

# When the Messenger and Message Become One

by Dennis Kinlaw

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of having an identity between the message and the life of the messenger, and that Christians are called to be Christ's message and to have an intimate communion with Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 56:58

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 11:1, 2 Corinthians 2:14, 2 Corinthians 11:1-2

**Topics:** "Messenger"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on a specific passage in the Bible, 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6. He explains that this passage is the essence of what Paul wants to convey to the Corinthians. The speaker challenges the traditional interpretation of this passage, which suggests that believers march triumphantly through life in the train of the conquering Christ. Instead, he presents a historical context where a victorious general captures key figures alive to be a showpiece for him. The speaker then connects this concept to the apostles being put on display by God, highlighting their suffering and persecution for the sake of Christ.

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## Transcript

Father, we thank you for those who paid a price so that we could know the Word of Truth. And there were people just like Vassily Talash who paid a price so that we could have the freedom that we have and the opportunities that we have. But Lord, let us be faithful that any generation that comes after us will know as much or more than was given to us because we have that kind of responsibility and that kind of calling.

Thank you for being with us these two days. Now in our closing minutes together, bind our hearts together before you at your feet as we listen to a final word that you have to say to us. And we will give you praise in Christ's name.

Amen. In the first session that we had, we talked about the call that God has given to us, that the thing that makes us who we are is the fact we are called. And the call that we have is essentially what Paul says.

The call is not to establish an organization, not to spread an institution, not even really to spread the gospel, but the call, the thing that makes us who we are is we are called to fellowship with Jesus Christ. And all of the things that come out of the gospel are supposed to come out of that personal communion individually and corporately with the Lord Jesus. We said that it's a more intimate fellowship and a more

intimate relationship than oftentimes we think.

I know a lot of people who say, Yes, I know Christ, and they'll tell me when they were converted. And their relationship to Christ is based on a past experience. But Paul says there is supposed to be a continuing, every-moment relationship with him that's more intimate and more real than any other relationship in human existence.

And we went through some of the models that we have in the Scripture, some of the metaphors that are used. We said that the relationship is supposed to be intimate enough that ultimately there is an identification between us and Christ, where he inhabits us and we inhabit him. And when you punch one, you punch the other, and when you accept one, you get the other, and when you reject one, you miss the other.

That kind of identification where Jesus could say about us, he could say to his Father, he says, Father, I and my disciples, we are one, just the same way that you, Father, and I are one. Now, not metaphysically or ontologically, but in terms of who we are, personal identity, there is that kind of identification. We said that in 1 and 2 Corinthians, Paul develops two themes.

One of them is what the message is that is to be given to the world. In the first chapter of 1 Corinthians, you will remember, he says, I determine not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, in him crucified. And he said, when I came, I didn't come to baptize, but I come to preach the gospel.

It's interesting, the Greek verb which is used there is the verb from which we get evangelism, evangelist, and evangel. He said, I came to spread, to give the gospel of Christ, and to preach it. You will find that theme mentioned again and again, explicitly, many times implicitly within 1 and 2 Corinthians.

But it is not just the message that he speaks. Before you get through 1 and 2 Corinthians, you find Paul saying, my life is the message that I have to present to you. Now, I've hesitated to verbalize it that way, because who is there among us that wants to say that I am the message that I have to give? I just want to simply say, Paul says he is.

And it's an astounding and a radical thing. He says, there is an identification between the message I have to give, and my own life and my own personhood, so that I am tied up with the message that I have to offer. We know that his message is the cross, and you don't have to think long until you can think of texts in Paul's writings that indicate the identity of Christ, of Paul himself, with that cross of Christ.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which I am crucified to the world, and the world to me. You find him saying, I am crucified with Christ. Christ was crucified for me, I now am crucified with him.

And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loves me and gave himself for me. So there is a very close relationship between the life Paul lives and the message which he has to preach. You will remember that in the Philippian letter he says, and this verse has tantalized me for decades, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

We all understand without any question what he means when he says to die is gain. But that first half, for me to live is Christ, is he simply saying that for me Christ is my life and as I have him I live, or is he also saying for me to live for a world around me is Christ? And if you know anything about church history and you know enough to know that, for Paul to live was Christ for thousands of people in that first century

world, and for him to live has been Christ for multitudes of us ever since. So you get this identification of Paul, his own life, his own personal existence, with his message.

Now, I think the reason why he is so strong on this in Corinthians is that was the point where he was being attacked, that was the point where he was being challenged. If you will read the two epistles carefully, you will find that when he left there were some others that came that said Paul's not a real apostle, and we are real apostles. We've got letters of recommendation, we've come from the center of the church, we are the people that you need to listen to, we are the people that you need to observe, and Paul is not a real apostle.

Now, it's one thing for people to reject you, isn't it? But isn't it interesting that Jesus said, if they reject you, they miss me? And Paul said, if you reject me, you've rejected Christ. You know, I hesitate to find myself saying that, Paul says it, and if I'm going to be faithful to the text, that's what he said. And so his laboring this identity between his own life and the gospel is in order to address the problem that is found there in Corinth where they are trying to separate the message.

You see, he took the message of the gospel to them. They were his converts. He was the first one to preach Christ to them.

They came to know Christ through him. And now there is a group who is saying, Paul and his message must be separated. You need to pay attention to the message of the gospel, but don't pay any attention to Paul because he's not a real apostle.

And Paul begins to say, wait a minute. These two things come together, and you cannot separate them. And so you get that passage in chapter 4 that we looked at yesterday, sort of an unbelievable passage where he speaks and says, It seems to me that God has put us apostles.

He's including himself in that bunch. Has put us apostles on display. Now note, he has put the apostles, God has put the apostles on display.

He says, we're at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men, heaven and earth is watching us. They've got their eyes on us.

God has made us that kind of a spectacle. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong.

You are honored and we are dishonored. To this very hour, we go hungry and thirsty. We're in rags.

We're brutally treated. We're homeless. We work hard with our hands.

When we are cursed, we bless. When we are persecuted, we endure it. When we are slandered, we answer kindly.

Up to this moment, we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world, but we are a show. And that show that we represent is Christ. And if you reject that, you have rejected him.

Now, the most intriguing passage that I have found in 1 and 2 Corinthians, which I think may be the key to the whole thing. It is in 2 Corinthians and it is in chapter 2. There are such marvelous passages in 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 13, 1 Corinthians 15, chapter 11, which we use so steadily in

connection with the communion service.

Other passages that are there, the first three chapters about preaching. Then you come to 2 Corinthians, passages like chapter 5 on the atonement of Christ, Christ's passion and suffering for us. But with all these high points, in between there's a lot of personal interaction where Paul is addressing a church that has problems and they are trying to identify the problems with him and they're trying to shuck him.

Now, Paul begins to defend his gospel and to defend himself. He is telling about how he has been traveling about. He wanted to get back to them and he had some problems.

Now, he says, I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and I found that the Lord had opened a door for me. But he said, you know, I still had no peace of mind because I couldn't find Titus there. Isn't it interesting that Paul's peace of mind hinged on one of his colleagues? We need to hear that.

I don't believe anybody ever makes it alone. And when a man can run his ministry without a dependent need for others around him, he doesn't follow in the biblical pattern. So Paul is saying, I still had no peace of mind because I did not find my brother Titus there.

So I said goodbye to them and went on to Macedonia. He had an open door. But he turned away from the open door to go to Macedonia.

And then suddenly he speaks, sort of erupts, and what a passage. But thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

To the one we are the smell of death, to the other the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity like men sent from God.

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again or do we need like some people letters of recommendation? That's what the other guy brought. Or do we need like some people letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter written on our hearts, known and read by everybody. You show that you're a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry written not with me, but with the Spirit of the living God.

Not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God.

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant. Not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. Now, if you will take time and spend two or three or four or five or six or eight or ten weeks with those verses, you will find there is an incredible wealth in that small unit, 214 through 36.

And it is, I think, the essence, the heart, the guts of what Paul wants to say to the Corinthians. Now, he says, let me tell you what I'm thankful for. He's under great pressure, his heart is in many ways distressed, but he says, thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death, to the other the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? Now let's take a few moments and just look at that.

Because in that passage you can see how radically he relates his message to himself and his personal existence. You will notice he says, thanks be to God, he always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us, notice the pronoun, through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. Now you know that I read that for years and what I read was, we're his instruments, we're his spokesmen, we go preach the gospel and the gospel does the work.

But I want you to look at this a little closer. Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we, did you notice it, look at the pronoun, we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.

He doesn't say our gospel is, he says we are. Now I want to say I hesitate to preach this, but if I'm going to be faithful to the text, that is exactly what it is obvious that he's saying. We are the aroma of Christ for God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

To the one we are the smell of death, to the other the fragrance of life. Now that makes me appreciate very much that next comment, who is equal to this? Who is competent for such a task? Paul is fully aware of what he's saying and so he says, who is competent to this? Now what he's saying is that the Christian should be Christ's message and that's true of the preacher, that's true of the lay person, that's true of the father who wants his children to follow in him, his mother who wants her children to follow Christ, the friend who wants his friend to follow Christ, the teacher who wants his students to follow Christ. I don't care who you are if you claim to be a Christian, there is supposed to be apparently as far as Paul is concerned, an identity between the message you've got to offer and the life, the person that you are.

And so he says, God takes people like you and me and makes us an aroma of Christ to those that are being saved and to those who are perishing. Now you will notice how tightly knit that paragraph is because when he says, and who is equal to such a task, if you come down to verse 4 of the next chapter in 5 and 6, you will see he answers it. Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God.

Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. God has made us competent as ministers of the new covenant. Now there is a boldness in that that is remarkable, and it is the background for what you will find him saying in passages where he says, imitate me.

And as I said to you, I never looked at those passages in Paul until the last year because it's much easier to say, don't look at me, but hear what I have to say. But Paul baldly says to the Corinthians, if you will read chapter 11, the first verse of chapter 11, he says, imitate me. And you will find him saying, I'm sending Timothy to you, and when Timothy gets there, he'll tell you how I live and you will have heard.

Now how under the sun does a guy like me get to the place where there's that kind of identity shifted between the word, the messenger, and the message? Now I think the key is in what he began with. For a long time I couldn't understand why he began this section saying, but thanks be unto God. I would say he should have said, this is unbelievable, but God does some remarkable miracles.

But the way he says it, it's a thing of joy to him. Now thanks be unto God, who always leads us in triumphal procession, always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ, and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. Now that's become very significant to me and a completely different understanding of it in the last six months.

Let me tell you a little story. I was in Indianapolis for a board meeting of OMS, and so as I pulled into Fry Road off of US 30 and started toward the headquarters, I noticed a bookstore, half-priced bookstore. Well, I'm like you, I said, let me see what this is.

So I stopped and went in. It's an amazing bookstore, it's a huge bookstore, and they're half-priced, some of them less than that, much less than that. So I looked around for the theological section and the biblical section, and as I was looking through, I noticed a book, *Suffering and the Apostleship of Paul*.

It was on 2 Corinthians, a study of 2 Corinthians 2, 14 through 3, 6. And so I just pulled it down off the shelf and looked at it and found out it was a Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Cuba. And I looked at the price, and the price was \$9.95. I thought, you know, there are some injustices in the world. The guy spent three years putting that book together, and I get it for \$9.95. But I gave thanks and bought a copy and brought it home, and I started reading.

And it is a fascinating discussion of that, primarily of the Greek verb here that is translated to lead in triumphal procession, to lead in triumphal procession. And he does a study of how that's been interpreted across the centuries of the church. It's interesting, the verb there, one word, is to lead in triumphal procession.

It's the word *triambuo*. And *triambuo* is the origin from which we get in English the word *triumph*, the noun and the verb. In Greek it begins with a *th*, but that's no problem, the shift from the *th* to the *t*, that happens oftentimes.

And it's a shift from the *b* to the *p* to the *ph*, that's no great problem either. So that really is the verb, that really is the verbal root behind our word to triumph. So there's a sense in which triumph, always leads us in triumph, is a very good translation.

The only problem is the mental image that we have, the author of the book says, is exactly wrong. If you will read the commentaries, you will find that some of the commentators realized it was a problem here, so you've got it used one other time in the New Testament in Colossians 2.15. And in Colossians 2.15, it is very carefully clear that they are leading a gang of slaves, a gang of captives, and they're leading them either to imprisonment or to execution. And in that Colossians passage, they're being led to their destruction.

Now they said, so Calvin said, it's very obvious that can't be what Paul meant here. Now I'm not kicking Calvin, one of the greatest commentators we've ever had, but typically reflective of the traditional interpretation here. Because what they had in their mind was Christ coming out of the grave, after the cross, he triumphed over sin and over hell and over death, and now he draws us in his train and we march triumphantly through life in the train of the conquering crowd.

But the reality is, the writer said, he went back and chasted back into early Roman and pre-Roman Etruscan history, and here's what the picture is that's behind that. The general or the king goes out to war, and when he goes out to war, he has the good fortune of conquering his enemy, and when he knows that

he's winning the battle, then he does what he can do to capture the key figures alive and not let them be killed in the battle, because they're to be a showpiece for him. And so if he can, he captures the enemy king and his generals, or captures the enemy general and his staff, and then when he goes home to his home city, he parades those captives in chains in front of him through the city.

It's announced that the general or the king is coming home victorious, the whole city comes out, and what everybody always thought was that the fellow who won the battle led the procession. But in Etrurian history, the ones who led the procession were the captives, and the one who led it actually was the king who had been captured or the general or the highest figure that had been captured. It was a religious occasion because it was done in the name of the gods and for the gods, and this was a sacrifice for the gods, and at the end of the procession, they took the king or the general who led the procession with his staff and the other captives that were there, and they were executed at the end of the procession.

So the image which is here is Paul is saying, now thanks be unto God, who leads us in a triumphal procession, the end of which is we all get executed. And he says through that, the fragrance of the gospel is spread everywhere. Now, I've read a few of the commentaries working on this, and it's interesting.

Several of them say, you see, he shifted his metaphors here. They say the first one is a triumphal political, military metaphor. You see, the second is, and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him, for we are to God the aroma of Christ.

Now, we don't have time today to go into all the details on that, but there are two Greek words that have to do with fragrance and aroma, and they are words that normally are linked together and they have Hebrew equivalents that are used in the Old Testament in sacrificial context, and they are used in the New Testament in sacrificial context. So that the second part, how is the fragrance spread, the case can be made very clearly that the fragrance is spread by sacrifice. Now, some of the commentators say, oh, no, one of the most, one of the best known evangelical commentaries today says, oh, no, these terms do not imply sacrifice.

But I think if you will read it carefully, I don't think, there's no question in my mind, but what you have is two figures that are completely consistent with each other. One of them is that Christ has called us to follow him. Where is he going? He's going to a cross.

And it is through the cross that the gospel is spread to the world. I came not to preach anything other than the cross of Christ. And so this is a development of that theme in 1 Corinthians.

And he says, in our being sacrificed with Christ, in our being crucified with Christ, then we become under God the fragrance of Christ that spreads the knowledge of him across the earth. So what you have is Paul's testimony that that's the way the fragrance of Christ is to be spread. And if we are to be instruments of its spreading, we have to come to the end of ourselves for the grace and power of Christ to begin within us so that that gospel can be spread.

Now, as I've tried to live with 1 and 2 Corinthians, I've come to feel that that better than anything else in either epistle expresses the thing that Paul wants to say. He said, you see me. Yesterday we read those sections where he describes his troubles, his persecutions.

He's shipwrecked. He's thrown in prison. He's beaten.

He's flogged. He's a night and a day in the deep. And he's suffering all of these things.

And Paul is saying the message and the messenger go together. Now, why is this so significant to Paul? I want to link this, and if we had time, we don't have time, but let me just mention it and you can link it. I think what we're dealing with here is where Paul is dealing with the flesh.

What we used to speak of is our carnality. He is saying that the flesh profits nothing, even in the saved person. In fact, the flesh will corrupt things.

It does in the world, and it will in the saved person. You will remember that in the first epistle, he says there are divisions among you. There are strivings among you.

There's controversy among you. You are still fleshly. You're still carnal.

NIV says still you're living in terms of natural terms instead of in terms of divine terms. But what is being said is it's that biblical theme of the flesh versus the spirit. Now, I think what he's saying is I'm just simply wanting to say to you there is nothing that will ever, under any circumstances, at any time, be fruitful that comes out of you and you alone.

Now, why the emphasis upon death is because you and I keep wanting to stick our fingers in the vein. And we and I keep wanting to have something to do with the process. And so we keep sticking our hands in, and why do we do it? We do it out of self-interest.

And so as we keep sticking our hands out of self-interest, we pollute the medicine that can heal the world. And then we become instruments of pollution instead of instruments of healing. And you know that that's true.

Do you know anything in the world more obnoxious than ego and a preacher? Do you know anything more obnoxious than self-sufficiency and a preacher? Do you know anything that's more offensive to you than somebody else that's in the ministry with you, and the guy says, I've got it, under control, I can handle it? You instantly are offended. And you know, it's always offensive. The guys here who've heard me so much, and some other people who've heard me so much, one of the stories, I just found a biography the other day of old Dr. John L. Brasher, published by the University of North Carolina Press, entitled The Sanctified South.

It's a magnificent book, done by scholars. All of his papers are at Duke University in the library there. This guy did the dissertation.

So I was reminded of a conversation I had with J. L. Brasher sitting on the college campus one day. I was a senior in seminary. We had brought him here for the holiness series, lecture series.

I think he was all a very old man. He was in his 70s. And I was a seminary senior, my early 20s.

And I was his host. So I found myself sitting on the bench in the college campus. All the seminary was in Larrabee Morris down here.

That's all there was. Wasn't much place in Larrabee Morris to entertain him. It was every square inch was filled.

There were 69 students at that time. So we sat there and we're talking. And he looked over at me and he said, son, Henry Clay Morrison was a great man.

And I had heard Henry Clay Morrison. I said, yes. Oh, no, he said, you don't understand.

He said, Henry Clay Morrison was a great man. And I said, yes. No, he said, you really don't understand.

Let me tell you a story. He said he and I were preaching in a camp meeting together. And in this biography published by the University of North Carolina Press, it talks about Morrison and there's a footnote that I think is there because of this story.

So I was interested to find that. It doesn't give the details, but it talks about the relationship between the two. At that time, they were looked upon as the two greatest, many people looked upon them as the two greatest holiness preachers in America.

And they were on the same camp meeting platform. He said, Sunday morning, I preached. And he said, son, there are days when you preach better than you're capable of preaching.

And he said, the glory came. And he said, it was a marvelous morning. He said, marvelous.

He said, that night Morrison preached. And he said, that night he preached on the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. He said, and son, the lightning flashed, and the thunder rolled, and the ground trembled under our feet as he preached.

But he said, you know, the longer he preached, the more little thought kept annoying me. Had a great service this morning. We've got to have a greater one tonight.

He said, great, great sermon. He said, the service was over, and I went to my tent. He said, I crawled in my cot, let you know how long ago this was.

And he said, the lights began to go out over the campground. And he said, it got very still and dark, no light anywhere. He said, I didn't go to sleep real easily, so I was lying there awake.

And he said, suddenly I sensed that there was somebody moving in the grass outside my tent. And he said, it got closer. And then he said, I heard whoever it was fumbling with a flap on my tent in the blackness, trying to find the entryway.

He said, I thought this is interesting. He said, in a few minutes, he said, the flap came up, and whoever it was came stumbling into my tent and stumbled around until he found the foot of my bed. And he said, he got down on his knees and buried his head in the covers over my feet.

And he said, the next sound I heard was the weeping of Henry Clay Morrison. He said, son, he wept like his heart would break. He said, I never said a word.

He never said a word. It wasn't necessary. Spirit spoke to spirit.

He said, son, Henry Clay Morrison was a great man. Now, you see, Morrison knew enough that when he got in the flesh, he was useless. It didn't matter about his gifts.

Greatest orator in his day, probably. Preached to 55 annual Methodist conferences. I don't think there's anybody else in history who ever has done that.

He was an incredible orator. But he knew that his oratory was sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, apart from the anointing of the spirit. Now, why is the cross essential to our existence? That's the only way to get

the flesh out of the way so the spirit can work.

And we cannot crucify ourselves. Nobody's ever crucified himself. We've got to present ourselves to Christ and say, you stick the nails in.

And you bring me to the end of me so you can begin. And you know, the interesting thing is when we come to the end of us and he begins, how is it described? It is a fragrance. It is an odor, an aroma.

It is a sweet smelling savor. You sent some of that in here this morning. We sent some of that in the earlier session this morning.

I don't have to identify. But you knew you sent it. You could smell it.

Better you could taste it. When we are clean and he can come through. Now, it's interesting in 2 Corinthians and 1 Corinthians, Paul talks about his weakness.

Paul says, when I came to Corinth, he said, I preached with fear and trembling. I don't know about you, but it's hard for me to think of Paul trembling before anybody. Paul was a pretty, sorry to say, brassy guy.

Have you ever trembled before you preached? I learned to preach without notes because they shook too hard to handle. Terrified. Terrified.

You know, I thought, one of these days I'll get to the place where I'm not that way. Now, it's one thing perhaps to be afraid. It's another thing to be totally dependent.

But you know, oftentimes those two things go together. And the dependence needs to be total. I don't know who you are and what you believe.

But do you know why I believe in the Wesleyan message of heart purity and perfect love? Just exactly because of this kind of thing. When you meet anybody who's clean and Christ is supreme in his life, you're comfortable. And when you meet anybody who's a Christian and there's a bit of ego there, there's something about it that you recall at times.

And Paul says, you need to get to the place, and I have to live in a place where the flesh is crucified and the spirit reigns. Now, the flesh can produce the letter, but only the spirit can produce the newness of life. Now, is it possible for that to be true? Let me tell you the line that has become the key one for me.

It is found in Paul in a number of places. It is found in, well, let me tell you, describe how I discovered it. Rich referred to it last night.

I was working on Philippians 2, the mind of Christ, and I found something that came as a shock to me, that the heart of that passage is not, let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. That's the illustration. But, you know, I've heard a lot of sermons where the only thing I carried away was the illustration, but that's not what you preach sermons for primarily.

And the sermon has to do with things like this, do nothing out of self-interest. Now, this translation says selfish ambition, but the word really means self-interest. Do nothing out of self-interest or for appearance, they say, but in humility consider every other person, each other's, better than yourselves.

Each of you should look not to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Now, I got an education at that point. Do you know how hard it is to hear the Bible? You know people who have a mess of a time hearing the Bible, Fred, are translators.

If I could live long enough and were smart enough, I'd like to write a book on the places where translators felt the Bible was too radical for them to be honest with it. Now, let me give you an illustration right here. My translation says each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Now, if you've never heard me deal with this, I want you to look at that and see how much difference the word only makes. And I can't find the only in the Greek. Now, the King James puts the only in italics.

So I thought, you see, if I should look not only to my own interests, but also to the interests of others, I've got a corner for the flesh. And the self. So I thought, I don't know enough Greek to handle this.

So I went to the classics professor at the college. He has a PhD in ancient languages from St. Louis University. Good Jesuit school that trains men well in Latin and Greek and all that stuff.

So I said to him, will you find the only in there for me? Well, he said, give me a little time. Came back to me and said, you know, it's funny, I can't find it in the Greek. So I went to Bob Malala, who's the provost here.

PhD from Harvard. They teach it fairly well at that institution. I said, Bob, find the only in this verse for me.

I was sitting in his office. It was interesting to watch him. The books he went to, you know, he pulled them off the shelf and turned, you know.

I can see the perplexity on his face. Finally, he looked at me and said, you know, Ken Law, I don't think I can find it. So I thought, could it be? If it isn't in the Greek, then it's possible for a person to be delivered from the tyranny of self-interest? And if you'll work long enough, you can find an amazing case in the letters of Paul and in the New Testament that it's possible for a person to be redeemed from the corrupting influence of self-interest.

An instrument can be claimed. It shouldn't be a shock, because in the Old Testament in that passage, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings. It ends by saying, they that bear the vessels of the Lord must be cleaned.

Where do they clean from? The ultimate thing in sin is just separate. Now, but then on that, let me hold you to that 10th chapter of 1 Corinthians again. And I got the shock of my life.

He's concluding that 10th chapter where he said, nobody should seek the things of himself, but the things of others. You get down to the conclusion of the chapter and the beginning of the next one. So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the church of God. You see, what he's after is so everybody can be saved. That's what he's after.

So everybody will smell the aroma, the fragrance of the gospel. Do not cause anyone to stumble, even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking the things of myself, but the good of the many, so that they may be saved.

Imitate me. Now, you know, I've lived a fair amount of my life in circles that had heavy Reformed influence on me. And one of the things that I found in the Reformed circles was that the closest thing to blasphemy that a Christian could do would be witness to being clean.

And I've heard them talk about these people who testified, you know, these early Methodists who testified to entire sanctification. And, you know, that was, I heard a great, great Biblical scholar say that's a cruel thing to raise that possibility before people. Cruel.

The man is a wonderful, wonderful Biblical scholar and so forth. But the interesting thing is the early Methodists weren't the first ones to do that. Paul did.

Now, when I got to that point, my question was, how do you get there? And I know Paul's exceptional, and apparently Timothy was exceptional. Is this just for super people? And then I began to hide behind that. Well, you can't expect out of me what you expect out of the Apostle Paul.

Then an inner voice said, how do you think he got there? What he preached was the cross. And he said he got there by the cross. Has God a respecter of persons? The atonement that he provided for Paul, did he provide it for me? No man, no matter, no person has ever been delivered from the tyranny of self-interest by his own resolution.

That is something that God and God alone can do. And Paul says, but thanks be unto God. I got something I want to tell you.

Thanks be unto God, who always leads us in triumphal procession, where we come to the end of us and we come to the beginning of him. And his spirit fills us and the aroma begins to spread. And it ain't us because he's gotten us out of the way.

And he says, through this, the aroma, the fragrance of the gospel is spread everywhere, in every place. But now there's another word in there that I want to labor before we close. It's the word always.

Thanks be unto God, who always leads us in triumphal procession. I remember when he brought me to the place where he said, will you take your hands off your life? And I said, yes, and tried. And he said, what's that over there on the corner? I said, that's my thumb.

Don't I have any rights left? He said, I thought you were going to give me your whole life. Take that thumb off. And I found it was stuck.

Not only was it stuck, I was paralyzed. And the battle of my life was. I knew it would pollute everything I ever did, how to get it off.

Finally, in desperation, I'm glad I was not in a formal church service. I was in a situation. There was only one other person there.

And my anguish was deep enough. I stretched out flat on the floor. I said, God, can you get me loose from that? If I'm ever to get loose, you're going to have to do it because I can't.

He said, if you let me, I will. He said, I may have to crack your knuckles sort of hard. But, you know, I found he could take it off and I could put it back.

Do you know you have to pay the same price for his blessing next week? You have to pay for it today. And there is no eternal security in this kind of thing. Now, thanks be unto God who is always leading me through the cross into victory.

When you and I get there, what are we going to rejoice in the most? You know, I thought, what would you do, Ken Law, if you had to walk inside of Eulatima? And Latimer said, I went to the stake for him and they burned me for him. What did you do, Ken Law? But you know you're going to be with him and some other people like that? I thought, what if I had to walk inside of that girl we talked about yesterday from El Salvador that sang hymns while they raped her? She said, let me tell you my story. He was with me and it was worth it.

What about your story? Do you remember Amy Carmichael's, hast thou no scar? No hidden scar in foot or side or hand. I hear thee sung as mighty in the land. I hear them hail thy bright ascendant star.

Hast thou no scar? Hast thou no wound? Yet I was wounded, but the archer spent. Lean me against a tree to die and rent by ravaging wolves that compassed me, I swooned. Hast thou no wound? No wound, no scar, yet as the master, so shall the servant be.

Did you hear that? You know there's not going to be anybody there that doesn't have scars? And there's going to be scars in the things we hold, things. If we get there, we're going to be people who turn loose. Let him bring us to the place where we turn loose our lives and he gets possession of us.

What a marvelous message. You know, it's interesting to me how the ghosts turn out to be your friends. Because you see, I thought, is he really going to make me turn loose totally? And I thought that would be horror.

You heard Vassily Talos talk about when the pressure was on, they said if we could just get rid of the pressure, then he said I found out we had to be free in here. When we come to the place where we turn loose and he possesses us, then we're free. And then we say thanks be unto God.

God forbid that I should glorify the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's where we're supposed to live. We're to live in the cross and the resurrection.

And you can't get into one without the other. They go together. And there's where the victory is.

There's where fruitfulness is. You know, I believe the church today, the body of Christ, is hungry for that kind of message. They don't understand it.

You can't force it on anybody. You can't pound it into people. They've got to begin to see their own need and say is there greater freedom than I've known? And if we present it, there are people who are hungry to be free.

And you and I know what the key is. It's to get in that triumphal procession. That leads us to the end of us and to the beginning of him and his fullness.

It's been fun to be with you. Those of us who are here in Wilmore and put these sessions on, we appreciate your coming. We need to have you come.

But I believe that we're in a day when I appreciated what Brother Mitchell said, that we're at a hinge point in history. Wouldn't it be wonderful if each one of us could be a center of spiritual power, wherever we are,

wherever we go. But I don't believe there's any way that can be done if we don't have ties with each other, care about each other, support each other, love each other, and help each other.

Now you see, theoretically, the church is supposed to do that. But some of us were in a district pastor's retreat about three weeks ago. And it ran two days.

In the first two days, the hierarchy was there. And it was like trying to light a fire in a swamp in the middle of a rainstorm. And the next day, they were too busy.

And the fire caught. Now, I don't think it's going to come for most of us through the church and the official connection. I wonder if we, who God has given us the privilege of this kind of fellowship together, we don't need to commit ourselves to each other.

You notice how Paul said, I was very uneasy because Titus wasn't there. I needed to see Titus. Why'd he need to see Titus? He wanted to hear about Cain.

Because he lived or died by what happened in Cain. And they were all together. They were one.

I think if we came to the end of ourselves, the way Paul's talking about, we'd begin to live for each other. And I'd like to suggest in closing, and we've got to close, I'd hope to do this faster. Fastly took a little longer than I expected, but that was worth it, wasn't it? Okay.

I wish you'd tell us the places where we can be of help to you. Because we've got some people in Wilmore who travel. Somebody's going to move through your part of the country.

Now, we're not asking for preaching points. That's not what I'm talking about. We're not asking for revival or any of that.

I'm not asking for that. Are there ways that we can be of help to you? I think there are ways that you can be of help to us. And I wonder if we don't need to build bridges like that to where there's a sense of, do you hear what Vassily said? The five of us came together.

And there were two in the beginning. Wasn't that interesting when the guy said to him, did the police send you to pray with me? So they'd know what was in my mind. Nobody trusted each other.

But a group of them came together. And they began to commit themselves to each other.

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