure, but in that time that that bush burned, something happened in Moses that he was never the same again and maybe the most significant event in human history apart from the crucifixion and the resurrection took place while that bush was burning. So time, it is not all of equal value. Qualitatively, some of it is different.

We could talk about the time that Isaiah spent in the temple, or we could talk about the fact that the apostles had three years with Jesus, and that certainly was incredibly valuable time. But isn't it interesting that the basic things, the most significant things that Jesus wanted to teach his disciples, he was not able to teach in those three years, and in the last six months of his life he tried to explain the cross to them. And you will remember that on the last night before the cross, Peter, the leader of them all, had not the vaguest conception of what Jesus was talking about when he talked about the cross.

But do you know what happened in the third chapter of Acts when he stood up after, you will remember, the miracle there at the temple? Do you remember what he said? He said, all that's happening here and all that has happened in these last few weeks, Moses told us it was going to happen and all of the prophets in the Old Testament told us that God was going to send his servant and that he would suffer and die for us. Now it's interesting, I think the intellectual revolution that took place in Peter took place in one day's time when the Holy Spirit descended on him and three years of seminary prior to that with the greatest theological teacher the world has ever known, three years of theological education prior to that moment when the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost did not solve the intellectual problem that he needed solved and the coming of the Holy Spirit and a moment of power and grace and love brought understanding to him that had not come even at the feet of the teaching of Jesus. So I simply mention all of that to say, just think, we've got two days together, 48 hours or 40, somewhere in that category, and it'd be a marvelous thing if something could happen to me that next week I'm different from what I am at the present moment.

And if you could be different next week, not because of any virtue within us, but because simply the gift of God of himself to us. Now these differences in times, the qualitative difference that comes is the result of God coming near and God putting his touch on those of us, any who find that kind of transformation. I remember when I come to this, a story that I heard many years ago that I've always loved and periodically it comes back to mind.

Don't think I ever read it but once and I've never heard anybody refer to it. But when I was in my younger years and looking for models for preaching, I read a British Baptist evangelist and preacher a good bit. His name was F.B. Meyer and I expect some of you have drunk at that fountain too.

Well, one of the stories out of F.B. Meyer's life that I always loved was he came into a city in England and he had three days to preach there. His train was late and he arrived just a few minutes before the beginning of the service. They just had time to take him to his hotel, let him put his bags in his room, and he was hardly able to wash his face and hands without having to leave to go catch that first preaching appointment.

But his host was with him and so as they turned to leave the room, F.B. Meyer said, let's pray. And F.B. Meyer's prayer was this, Lord, you said with you a thousand years was as a day and a day was as a thousand years. We've got three days.

See if you can do three thousand years work in three days and if you can, we'll appreciate it. Now, that's the kind of sensitivity that F.B. Meyer had to the fact that one hour can be different from another and one moment can be different from another. But we have these days that we can spend together.

I think that means that we ought to be very careful about our attitude that he gets our attention. That the most important person in our midst these hours is not the person we like the best or admire the most or we'd like to know more intimately here, but the great guest here and the most important one is our Lord and he is the one who should get our attention. The second thing is that as we give him our attention, it ought to be done earnestly and passionately.

He deserves the best attention that we can give and the most passionate desire that our hearts can conjure up with the aid of the Holy Spirit. We ought, as we turn our attention to him, we ought to expect something to happen because this kind of change doesn't come, I don't think, capriciously. It comes because we have let God get us ready for it and get us receptive, so we should expect.

And we shouldn't tell him what to do or how to do. We should let him do what he wants to do in our hearts and lives, what he wants to do to prepare us for that next stage in our service for him. Now let me say a word about the fact that I think special things happen when folk corporately seek God.

I don't think we should, where there is anything that can take the place of private time with God, it's essential. But there is also something very significant about when we come together corporately and open our hearts and minds to each other and open our hearts and minds to the Christ that comes to me through you and the Christ that may come to you even through me. So as we open corporately to each other and open to him, something can happen.

Now I want to say a word also about the value of extended sessions. And this is what I was getting to a while ago when I commented on the fact that I have serious questions about radical change taking place in an ordinary Sunday morning service. I think there has to be in most of our lives a time when we give enough time that the Holy Spirit can dig down through the layers of the onion in us and get down to the center of us.

And when we come casually or occasionally or briefly into his presence, he may dig down through one level, but there may be a dozen levels more he needs to get through before radical transformation takes place within us. I think that that was the virtue of the old camp meeting in the United States. I had the privilege of attending a camp meeting when I was 13 years of age, much to my chagrin, because I was trapped into going there and I didn't want to go.

And what I found was you had five services a day for a 13-year-old and you had them for 10 days. That's 50 services in 10 days. Now I was a casual church goer.

By casual I mean that I went Sunday morning to Sunday school, Sunday morning to church, Sunday night to Epworth League, and Sunday night to church. And occasionally my father would, in spite of me, take me to Wednesday night prayer meeting. So I knew that kind of religious life, but it had never affected me.

Amen was still my favorite religious word and the one I looked for in every service. And I felt that the thought of going to church to be exciting and to be a privilege, oh no, no, no. You went out of pure duty and responsibility and respectable people did that kind of thing, so you went along with it and didn't fight it too hard.

And particularly if you were 13 and your father was a tough old Scot who believed everybody belonged there. Now, but I found myself in a camp meeting and it was interesting. Service after service, Bible study after Bible study, something began to dig down.

And by about the third day when the teacher in a young person's Bible class turned and looked at me and said, Dennis, are you a Christian? If I'd been asked that question in my home church, I would have said, of course I'm a Christian. If I'm a Methodist, I've been baptized, I take communion, I'm part of this. If these people are Christians, I certainly am.

But when she looked at me and said, Dennis, are you a Christian? There was something inside me that said, heavens no. A change had taken place. And do you know, when I went home from that camp meeting, when I went home, I walked into a high school as a freshman in high school where I did not know a single person who witnessed of the new birth.

And when I walked back into my local church, I didn't know a person in my local church who witnessed of the new birth. And when I sat down with my pastor to tell him about what had happened to me, he looked at me with some apprehension and said, well, you don't think this ought to have to happen to everybody, do you? Now, that was the unfriendly environment to what I had found in Christ when I walked into it. But do you know, I had a memory.

I had a memory of the living presence of Christ. I had a memory of intimacy with him. I had a memory of Christ that stood with me and stayed with me for four years until I came to Ashbury College and found it again.

It was not a part of my local context. But that memory of the presence of Christ with me kept me steady. Now, that doesn't mean it kept me from turning away and kept me open so that when the time came and I could find that kind of fellowship again, I thought I had gotten to heaven.

I didn't need to go to heaven. I was in Wilmore, Kentucky. Now, you can't understand that.

But if you'd been in my shoes back in those days, you would understand it. But in those ten days, there was a memory built into me that I can never forget over and never cease to thank God for. Now, there is something that happens when corporately we wait before him in an extended period of time.

I've been interested in what can come out of a group that will expose themselves to the word and expose themselves to each other and expose themselves to the Holy Spirit. As I told you, I've been working my way back through some of the Anglican Reformation. And you're aware that we wouldn't be here this afternoon if it hadn't been for a group of students at Cambridge that met in an upstairs room in an inn called the White Horse Inn in Cambridge.

And when they came in, they locked the doors and shuttered the windows. They came in ones and twos, not in a group. They came in secretly.

And then in the firebox underneath the wood that was there to feed the fireplace, they pulled out their Greek New Testaments and began to read their Greek New Testaments. And as they read their Greek New Testaments and shared what they saw with each other, they compared what they found in the New Testament with what they were experiencing in Cambridge and what they experienced in the Anglican Church, the Roman Catholic Church of that day. There was such a contrast between what they found in the New Testament as biblical Christianity and what they had experienced as young men studying for the

priesthood that they began to say, wait a minute, we've missed something.

And out of that came the Anglican Revival, and most of the boys that were in that group were burned at the stake, you will remember. Thomas Bilney, Hugh Latimer, Thomas Cranmer was collateral to the group, but a whole group of these that were there were burned at the stake. It's interesting there wouldn't be an Ashbury College if it hadn't been for that group of men.

Because it wouldn't have been an Anglican Church, there would have been a Roman Catholic Church in England, and John Wesley would have been in a different context when he came along. So when you get a group of people together who open themselves up to the Word of God, you have no idea how long the shadow is going to be. You have no idea how long the influence is going to be.

When a group of people open themselves to each other, to the Spirit of God, and especially, and this is a prime thing, to the Word of God. Now it was because of that that 200 years later you will remember a group of Oxford students met together. And one of them was named John, and one was named Charles, and nobody in this crowd is going to question the fact that we wouldn't be here today if it hadn't been for that group that met.

But they wouldn't have been there if it hadn't been for the group they met in the White Horse Inn. And what was their purpose? They wanted to be biblical Christians. And they sat together and said, what is God saying in His Word, and what is He saying to our time, and what is He saying to us, and how do we fit in with His program in our time? That means that if this is what we are about, it's big business, whether there are great numbers or whether there's anybody important here or not.

When those fellows met at Oxford, none of them were important, and when those fellows met at Cambridge, none of them at that stage of the game were important. But God was there and something happened. Another of the stories that I love, and which some of you, many of you have heard me talk about, is, I'll never forget discovering, and I discovered it, the story of Dwight L. Moody and the three young university men who came to him in, was it 1876, and asked him if he would spend four weeks of a summer with some university students that they could pull together.

And they pulled together some 250 university students, and by the last day of the four weeks, you will remember, 100 of those young men had committed themselves to give their lives to the evangelization of the world in that generation. Now you'd have never heard of E. Stanley Jones in Wilmore, Kentucky. There wouldn't be this building here, you can keep on going, if it hadn't been for the student volunteer movement that came out of that.

There wouldn't have been Alex Reed, there wouldn't have been an E. A. Seamans, you wouldn't have known about David Seamans, you can just keep on going on down the line. It came because a group of men came together to open themselves to the Word of God and to open themselves to the Holy Spirit. So, we need to expose ourselves to the Word, we need to expose ourselves to each other, we need to take advantage of the hours that we have together, and do it with the kind of openness where God can begin to speak to us.

Now, with that introduction, I want to turn and look at some scripture. I'm not going to do this in the typical Bible study, because I haven't gotten far enough in my own understanding, I'm still digging the ore. And you know, gold never comes pure, does it? It usually comes mixed up in something else.

Silver doesn't come pure, it comes mixed up in something else. Most of the precious things in the world come mixed up with some common stuff. Now, I haven't gotten all this sorted out, but I want to tell you there's some gold here, at least there's gold for me, so you help me do some mining in the time that we have together.

I want to look at the book of 1 Corinthians, and it is of interest to me for a number of reasons. It's a significant book, you know, because it's the second longest of Paul's letters. Only Romans is a shade longer than the book of 1 Corinthians.

It comes early in the Christian church. It's closer to the death of Christ than I am to graduation from college or seminary or ordination for the ministry, because it was written some 20 to 25 years after the death of Christ. Somewhere around, I suspect, 53, 54 A.D. So if he was crucified and died and was resurrected in A.D. 30, you see where it is.

Alright, there is another thing that interests me in 1 Corinthians. That is that we see the Apostle Paul as a human being, probably as well in this book as in any book that we've got in the New Testament. And I'm very interested in Paul because Paul, in a sense, is the most important Christian in that first century after Christ.

He's the one that laid the groundwork for the church across the world. And in this letter, there are these glimpses where you can see what he's like. Some of the glimpses you may not like, but this is the best the church had to offer.

Some of the glimpses may convict you. They certainly convict me, but that's what I'd like to do. It's interesting how different the book of Romans is from the book of 1 Corinthians.

And Romans has gotten so much more attention than 1 Corinthians, because Romans is a beautiful theological abstract. It is dealing with the Christian gospel in theory and in abstraction. You don't need to know where Paul was when he wrote the letter.

You don't need to know anything that ever happened to Paul. It is a statement of Christian doctrine and it runs down through the whole thing. Very little that you'll learn about Paul in the book of Romans except his understanding of what the gospel was.

But if you look at 1 Corinthians, you'll see the man. And I don't know about you, but I've learned more from preachers than I have from preaching. Now, I may be different on that score, but when you mention great preachers to me, if I ever knew them, it's the things I knew personally about them that told me about them that made their preaching significant.

I had the chance to get to know John Church in his later years. I remember I was invited to preach in a camp meeting with him. And I came to the first service totally terrified.

To stand on the same platform with him, he preached in the morning. I was to preach at 2.30. About 30 minutes before the service, I was sweating like fury and doing everything I could do to get a better sermon than I was capable of producing. And I was a little rap at the door.

And I thought, who would bother me 30 minutes before my preaching time? And I went and here stood Mrs. John Church. Very gentle lady and very quiet. And she had a plate in one hand with a slab of pound cake on it.

And in her other hand, she had a saucer and a cup full of coffee. And she said, I always feed Brother John before he preaches so he'll have energy. I thought maybe you would like some.

For 10 days, every time I got ready to preach, 30 minutes before I preached, it was Mrs. Church. She adopted me. And that opened the way to get to know John Church.

And some of the most priceless insights I've ever had came not just from his preaching, that was great, but when I got to know the man. Let me give you one story that some of you, maybe many of you, but let me repeat it anyway for anybody who hasn't. He was a young preacher working his way up.

He had a certain gift for oratory, use of language. He was very gifted in his use of language. He was to preach the commencement address or baccalaureate, I don't know which it was, in Hughes Auditorium for Asbury College.

Now, he was not well educated. He had a college degree, but that was all. And so he felt he was in a very significant spot.

And in those days, Wilmore was, in a sense, the capital of the spiritual world of which he was a part. And Henry Clay Morrison invited him and so he was to preach. He said, I got ready and I prepared.

He said, I had a certain portion of my sermon that I knew would turn him on. And so he said, when I got to that portion, I began my peroration. I think he's the only person I ever heard who used that word.

My peroration as I began to climb in my oratory. He said, as I began to climb, everything was still. He said, suddenly it downed on me with a shock I had him in the middle of my hand.

And I could play that audience like a kid plays a yo-yo on a string. And he said, suddenly, pure terror struck through me. He said, I closed that service as fast as I could close it.

Went to my room, got down on my knees and said, God, if you'll forgive me, I'll never do that again. Because you're not to make disciples of yourself. I'll never forget him sitting telling me.

I knew some of the key of the power in John Church. Now, I'm interested in 1 Corinthians because we get some glimpses into the soul and into the soul struggles and the soul convictions, the things that move Paul, the things that make Paul. And that's what I want to get to.

You will remember that this is a church that he founded. If you will go back to his missionary journeys, you will find that he came to Corinth and he spent 18 months there. One of the longest days that we know about of Paul's ministry.

And when he left, there was a Christian church there with some key people in it, and we have the names of a number of those key people. As he went on his way, later he received correspondence from them, so he kept in touch with them and they kept in touch with him. And the 1 Corinthians letter is a response by Paul to some of the correspondence that came to him.

So we see the man, Paul, and we also see a 1st century Christian church with all its problems. I'll tell you, it's cured me of thinking that the 1st century Christian church was all it ought to be. I've gone through the countryside in the south, you know, and see on a sign out front of a church, a New Testament church, or a 1st century Christian church, you know, this kind of thing.

Well, let me tell you, I find that people are people in any century, and the grace of God has the same problems in one century that it has in another, and it was encouraging me to find some of the problems that he had here. But one thing you do see in this letter is his passion, and it's a very personal passion. Let me illustrate this.

You will remember it's familiar to you in the 1st chapter. He is writing with some degree of intimacy and affection, I appeal to you brothers in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that all of you agree with one another so there may be no divisions among you, and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.

What I mean is this, one of you says, I follow Paul, another I follow Apollos, another I follow Cephas, still another I follow Christ. Sounds like modern denominations, doesn't it? Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius. So no one can say that you were baptized into my name, and then there's a parenthesis, and I find that Paul's like some of the rest of us.

He forgot something. So he's writing, handwriting, and so he says, let me correct that, he says, I did baptize the household of Stephanus, but beyond that, if I baptized anybody else, I can't remember it. So he says, for Christ did not send me to baptize, but he sent me to preach the gospel, not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

He said, my first business is not liturgy, though I'm involved in it. My first business is not ritual, though that's a part of the worship of God. My first business is none of that stuff.

My first business is the proclamation of the gospel. Do you know the one thing that I think is lost out of the American church today? It's the proclamation of the gospel. Now that may reflect a very narrow perspective on my part, but we are doing a whole lot of other things rather than declaring the gospel, and I think one of the reasons is that we've never seen the depth and the mystery of the gospel, and so we declare what we think it is, and there is a triteness about it.

There is a triteness about it that produces no significant impact on the people who hear it. Now Paul is not talking about that kind of thing. Paul is saying that where the gospel is preached, something will happen to the people who sit and listen.

There is a power, he says, in the proclamation of the gospel. Now I wish that we could gain again a sense of the greatness, the dignity, the joy, the thrill, the privilege of proclaiming the gospel of Christ, but if that's true, it's got to be a joy in your heart, and it's got to be a mystery and a power in your heart before it's going to be proclaimed that way. Now he says, I resolved when I came to you, in the second chapter he begins, I resolved to know nothing while I was with you save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Now I haven't gotten to the ore in that yet, but I want to tell you I'm convinced it's there. I'd like to know what that means for me, because I spend my time doing a lot of other things, I think. But Paul says I have one purpose, one passion, one resolution.

I resolved that I would not know anything while I was among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. Now I want to say at this point it's interesting that he spends 15 chapters before he gets to the resurrection. That's surprising, because you see, I tend to say, the resurrection, there's the power, there's the glory, there's the victory.

Paul spent 14 chapters before he got to the resurrection. Now I think sometimes we want to shortcut that, but the only way you get to the resurrection is through the cross. And we'd like to get to the resurrection and get the cross behind us, but I don't think there is any way it can be done.

And the power that he speaks about through the most of the letter is not the power of the resurrection, it is the power of the cross. Now I'd like to know what the power of the cross is. I'd like to know what it is in my life and what it ought to be among us.

So he says, that's my resolution. He says, let me tell you about us in contrast to you. You wonder how Paul got away with some of this.

He says, you see, we're fools for Christ, but you're so wise. You're smart guys and you're careful. We're fools for Christ.

Our necks are stuck out. We're weak, but you're strong. You are honored and we are dishonored.

We go hungry. We go thirsty. We go in rags.

We are brutally treated. We are homeless without a home. In fact, he said, we're the scum of the earth.

We're the refuse of the world. That's all right, because that's what he was. On the cross, he was the refuse of the world.

And there he was. He was a fool, weak, dishonored, hungry, thirsty, didn't even have rags, brutally treated and no home. Now, he says, that's who we are.

Now, what was Paul saying? Tell me in that what's applicable to me and what I ought to be hearing in that. What's the ore that I ought to dig out of that? Now, come on. He says, that's in chapter 4. Now, let's look next.

He says, the time is short. He said, in fact, the time is so short and the message and the circumstances are so urgent that he said, I wish it were possible for those of you who have wives to live as if you didn't have any. Now, that's one of those lines in Paul we don't like, isn't it? But he's telling you something about Paul.

I'm interested in who Paul was. He says, as for you who mourn, I wish you were as if you didn't mourn. You've got your sorrows, but there's something else more important than what makes you mourn.

He says, for those that are happy, I wish you were as if you weren't, because your happiness is in circumstances. I wish the thing that concerns you most was what concerns the heart of Christ. Those of you who buy, I wish it was as if the possessions weren't yours.

I think he's getting at a kind of detachment to where he can be cut loose from everything in his life. Personally, socially, emotionally, possessionally, he is capable of detachment from them all. I wish those who use the world as if you weren't engrossed in it, for he says, I want to tell you, all that's going to pass away.

And he says, since it's all going to pass away, I'd like for you to be free from the claims of those things on you. He said, I wish really, end of chapter seven, that you would live in undivided devotion to the Lord. Now I'm interested in what the precious metal is in that chunk of four.

I wish you would live in undivided devotion to the Lord, to where what moves the heart of Christ dominated every part of your being, your person, your life. Now he said, I know you've got a lot of rights. And he said, we can discuss those rights.

He said, you're free. You don't have to be bound by the legalisms of the world and those things. He says, rejoice in your freedom.

Exult in it. But he says, don't dare let your freedom and your rights become a stumbling block to your brother. Because he says, if you know more than your brother does, so you know you don't have to be confined to his constrictive thoughts and ways, if you know more than he does, remember, knowledge puffs up.

One of the key lines in 1 Corinthians. Knowledge puffs up. That's a good line for an educational institution, isn't it? It's a good line for an educator, isn't it? I think about how much of my life I've spent in school.

When I was elected president of Ashbury College, I spent half of my life sitting in class reciting like a first grader. Twenty-three years. Knowledge puffs up.

He says, love is what counts. Love builds up. But the interesting thing is, love builds up the other person.

So you've got your rights, you've got your freedom. Rejoice in what you know and what you understand that makes you superior to everybody around you. But the other person's well-being needs to be the dominant controlling factor in your life if you're going to live by love.

Now, I'm scared to say that out loud. I'm scared to say that out loud, because that's radical. And if it is said, you know one of the problems of preaching is you have to listen to yourself.

And then you've got to go home and live with what you've said. And when you kneel to pray and when you face him, you've got to face not only him, but you've got to face what you've said. But you will notice he says, if your example hurts a brother, you have sinned against Christ.

That's an interesting bit of orb that we need to work with. If meat is a problem, I want to tell you, I can be a vegetarian the rest of my day. I don't know whether I want to be a vegetarian.

And I don't know whether I want you controlling my diet. But that's what Paul said. I enjoy meat.

He says, but I want you to get to the place where the will of Christ and the well-being of others is the dominating controlling factor in your existence. Now, there are two sides to that, and you know that, but I'm not sure I need to tell you about the other side, because I think you'll take care of that. I think every one of us will take care of that other side.

But this is in 1 Corinthians, and this is Paul speaking, and this is Paul saying, if eating meat makes my brother too offended, I'll be a vegetarian the rest of my days. You will notice he says, all of us have our rights. We have the right to eat.

We have the right to drink. We have the right to have our sexual and social needs met. We have the right to marry.

He says, we have a right to live from our work. The soldier doesn't pay his own way. The state pays the way of the soldier.

The ox has the right to partake of the grain as he does his work in the field. We have our rights, but he says, and notice what they are, the right to eat and drink, the right to have our sexual and social needs met, the right to marry, the right to live from our work, but he says the gospel is more important. I don't know about you, but I count that as radical, and I want to say I don't think I've always lived there, and I think I've got some company in the circles in which I've moved.

Now he says, the gospel is more important. I would rather die than be deprived of the boast that Christ and his concern are supreme in my life. Nothing competes with those.

In fact, he says, I make myself a slave to everyone if I may win some. I guess the thing that moves me here is that here is a person who has gotten to the place where one objective has totally dominated his existence, and what is that? It's reaching a world with the message of the gospel. So that every relationship in his life, every right in his life, every possession in his life, every ambition in his life, everything in his life is subordinated to one purpose, and that's reaching the world for Christ.

And I do not see how you can question that when you find him sitting in a prison in Rome saying, I'm where I belong, he's put me here, and because I'm here, the gospel is being preached in Caesar's household. And he's perfectly willing to be in a stinking Roman dungeon hooked to a Roman soldier if the gospel can be preached in Caesar's household. Now I'm not sure I've begun to even catch a glimmer of that, but I just want to say to you I'd like to.

I'd like to catch a glimmer of that, because I suspect he's the one that's to be admired, and he's the one who's in the best position. And he's the one who would say, you know I used to be like you, but I found a better way. I found a way of total giving for the noblest of all causes, and that makes any sacrifice worthwhile.

I don't have to be a Jew, I don't have to be an American. I had a roommate at Princeton once who grew up in Mexico. And I remember when he went back to Mexico, his father was a missionary there.

His father was an interesting person, Marjorie Braben knew him. He was the kind of guy who would come into Wycliffe Bible Translator's headquarters in Mexico City, he was a disciple of Christ missionary, you don't expect that. That's almost as bad as being a Methodist.

But he'd come into Wycliffe Bible Translator's headquarters and say, anybody for prayer? Anybody for prayer? And somebody in the crowd, they relished the opportunity to pray with him. I spent a night in a club car on the New York Central Railroad between New York and Buffalo one night. And spending with him is one of those nights I'll never forget.

But his son came to the place where he had to make a decision. He had dual citizenship and he had to choose between one or the other. He's a Mexican citizen, for Christ's sake.

Now Paul said, I don't have to be a Jew, I don't have to be an American. If not being an American will reach more people for Christ than being an American, am I ready to lay that on the line? If not being a Methodist would reach more people for Christ, am I ready to let... I don't know where you ought to apply. I don't know where you are and what your circumstances are.

But evidently, Paul says, he said, I don't have to be a Jew, I don't have to be a non-Jew. I don't have to be anything, but I have to become all things to all men, if by any means I might win some. And you know how easy it is for us to set our sights on position in the pecking order? And we always do it for Christ.

I always sanctify my objectives that way. I say, of course I'm doing this for Christ, because if I get in that spot I can do more for him. But I seldom ever brutally test the results.

Now Paul is one who brutally was ready to test the results. He says, I've become all things to all men, if by any means I might save some. Everything for the sake of the gospel.

He goes back to another thing, we all have our rights, everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. I now consider this one of the most revolutionary texts in the scripture, and I have never heard it preached on. 24 of chapter 10.

Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. I'd like to ask you, do you know anybody living that way? Should I ask, are you living that way? Am I living that way? Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. And the way Paul speaks about it, you'd think he was telling you about a very privileged position.

The kind of thing that everybody ought to want to be. He says, everything in your life should be under the dominance of one concern, the glory of God. Now I'll tell you what shakes me up.

He then concludes, that's what I do. You see, I always thought that Paul's testimony was in Philippians, where he said, not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, I pressed toward the mark. And when he said that, I always like to link with it, when Paul said, chief of sinners.

I'm the chief of sinners because I persecuted the church. But you come to the end of this chapter 10, and it's lost in there, and I missed it for years. Do you know what he actually says? He says, that's what I do.

I do not seek my own good. That can be sacrificed. I seek the good of others.

And I want to tell you what you ought to do. You ought to imitate me. Is that arrogance? Is that spiritual pride? I read a line in Oswald Chambers the other day that said, much of our so-called expressions of humility are alibis, to keep us from coming to grips with the claims of Christ.

So he says, follow my example, because he said, I'm following Christ. Now, he says, you see, I want you to live by love. And that means that at the center of your attention, that center of attention is outside you.

And you're not living for yourself or for your own interests. In fact, love may be the central line in 1 Corinthians 13, is love seeks not its own. Paul says, whatever the cost, Christ is first, and that's the way I've determined to live.

Not to know anything among you, save Christ and him crucified. Now, I wonder if the power of the cross is the power to get a person to that place. We like the concept of power when we're the beneficiaries.

But could it be that the power of the cross is the power to make somebody else a beneficiary because of you? That's what happened in the cross of Christ. And out of his crucifixion came the redemption of the world. I've begun to wonder, you know, the gospel of John has tantalized me on its understanding of glory.

Because, you see, I always figured the resurrection was a better illustration of glory. The glory of Christ and most anything else with the ascension. But in the gospel of John, there are some fascinating passages where the cross is the glory of Christ.

The ability to sacrifice himself for something outside himself and beyond himself. Now, here I find in 1 Corinthians, something comparable to what I find in John. That the glory of Christ is that capacity for self-sacrifice that takes him to the cross.

And in 1 Corinthians, the power of the resurrection is the power to sacrifice yourself for him. I need power to do that because I've got enough of me left that I'll fight that if he doesn't do something for me to set me free from that. Now, let me mention, boy, my time's gone.

I have to tell you two quick illustrations I'm through. A young graduate student, a graduate of Asbury who's doing doctoral work at Drew, was in a meeting with me the other day and he said, Dr. Kinloch, have you ever read any named passage out of Wesley? I said, no, I've never read it. Well, he said, let me tell you what I found.

He said, Wesley was making an address to his preacher. He said his preachers had found out that they paid the Methodist preachers more in Bath and one of the other cities on the coast there, Bath and Bristol, than they did in London. So a number of the London Methodist preachers wanted to move to Bath and Bristol.

After all, they had wives and families and responsibilities and children in college and a lot of other things. And so Wesley said, you need to apologize to Simon Makus because what he wanted to do was use his money to get more of the Holy Ghost. And what you want to do is use the Holy Ghost to get more money.

You need to apologize to Simon Makus. I thought, you know, that's remarkably like Paul sounds to me. Isn't that interesting? Now that's our heritage.

Let me mention something else. Andy Miller's over there. I had the privilege of being with the Salvation Army officers in Florida recently for a retreat.

It was a delightful time. But it's interesting. I came to one thing and it struck fire.

And you know there are times when you don't anticipate it when you're speaking. You're suddenly aware that something you've said has gone home. We have on the board of the college a board member who is on the faculty at Wheaton and on the faculty of the Billy Graham Center for World Evangelism at Wheaton.

His name is Lyle Dorsett. Lyle's a great guy. Very original.

You never know what's going to come out of him. Sort of a sophisticated Bob Coleman, you know, this kind of thing. He said to me, Ken Law, I'm thinking about writing a book.

He's written a whole string of books. He said, I'm thinking about writing a book on downward mobility. I thought, that's interesting.

Downward mobility. I've heard the sociologist tell us about upward mobility. He said, you know, that's what Jesus did.

Philippians 2. Humbled himself, emptied himself, came down. You know, the minute I said it, the atmosphere in that group of Salvation Army officers became electric. And when it did, I thought of Methodist conferences.

When somebody says, are you moving this year? And you say, yeah. The other guy says, where are you going? And immediately the computer computes. Is he going up or is he going down? Am I wrong? Now, maybe only Methodists do that.

But I suspect there's a sophisticated way of that among Presbyterians and Episcopalians too. But it was interesting when the report on those sessions together was published in a Salvation Army publication, the only thing it listed that I said was that I talked about downward mobility. Because in the Army, position is a very significant thing.

Am I reading it right, Andy Miller? Status, you see. After all, it's a military organization and you live to be promoted. As I read this, I think he had gotten even beyond downward mobility.

He'd gotten to the place where anywhere, it didn't matter whether it was up or down, there was something else that was at stake. And the something else was how to reach the world for Christ. Now, I want to say, if the Apostle Paul had to have that kind of burning passion in him in his day, how are you and I going to face God if we don't have something comparable to that? I'd like to ask you if you're running a church or if you're teaching a class or if you're administering a college or if you're trying to reach a world for Christ.

Because I suspect, if that's not what my business is, then I'm going to have some problems when I face Him. And Paul says, Ken Law, you're going to face Him. You're going to give an account of every day you lived, every relationship you had, and everything you gave yourself for.

Now, I don't know about anybody else, but I think we live in a day when a dispensation of the gospel has been given to us like in no other generation in Christian history. Mike, is it true that half the people that ever lived are on the earth's surface today? What's the lifespan of the average one, Mike? What's the lifespan of the average one today? I'm not talking about the U.S., I'm talking about outside the U.S. In the third world, what would it be? Are those your responsibilities? Are those mine? They're Christ's? Am I in Christ? You see, I think that's the kind of thing that got to those fellas in the white horse, isn't it? And got to those guys at Oxford. And got to those students with Dwight L. Moody.

And you will remember, at the end of four weeks, a hundred of those 250 students with Dwight L. Moody signed a pledge that they would give all that they were and had for the evangelization of the world in their generation. And you know, if you look back into the history of most of the movements from which we came here, and he comes from the Salvation Army, you look at William Booth, that was what moved him. His wife, all of them.

Wesley, keep on going. So that's what's burning in my heart today. Shall we bow our heads together?

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