

# This Calling and Its Cost - a Cross

by Dennis Kinlaw

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*Dennis Kinlaw's sermon emphasizes the cost of discipleship and the transformative power of being in Christ, calling believers to embrace their identity as ambassadors of reconciliation.*

**Duration:** 53:24

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 4:5-12, 2 Corinthians 6:1

**Topics:** "Cross of Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preaching Christ Jesus the Lord and not oneself. He refers to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 5, where it is stated that the preaching should focus on the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The preacher highlights the challenges and hardships faced by those who preach the word of God, including being hard-pressed, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. However, despite these difficulties, they continue to carry the message of Jesus and manifest His life in their mortal bodies. The sermon also includes a personal story shared by Helen Rosevear, where she encounters a girl who has been traumatized and finds solace in the presence of Jesus. The preacher concludes by emphasizing the importance of experiencing death in order to bring life to others.

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## Transcript

Let me read a familiar, incredible passage out of 2 Corinthians, chapter 5, beginning with verse 14. For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus, that if one died for all, then all died, and he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again. Therefore from now on we regard no one according to the flesh, even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him thus no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, you remember where we finished yesterday with inhabitation? Is he in us, or are we in him? We talk about him in us, and Paul talks a great deal about us in him. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.

Now, all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us.

We implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For he made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in him. We then as workers together, and it's interesting that with him is not in the Greek, but a word which Paul plays a great deal with.

We then as sunergoi, he works, we work, we work, he works, at least that's the way it's supposed to be. So oftentimes we work, but he's not working. And he's always working, and oftentimes we're not.

But what Paul is after is where the two become intimate and identified enough that it's not our work, it's his, and we are working together with him. We then as sunergoi also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. Yesterday we were talking about these various metaphors that are used in the scripture to speak of our relationship to God.

And we spoke of them in sort of an ascending measure of, I'm not sure that that's absolutely correct, but anyway, a development through the scripture. First of all, in the sense of fellowship, Abraham walking with God, and he is his friend, and he loves God, and God loves him. God calls him, and he calls him into that kind of fellowship with him.

Do we have a Latin scholar in the crowd? John, how much Latin do you know? What's the origin of the word communion? It's interesting, the word fellowship, the word which we translate fellowship in the passage I read yesterday is the Greek term koinonia, which really speaks of not fellowship but commonness. And I think, and I don't have the tools in my library to chase it down, but the best I had earlier this morning was that the one, can you help us, Ken? People who have something in common, who have communion, commonness, have the same wall. They're inside the same wall together.

And so they are separated from what's outside, and they belong to each other because they're within the same wall. Now, Paul says God has called us into that communion, commonness with each other. We shared his nature within us, and the incredible thing is he loved us enough that he's taken our nature on him.

And eternally now, God has man in the midst of his being, between the Father and the Spirit. We tried to get at the fact that God wants us in an intimacy far greater than oftentimes our preaching would reflect. I don't want to sound as if I'm negative to the Reformation, because I don't think I really am.

But I don't think any of us ever see, any generation ever sees the fullness of biblical truth. And so what happened in the Reformation was a great concept was taken to interpret the gospel, and that concept was a legal and a forensic one. If you will read 2 Corinthians 5, the passage I just finished reading carefully, you will notice he's talking about reconciliation, which you can interpret in forensic and juridical terms.

But he is also speaking, I think, in something a little fuller and richer than that. The end result is that oftentimes in our preaching of the gospel, we have preached it in the sense that we have preached it in those categories and have never gotten to some of the more intimate ones. Some time ago, I don't know when it was, I became familiar with a hymn that impressed me a great deal.

I'd be interested. How many people here are familiar with the hymn, Jesus, Priceless Treasure? Okay. Just listen to the word for a few moments, Jesus, Priceless Treasure.

Now the Hebrew of priceless treasure would be a word for gulah, and that's the word which is used in Exodus 19 when he says, You will be to me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, and a treasured possession, the gulah. Jesus, Priceless Treasure, source of purest pleasure. You know, Augustine talked

about a concupiscence of the flesh, and he also talked about a concupiscence of the spirit.

I wonder if the reason we know so much about the concupiscence of the flesh is because we don't know very much about the concupiscence of the spirit. So you notice he's saying, Source of purest pleasure, truest friend to me. Long my heart had panted, till it well nigh fainted, thirsting after thee.

Thine I am, O spotless Lamb. I will suffer not to hide thee, ask for naught beside thee. Lord, if I can have you, I don't need anything else.

So as I found myself thinking, if the guy who only has God, any poorer than the fellow who has God plus everything, and if we really believe that the guy who has God plus everything is not a whit richer than the guy who only has God, wouldn't it sort of focus our direction? Because oftentimes our eyes are on his gifts and the goods he has to give to us, and we miss him. But if we get him, when do we get him? The psalmist, this guy, said, I've got all I need. In thine arms I rest me, rather intimate.

Foes who would molest me cannot reach me here, but it's arms of love that hold him. Though the earth be shaking, every heart be quaking, Jesus calms our fears. Sin and hell and conflict fell, with their heaviest storms assail us, our fiercest storms assail us, Jesus will not fail us.

Hence all thoughts of sadness. I never knew that the word hence was a verb. But in Old English, hence is a verb, and it means get out.

Get out, hence all thoughts of sadness, for the Lord of gladness, Jesus enters in. Those who love the Father, though the storms may gather, still have peace within. Yea, whate'er we hear must bear, still in thee lies purest pleasure, Jesus' priceless treasure.

I'd have forgotten when I learned that hymn, how I came across it, but over the years, you know what I found myself doing? When I wake up in the night and can't sleep, I start reciting that. You know, I almost never get through the third verse before I'm quietly, gently asleep and back at what I'm in bed for. And what a good way to sleep in that, Jesus' priceless treasure.

Well, it's very precious to me. I remember one year for the fall revival at the college, I decided we'd pick, because we had different kids from different backgrounds, so we picked the Salvation Army hymn. We picked the Christian Missionary Alliance hymn.

You remember A.B. Simpson's himself. We picked a Wesley hymn, and this is one we picked, Good Lutheran. And so the kids learned it.

And it's interesting, the students that were at Asbury at that time, that is the years have passed, I found they know that hymn, though very few people do. Well, let me tell you what, I have a book called Companion to Hymns and Psalms, and it gives you, from the British Methodist hymnal, a bit of information about every hymn in the British Methodist hymnal. And the British Methodist hymnal carries this hymn, Jesus' priceless treasure.

And the German of that's even a little more intimate, Jesus, Jesu meine Freude. But notice what he says about this. The hymn has never been sung widely by English-speaking congregations, perhaps because it was felt that it expressed a deep spiritual experience that was unfitted for public worship.

Isn't that interesting? Never known well, because perhaps it was felt that it was unfitted for public worship. Now, I can understand some of the thinking behind that. After all, we don't want to be mystic, you know.

We don't want to get starry-eyed and mystical and go off like some of the Roman Catholics do. But it's interesting, that's a Lutheran hymn. And what's more interesting is, you know who wrote it? He was a lawyer who was mayor of his city and a member of the state legislature in his state.

Now, when I found that, I liked it all the more, because, you know, I'd love to think there was somebody in Congress who knew him with that kind of intimacy. Because, as I suspect, if you could find a person who lived in that world who had that kind of intimacy with him, you'd have a different kind of legislation and a different kind of community. Okay, now, is it possible for us to have that kind of intimacy? Now, let me get to why I'm interested in that in 1 and 2 Corinthians and you.

Hans Konzelman, who has a commentary on 1 Corinthians, says in the Hermeneas series, says that the purpose of 2 Corinthians is to show the unity of the preaching of the preacher and his personal existence. Now, could I repeat that? The purpose of 2 Corinthians is to show the unity of the preaching of the preacher and his personal existence. That there's no discrepancy between 11 to 12 on Sunday morning and the other six days a week in the personal life of the guy who's doing the preaching.

Where the word becomes flesh and the flesh expresses itself in words. Now, I know that every person who's had a call from God and wants to preach and is called to preach, deep in his spirit, that's what he wants or that's what she wants. Every one of us wants that kind of unity between what we say and what we are.

Now, I've come to believe that in 1 Corinthians you get a good expression of what Paul preached. You remember he talked a great deal about preaching. He said, When I came to you, I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

And that's my message and I came to preach that. Jesus Christ and him crucified. The word made flesh.

And then in 2 Corinthians, we begin to see what that means for Paul's personal existence. Where the message and the person come together. Now, it's interesting what happens if the message of the cross, if the message of the cross and the person of the proclaimer come together.

Let me show you in 2 Corinthians what it meant for Paul. He got appointed to a big church. Got a nice salary with a good many perks.

Had an acceptable position in the society. Had a lot of people who loved him. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.

When you get him talking about mercies and comfort, you know something's coming. Who comforts us, that's me and my team and my fellowship, who comforts us in all our tribulation. That we may be able to comfort those who are in trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us. Now, in Christ you get the unity of his message and his person. And our message is the message of Christ who died for us, the incarnate one who suffered for us.

Now, he says, for as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation abounds through Christ. Now, what is the consolation? Let me tell you where I'm going so I can tell you when we get there and

afterwards where we got. The consolation, I think, is in the fellowship.

It's interesting, if he's there, tribulation is a nice place to be. If he is there, even persecution is a good place to be. And if he's not there, a palace.

Do you remember the one, the line, and prisons would palaces prove, if Jesus would dwell with me there? Well, that means that palaces, prisons become if you're in them and he's not there. Okay. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.

Now, if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and your salvation. Now, what intrigues me is that he says our sufferings have to do something with your salvation. I know that all salvation comes out of the cross, but do you know the power of the cross? It can make your sufferings redemptive to somebody else.

The power is in the cross of Christ. It's not in your suffering and mine, but it is the power of the cross of Christ that comes through our suffering for those that are in need. Now, if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings, which we also suffer.

Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation, and you notice again, and salvation. Paul says, why would I live this way? So you'll have a chance to know what I know. And what is salvation? It's to know Jesus Christ.

And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation. For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia. We were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.

Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us, in whom we trust that he will still deliver us. You also, helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many. Our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God and more abundantly to you.

Now, that's an interesting picture of a first century preacher, isn't it? Listen to this. We do not preach ourselves, but we preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. If you're taking notes, this is in chapter 4 of 2 Corinthians, beginning with verse 5. For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who is shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellence of the power may be of God. We, we are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed. We are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed, always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.

For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal body. So then death is working in us, but life in you. Could it be that there's no life working in anybody around me because there's no death working in me? Now, you don't usually get that in preaching classes in seminary, do you? But that's what preaching, he says.

How does he begin? We don't preach ourselves, but we preach Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. And then he describes what it's like. Okay, let's try another one.

Chapter 6, beginning at the beginning of chapter 6. We then, as sunergoi, as workers together with Christ. Now, what is the picture of working together with him? We plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.

Behold, now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation. We give no offense in anything that our ministry may not be blamed.

But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God in much patience, in tribulation, in need, in distresses, in strife, in imprisonment, in tumult, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fasting, by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and yet not killed, as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things. O Corinthians, we have spoken openly to you. Our heart is wide open.

You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affection. Now, wouldn't that be interesting if you went to an annual conference and the bishop said, I want to tell you what your next appointment is like. And he read that assignment to you.

That is what Paul said the ministry was in his day. Now, let me read one more out of 2 Corinthians. You know, as I've sort of lived a little bit with 2 Corinthians, I found myself saying, Paul, let up a little.

Please, for goodness sake, let up a little. But he doesn't let up. He just keeps getting a little stronger.

Look at this passage, 1116. I speak again, let no one think me a fool. If otherwise, at least receive me as a fool.

That I also may boast a little. What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord, but as it were, foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast.

For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise. Now, as I've read 1 and 2 Corinthians, the context for that has become sort of clear to me. You see, what had happened at Corinth was, after Paul left, there were some people came in and said, he's not a real apostle.

He's not a real apostle. And so they had their credentials. They had letters of recommendation, I suspect from the Jerusalem church, or at least from Jerusalem.

These guys came in, see our credentials, we got them. We can hang them on the wall. Paul says, let me tell you about my credentials.

You put up with fools gladly. Is he talking about the people who put their credentials on the wall? Have them written. I'm not scoffing at ordination papers, but I'm just simply saying, listen to what Paul's credentials are.

For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you in the face. To our shame I say that we were too weak for that, but in

whatever anyone is bold, I speak foolishly. I am bold also.

Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abram? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool. I am more. Now what does it mean to be a minister of Christ? In labors more abundant? In strikes above measure? In prisons more frequently? In deaths often? From the Jews five times I received forty strikes minus one.

Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked.

A night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeys often? In perils of waters? In perils of robbers? In perils of my own countrymen? In perils of the Gentiles? In perils in the city? In perils in the wilderness? In perils in the sea? In perils among false brethren? In weariness and toil? In sleeplessness often? In hunger and thirst? In fastings often? In cold and nakedness? Beside the other things, what comes upon me daily? My deep concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation? If I must boast, I will boast in the things which concern my infirmity.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. In Damascus I went and preached, and they received me royally and gave me a goodbye party when I left." He said, And under King Aretas the king, the governor was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison desiring to arrest me. But I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped from his hands." Now, I think what Consulman is saying is, what you are seeing is an identity between the message he preaches and the personal existence of the guy who does the preaching.

Because what he is doing is, he is living a life that the cross is the only key to. Now, it is interesting, you get all of those in 2 Corinthians. And in 2 Corinthians is where he specifically is answering these charges that are made against him by the people who are saying, Paul and I, he is not a real apostle.

But it is interesting, in 1 Corinthians you get a sort of a preview of that. Let me read you that. It is in the 4th chapter.

It begins with the 9th verse. For I think that God has displayed us the apostles. Now, what does it mean to be an apostle? He has displayed us last as men condemned to death.

For we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong.

You are distinguished, but we are dishonored. Even to the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled we bless, being persecuted we endure it, being defamed we entreat.

We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now. I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand teachers in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers.

For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you," you notice the neckline? I think the thing that has staggered me the most in 1 and 2 Corinthians is it shattered all of my popular notions about Paul. Because you see, I have been thoroughly indoctrinated in this notion that Paul said, I am the chief of sinners, not as though I had already attained either or already perfect.

So don't look at me, but listen to the gospel I preach. Have you ever said that? Have you ever prayed, Lord, let them hear what I have to say. Don't let them look at me.

I want you to sit down sometime and go through how many times Paul says, look at me. If you don't want to know what it means, imitate me. That runs counter to everything, everything in our mindset.

I said, Lord, is there grace that can get me to the place where I can look at anybody and say, follow me. Imitate me. But the word is, imitate me.

Now what does he mean? I think what he means is imitate me in coming to the place where self-interest no longer is a determining factor in your personal existence. Where self-interest is no longer a determining factor in your personal interest, but it is the love of Christ that is the determining factor in your personal existence, and that determines who you are. Did you notice what Paul said in that magnificent atonement passage in chapter 5 of 2 Corinthians? For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then all died.

And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves. And do you know, I think we live in a culture where you and I can sanctify self-interest and call it the service of Christ. After all, a fellow deserves some security, doesn't he? I was in a district conference not long ago, and there was a young guy, not a young guy, he was a second-career fellow who came in, who had left a position in the world, and he had felt the call of Christ the priest.

I would suspect he did fairly well. My evaluation of him and my conversation with him and getting to know him, when he was living out before he found Christ, and then Christ called him into the ministry. And so he found himself in seminary, and so he needed a way to help support his family, so he went to the district superintendent and asked if he would have a church for him.

And so the district superintendent examined him and finally sat down and looked at him and said, Now, what do you need? And the guy looked at him and said, What do you need? Well, he said, What kind of place do you need? He said, Well, I just want a place where I can preach the gospel. God has called me to preach. I guess he said, I know that, but what do you need? What do you have to have? Well, he said, All I've got to have is a place to preach.

Have you got a place for me to preach? The DS said it was the first time it had ever happened in my tenure as a district superintendent. We negotiated. Now, is it not easy to move from negotiating? If you negotiate at one level, are you negotiating at another? And Paul is saying, I'd just like you to know I've quit negotiating.

I've gotten into a fellowship with him so intimate and so genuine that I listen to him, and his word is the dominant, controlling one, and self-interest does not condition who I am. And the preacher becomes one. Now, how do you do that? How can you live that way? The price is high.

But I want to suggest that the reward is great. I think Paul would say the reward is infinitely greater than the price you pay. Chuck Killian is preparing one of his dramatic presentations for, I think it's the dedication of maybe the Beeson Center here, a preaching center.

And so he's doing his presentation on Hugh Latimer, the Anglican bishop, who was burned at the stake in the square in Oxford. How was the name of the church, St. Mary's? Burned with Ridley, Bishop Ridley. And he let me see his manuscript.

And so I read it with great interest. I had read *The Life of Hugh Latimer*. If you've never read *The Life of Hugh Latimer*, you owe it to yourself to read it.

Hugh Latimer was a preacher. One of the passages I love, and Chuck Killian developed this in his thing. Latimer was a part of the Reformation, and Henry VIII was trying to hold on to his Roman Catholicism and yet have an heir for his throne so that the royal family could continue, and so he had his problems.

And Latimer had come under suspicion and had been harassed for his faith and so forth, but now he was free. And so the king called for him to preach before him, and he was to preach six times during Lent. So Hugh Latimer sat down, not Hugh Latimer, but Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop, sat down with him and said, Now Hugh, you don't have to say everything you believe to be faithful, and you don't have to say everything you think to be true to God.

He knew Hugh Latimer. But Hugh said, No, Thomas Cranmer doesn't know Hugh Latimer. I'm called a preacher.

So I suspect that Hugh Latimer had some apprehension, or at least that Thomas Cranmer had some apprehension when sitting in the church and here is Henry VIII and Hugh Latimer goes to the pulpit to preach. He reads his scripture, and when he is finished reading his scripture, he looks down and there's Henry VIII and their eyes meet. And he backs up a little and lifts his head and says, Latimer, Latimer, you are in the presence of the king, Henry.

Be very careful what you say. And he got real still. Then he backed up a little farther and lifted his voice and said, Latimer, Latimer, you are in the presence of the king of kings.

Be very careful what you say. Now, there are two conditioning elements there, aren't there? One of them is Henry, that you can see, and one of them, Jesus, whom you can't see. And no man is free until the world you can't see determines who he is.

Because if the world you can't see isn't real enough to determine who you are, the world that you can see will determine who you are. Well, the end result was that he was ultimately arrested. He was put in prison and prepared for death.

When they prepared him for death, they came into his prison cell with a bishop's robe, because he had been a bishop before he was stripped. And they put the bishop's robe on him. Then they put the bishop's miter on his head.

And then they put the bishop's staff in his hand and made him stand there fully clothed as a bishop. And then they stripped the miter from his head, the staff from his hand, and the robe from his back, and they clothed him in an old, old worn smock. And then they took something the equivalent of sandpaper and sandpapered his hands to get the holiness off them, because they had held the body and the blood proper.

And he stood there and wept. He had been stripped of what was very precious to him. And as he stood there and wept, they watched him and suddenly he began to stroke his smock.

And they noticed he stroked it very tenderly. And then he spoke and said very simply, My wedding garment. He knew where he was going and he knew who he was.

He was the bride of Christ. And his spouse didn't love him because of what he wore. They loved him because of who he was.

That identity, you see, of the message and the messenger. Now, you may remember John Wesley had a fellow by the name of Tommy Walsh who was a preacher of his. And Tommy Walsh died when he was 28.

My memory tells me, and I may be wrong, I tried to check this and I couldn't check it, but I think Tommy is the one, maybe somebody here knows, that one day he preached. Oftentimes, you know, Methodist preachers in those days had experiences like Paul in 2 Corinthians. And so they mobbed him, beat him, took him outside of the village and then rolled him through the village sewer.

And he stood up with human excrement and human urine dripping off of him. And his comment to his friend was, And I felt nothing but love. Now, there's an identity there, isn't there, between the one you follow and who you are.

But when he was dying, he went into a coma Very brilliant young man. After a year of Hebrew, never used a dictionary again. At least that's what John Wesley said about him.

He never could say that about me, I'll assure you. But anyway, he went into a coma and then suddenly he awoke or came out of the coma and he sat up and his words were, He is come, he is come. My beloved is mine and I am his.

His forever. Somewhere I have a memory of somebody else who in his death had his walls dropped great with prayers of repentance and confessions and pleads for mercy. Now, I don't scorn that.

I don't scorn that. But I just want to say there are some people who found an intimacy with him. And you know, I think it makes a difference.

Got one story and I'm through. If we had time, I'd come back to this passage. I hope to get to it tomorrow.

It's in the second chapter of 2 Corinthians where he says, But thanks be unto God, who always leads us in triumphal procession, that the fragrance of the gospel may be spread in every place in Christ through us. And then he speaks about us as a sacrifice of sweet-smelling savor to God so the gospel can be spread. Now, you know, how's the gospel going to get spread in places where they don't want it? I try to read the New York Times a couple of times a week if I can get it.

Can't buy it in Wilmore. So I have to go somewhere else to get it. But as I travel, I usually get it in an airport.

In fact, you can buy it in almost every major airport in the world. Now, that interests me because I read no publication more hostile to Christianity than the New York Times. It is unmitigatedly hostile to the gospel of Christ.

And I thought, I wonder how God could ever get a witness in there? Because he's going to get his witness every place. He's going to get it every place. Now, how will he get it into places like this? Well, it slips in sometimes, and the editors don't catch it.

Like every day on the second line, there's a reference to Bethlehem. Because every story the New York Times ever reports, reports in terms of Mary's delivery of the child, of baby Jesus. November 29, 1994.

Every story they report today will be reported in terms of Jesus. There's something eschatological in that. Did you hear me? There's eschatology in that because everything will be ultimately measured by that, you see.

Helen Rosevere said when the rebels raped her in Africa, she, a virgin, said, the blackness of hell encompassed her. And she cried out, Lord Jesus, where are you? She said he suddenly spoke and said, Helen, thank you for letting me use your body. It isn't you they raped, it is I. And came through victorious.

She said I was home on furlough, trying to put my life back together before going back. And she said I was at one of the universities, and she said I was speaking. And she said, I noticed in that university crowd two girls, one of which I knew was far too young to be a university student.

She said they sat on the end of a row of seats. And she said I finished my lecture. When I finished my lecture, the audience left, and I went back to get my briefcase.

And when I came back, I noticed the two girls had never moved. And so she said I started back to them. And she said as I did, she said, what was obviously the older girl came to me.

And she said a few weeks ago, my sister who's here, long yellow hair down her shoulders, was raped. And from that moment to this, she's never uttered a word. She is in total shock.

Could you talk to her? Helen Roosevelt said I turned. And you know all of the horror of that experience must have flooded her again. But the memory of the presence of Jesus, and as she started for the girl, the girl bounded out of her seat.

And when she got to Helen, she didn't embrace her. She collided with her. And Helen said the two of us fell on our bottoms on the floor wrapped in each other's arms.

And she said we wept for the better part of an hour. I deserve better than this. How am I ever going to look at Christ under any circumstances I ever meet and with any honesty and integrity say, I deserve better.

Now if He's sovereign, and if He's Lord, and I give Him my life, is there anything that comes to me that I can separate from His choice? And if He's the one giving it, don't tell me He doesn't give it with redemptive purposes in mind. Now, I've come to believe that there is grace that can enable a person to live. Nobody's going to get to the place where he's not going to say, what's in this for me? But you don't have to be controlled by it.

You can analyze it out and say, it's not much from a human point of view. But Father, if it's Your will, and you can put your arms around it in His grace and embrace it. How will I look? I don't like to look like a fool any more than anybody else.

So you'll recoil from it. But you say, Father, if it's Your will, I can put my arms around it because I won't have to go through it alone. And I deserve better than this? No, no, no.

If I'm following Him, how can that question ever be raised? But the big one is, how can I get to the place where the but doesn't follow the yes? And that's why I believe in the message of heart holiness. I believe He can take the resistance out, the recalcitrance. Where you look at all the negatives, and when you've looked at them, you say, that's all right, Lord.

But I consciously, deliberately choose it because I know it's from You. And He delivers you from the but. Now, every one of us is in Christian ministry and Christian witness, everybody in this room.

Do you know what your context needs more than anything else and what my context needs more than anything else? It needs for you to have the mind of Christ and for me to have the mind of Christ. Because if we don't, when we get in the middle of it, our witness won't be the same as His. And there'll be two witnesses instead of one.

But if we let Him bring us to the place where His will has become ours and His mind controls ours, then we will find that any witness we have is identical with His. And a world can see who Jesus Christ really is. Now, that's the message for tonight.

I don't know who you are and I don't know where you are. But it may be that God has been getting... One of the things I know is that I'm never ahead of Him. None of us are ever ahead of Him.

We're never first with anybody else. And if it was His will that this be preached, He's been getting you ready for this just as much as He's been getting me ready for it. And it may be that God has brought you to the place where you see how this applies to your circumstances and to who you are and who He wants you to be.

And you're beginning to entertain the thought, Can it be possible that I put my arms around His will for me and embrace it? If I do that, He's going to have to do something in my heart to enable me to embrace it. If you ask Him and ask Him sincerely, He can do it. He can do it.

And what you will find is that when you have asked Him and He has helped you to embrace what you don't want, you will find that He can take you victoriously through it. And out of it will come something redemptive.

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