

(Christ) Christ Our Example

by Denny Kenaston

Christ's life is a radical and otherworldly example that we must take seriously and follow in order to live a life that honors God.

Duration: 1:10:54

Scripture: Matthew 20:28, Mark 5:22

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the life of Christ and the example he set for believers. The preacher highlights seven major aspects of Christ's life. Firstly, there was a clear distinction between the two kingdoms in Christ's life. Secondly, Christ lived a life of suffering love, constantly bearing the burdens and iniquities of others. Thirdly, he walked closely with his Father, relying on Him for guidance and strength. Fourthly, Christ demonstrated humility and servanthood, ministering to others rather than seeking to be ministered unto. Fifthly, he showed great compassion towards the poor, weak, sick, maimed, and tormented, always having a word of comfort and healing for them. Lastly, Christ laid down his life as a ransom for many, exemplifying the ultimate sacrifice and love. The preacher emphasizes the importance of taking Christ's life seriously and following his example as fishers of men.

Transcript

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. You are our Father this morning.

God, we acknowledge You. We acknowledge that we need You. We know, Father, that without You, we can't do anything.

God, so we ask You, Lord, to come. Come visit us again here today, Lord. Come anoint us with the Holy Ghost, every one of us, Father.

Anoint us with the Holy Ghost that we may be able to see Jesus. Lord, we ask You to come. Lord, we ask You to come.

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And, that we should follow in His steps. That's not a small statement, brethren, that Christ is our example and that we should follow in His steps. And, I take that to mean that we should study His life, we should study His teachings, we should study His footprints in the early church, we should study his footprints in the epistles and do as he did and as he said.

And I want to quickly say, this is no mere imitation. It can only be done according to the power that worketh in us mightily. Mark that down, brethren.

We're not talking today about just going out and imitating. There is more to this Christian life than imitating Christ. Christ is not an imitation.

Christ is an impartation. And we will see that clearly tomorrow, but I just want to preface what I'm saying today because we're going to look at his life. But let's look at his life and long.

Let's look at his life and dream. Let's look at his life and desire those things because it will never be imparted, brethren, if we are not longing for it. Guaranteed.

More on that tomorrow. Turn with me to 1 John 2 for first reading of Scripture here this morning. The Apostle John said it so beautifully here in 1 John 2. Let's read from verse 3-6.

Beautiful coming together of three things here in these verses. 1 John 2-3, And hereby we do know that we know him. If we keep his commandments, he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.

And the truth is not in him. And the truth is not in him. And but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected or brought to maturity.

Hereby know we that we are in him. More on that tomorrow. He that saith, he abideth in him, or himself also, so to walk even as he Jesus walked.

There again we have the example of Jesus Christ. And if we say that we abide in him, then our life should surely show forth the example of the way that Jesus lived when he walked on this earth. Amen? In these verses we have three things that come together.

We have the word of God, which is the commandments. We have the example of Christ, and that we are to walk like he walked. And we have the life of God, that is that abiding presence.

And those three come together to produce a beautiful Christ-like life. The word of God, that is his commandments. The example of Christ, that is how he lived and walked.

And the life of God, that is that abiding presence that produces that life in us. All three flowing together, and actually they are synonymous expressions of the same thing. Here in these verses.

Paul said it this way. Paul said, follow me as I follow Christ. And in another place he said, the life also of Jesus is made manifest in my mortal flesh.

That was Paul's testimony. And I'll finish my introduction with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. He simply yet profoundly said to his disciples, what? Follow me.

Period. He simply yet profoundly said to his disciples, Peter, follow me. His disciples knew what that meant.

They denied themselves. They forsook all that they had. They took up their cross and they followed the master.

And the rest is history. Now it is our turn, brethren. What will we do with the incomparable Christ? What will we do with all that we've been seeing and learning? What will we do with that fire that's been burning in our heart as we have sat and gazed upon Christ for these last three days? What will we do with the incomparable Christ? That is the question.

You see, the problem with the life of Christ, even for us here, is this. His life is so radical. His life is so otherworldly.

His life is so different than life here in America, 2008, that it's even hard for us to look at his life and say, that's the way God wants me to live. And by the way, let me give you a definition of radical. Radical simply means to get back down to the basics.

It's not an extreme word. It's not an eccentric word. Oh, that person, he's weird.

He's way out there. He's way in left field. He's a radical.

No, no, no. Radical just simply means back down to the basics. It is hard for even us to take the life of Christ seriously.

We live in America. Resort America, by the way. You don't have to travel 400 miles to get to Resort America.

It's about two blocks away. And I speak that in the context of the rest of the world. It's hard for even us to take the life of Christ seriously.

However, it is very clear in these scriptures that we must take his life seriously. This morning I want to cover several aspects of Christ's life. And I'll tell you what I did.

I just sat down yesterday knowing in my heart that the example of Christ was the next thing that we're supposed to look at in this series. And I sat down with the Gospels and I started going through the Gospels looking for major examples in his life. Now there may be minor ones that we can find here and there, but I'm talking about the meat, the solid, the basics, the basic categories of Christ's life.

And I have seven of them here. Number one, there was a clear dividing line between the two kingdoms in Christ's life. Number two, he lived a life of suffering love.

We call it non-resistance. I'm calling it suffering love. You'll see why later.

Number three, his life and teachings on materialism were very clear. Number four, he lived a life and a lifestyle of humility. And number five, I put two of those in there because he was in the spirit of humility, but he also lived a lifestyle of humility.

Number five, behold how he walked with his father. Number six, he lived for others. He walked and lived among the weak, the poor, the sick, the maimed, the tormented, and his life overflowed with compassion

toward the hurting of this world.

And number seven, he preached the gospel. He laid down his life for a lost and dying world. Those were major categories that I found in the Scriptures.

As I looked over this list of prominent aspects of Christ's life, I thought to myself, okay, who lives like this? Who lives like this? And my mind started to go, well, you see this life lived out in the book of Acts by those disciples who walked with him for those three and a half years. You will be able to just transfer every one of those points right over and see them in the lives of his disciples in the book of Acts. I thought number two, the early church lived like this for maybe 200 years, maybe 250.

Then I thought a little more and I thought, you know, missionaries down through the ages, even to the present, they live like this. And then I thought fourthly, ah, yes, the persecuted church down through the ages, even to the present, the early Anabaptists being a good example, the early Anabaptists. I thought, yes, they lived like this.

What about us? We live in America. Let's consider these seven points. First of all, in Christ's life, there was a clear dividing line between the two kingdoms.

We see it so clearly in his life. He never addressed political issues, even though there would have been plenty of issues and opportunities for him to address them. But he did not do it.

Isn't that interesting? Men tried to draw him out into them, but he quickly divided the kingdoms when they tried, like there in that place where they said, is it right for us to give tithes unto Caesar? That's a political question, by the way. And Christ looked at them, saw right down in the heart of what they were doing and said, what superscription do you see on that coin? And they said, Caesars. And he answered back to them, render under Caesar the things that are Caesar's and the things unto God that are the things of God.

Clearly drew the line, backed away from the whole political controversy and kept on serving in his father's kingdom. Hallelujah. He wouldn't be distracted away from that.

People would have wanted him to step into the arena and set things straight. I'm sure that many of them, as they sat and listened to him with all their things in their mind, in their Jewish-centered theologies about how Israel will rule the world and all those things, they probably, many of them thought, when is he going to step forward and take charge? When is he going to address the issues? When is he going to see the bondage that were into the Romans and all those things? But Christ stayed way far away from them. There was a clear line in his heart between the two kingdoms.

I mean, at one time they looked at the things that he was doing and they said, let us make him a king. That's a political ruler, by the way. Let us make him a king.

And he found his way out of the crowd and went up into a mountain somewhere and hid himself and prayed. That's what he did. But lest you think that I'm just parking on the negative side of the two kingdoms, that's not where I'm at this morning.

Christ didn't go around with just a big negative view about politics and all of that. No, Christ was so caught up in the kingdom of his dear father that the other one just paled in its view to him. And I believe that's the way it needs to be with us, brethren.

He was so caught up in the kingdom of God. He was so busy about his father's business. He was so focused on the needy world around him.

He was a kingdom conscious man every day of his life. And that's exactly what God wants us to be. Amen, brethren? He didn't just have a negative view about politics.

He was building God's kingdom every day of his life. He didn't just have a negative view about building the kingdoms of this world. He was caught up in another one.

Our view can be a bit distorted if we are not caught up in God's kingdom ourselves. And frankly, I think our view is a bit distorted because we're not much caught up in God's kingdom work. And because of that, we kind of sit back, you know, over here by ourselves and look down our nose and say, yeah, politics and yeah, voters and yeah, this and yeah, that.

We sit back in prosperous America and come against politics. But instead of the heavenly father's business, which we should be all wrapped up in, it's our business. We end up building our own kingdom, but we would never call it that.

Brethren, is not this the life of Christ to be so caught up in God's kingdom that the other kingdoms don't even mean anything? Do you see the difference? You see the difference? There was a clear line between the two kingdoms in the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. I thought about the missionaries. They are so enraptured with kingdom building and winning the heathen that they would never stoop to the lesser things of this world.

Many a missionary down through the ages was approached by that heathen government where they went to win souls and preach the gospel to the heathen. That government came to them recognizing their gifts, their talents and their abilities and said, come help us run our country. And the missionary looked at that and said, are you kidding me? I will not stoop to run your country.

I'm preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And then I thought about the dear persecuted brethren. That other kingdom is what is tormenting them.

There's a fine, clear line between those two kingdoms, isn't there? Very clearly. Number two, Christ lived a life of suffering love, nonresistance, if I may say. Oh, what a beautiful example he is to us in his living and ultimately in his dying.

He lived a life of suffering love. But why did he suffer, brothers? Did he suffer just for suffering's sake? No, he didn't suffer just for suffering's sake. It was for lost humanity that he lived a life of suffering love.

And defenseless Christianity has taken the example of Christ down through the centuries. The same way we will suffer for the sake of lost souls. They know that the dying lamb is the conquering lion crushing the head of the serpent.

We Americans don't like to suffer. Most cases, we don't have to suffer. And that skews our view of this subject tremendously.

Let's just all acknowledge that here this morning. Number one, we don't like to suffer. Number two, we rarely have to suffer.

And that's going to skew our view quite a bit. I wonder if we have lost our cause here in America. I don't want to fight back.

I love that man's soul. I don't want to shoot that man. He'll go to hell if he dies.

I don't want to slander my brother. I want him to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. These are the motivations for suffering love.

It's not just suffering for suffering's sake. It's suffering for the gospel's sake. It's suffering for the souls of men.

It's suffering that some soul might come to Christ through my life and the way that I behave myself. Christ lived a life of suffering love. I thought about the missionaries again.

And maybe you have read of one, but I have never. And I've read a lot of missionary biographies. But have you ever heard or read of a missionary who killed a native? I mean, there might be.

But have you? Anybody got anything come to any of your minds? I haven't. And if there is, they are very, very rare. I mean, imagine coming to some hostile, heathen tribe with a rifle in your hand to protect yourself and then tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ.

That doesn't make any sense, does it? Many missionaries have suffered many things at the hands of the people that they came to win, but they never fought. Why? Their soul. I'm here to win their soul.

Brethren, that's the foundation of suffering love. It's not just suffer for suffering's sake. It's suffer for that soul's sake.

Aside from fighting a hostile tribe, remember all the suffering that the missionaries go through just to be there. And win the heathen. But their suffering makes sense.

Amen? Their suffering makes sense. I'm here going through what I'm going through. I'm laying on this bed burning up with malaria.

Why? For the sake of the souls of these heathen. That's why I'm here. I'm laying on this floor trying to sleep.

Why? Oh, just to go somewhere and suffer? No. For the souls of men. They find joy in their sufferings because souls are going to be gathered around the throne worshipping the Lamb.

And then I thought about the persecuted again. Oh, how they bear up under suffering and they do not fight back. How many times the persecuted have won the persecutor.

And the beautiful, historical, so powerful statement still stands. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Jesus Christ lived a life of suffering love for the souls of men.

The early Anabaptists were a beautiful example of both of these. That missionary spirit that suffers just so others can hear. And that persecuted humility that bears all pain for the cause of Christ.

Let's move on to number three. Christ's life and teachings on materialism were very clear. He did not serve mammon.

Amen? He did not serve mammon. He was not a rich man. He gave to the poor.

He saw money simply as a means to a glorious end. That's how Christ viewed finances. He used time and he used money to further God's kingdom business.

That was it. That's how he looked at it. And by the way, brethren, time equals money and money equals time, especially here in the USA of America.

But Christ used time and money as a means to reach the glorious end of building God's kingdom and that was it. He told his disciples, leave your nets. Come, follow me.

And they did. I know we are growing in this area and I'm blessed. But I want to encourage us all, brethren, let us continue to hold the example of Christ and his view of finances before our very hearts.

Do not run away from it. Do not look at it and say no. Do not try to explain it away.

Just keep holding that beautiful example before the eyes of your heart and let God continue to raise up a different breed of men. I know we need to work. I'm not against that.

I believe that we are more caught up in the business world than what we would realize. Many of us. Back again to our example of the missionaries and the persecuted.

First, the missionaries. They have lowered themselves down materially and simplified their life to the point of riding bicycles or walking to the point of living basically down on the level where the people are. Why? For the sake of winning the heathen.

See, that's just like Christ. See, that's exactly what Christ did. That's exactly how Christ looked at money.

This beautiful verse. So describes the missionaries, and it's the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Second Corinthians, chapter eight and verse nine, we have this precious word.

Paul admonishing the Corinthian church, he says, for you know, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. Isn't that beautiful? And that's exactly what a missionary does, by the way. Walks away from their freedom and their liberty to make a good living and establish themselves and put some money in the bank and have a little place to live in and go somewhere else and live a life of poverty.

Just for poverty's sake? For the sake of the heathen. And think about the persecuted for a moment. Persecution and poverty go together.

Amen? They go together. History tells us that when persecution breaks out among rich Christians, poverty is the immediate result. It's the first thing they take away when they persecute Christians.

They take away their money. They take away their property. They take away their furniture.

They take away their jobs. Oh, how many times I've read accounts, as I've read about the persecuted church of a man and his wife and children and loading them up on a wagon somewhere and a few things, a few clothes on their back and a few things out of their house and there they go down the road early in the morning or in the middle of the night, leaving behind them everything that they ever owned to go start all over somewhere else. Leave their land behind.

Yes, the persecuted, they know what poverty is all about. But oh, how the grace of God flows upon them and also upon the missionaries, brethren, mind you. How the grace of God flows upon them.

Number four, Christ lived a life and a lifestyle of humility. Remember the verses we read in Philippians chapter two, his seven steps downward. Those beautiful graces of humility that we call the Beatitudes permeated Christ's life.

Poor in spirit, mourning, meek, pure in heart, patient in persecutions, merciful, compassionate heart. Those beautiful graces of humility which we call the Beatitudes or the beautiful attitudes, those were so beautifully seen in the heart and life of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said these words, I am meek and lowly in heart.

He so humbled himself to do his Father's will. He was humble in his birth. He was humble in his life.

He was a poor carpenter's son. See him walking among the poor and the needy in his ministry upon the earth. See him there, the king, coming into Jerusalem riding upon a donkey.

See him stoop and wash the disciples' feet. He was a common man and he lived in poverty. And he chose to live that way, by the way.

No show, no ostentation, no big shot, no fancy man, no rich clothes, no great white horse, no just give me the donkey and I'll ride into Jerusalem. Behold your king riding on a donkey, Zechariah said. Some of them did see the king riding on the donkey, but most of them missed it.

They missed it because they were proud. They missed his humility because they were proud. We can take some practical lessons from the example of Christ in the way we live, in the way we walk, in the way we dress, in what we drive, in the house we live in, and on and on and on and on.

He had a spirit of humility and he lived a lifestyle of humility. May God help us who live in rich America. Again, I think of the missionaries and the persecuted.

Both are immersed in a life and a lifestyle of humility. They can't get away from it. And oh, God resisteth the proud, but he pours grace on the humble, doesn't he? That's a kingdom principle.

He pours grace on the humble. Number five, behold how he walked with his Father. Oh my, Christ is our example.

But behold the way he walked with his Father. Hear the words of Christ as he describes his relationship with his Father. My Father worketh hitherto, I work also.

The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do. Basically what I see in all those things is as Christ walked through this world, he was in communion with his Father and he saw the heart of what his Father wanted to do in every situation and he did it. That's the way I see it.

That day that he walked up there on that widow at that funeral and there was the widow crying and there was the coffin and the widow's son was in there and he was dead and they were going to bury him and Christ walked up onto the scene and his Father began to work within his heart. He reached out and grabbed a hold of the hand of that boy laying in the coffin and he sat up just like that. My Father worketh and hitherto I work.

He was in tune with his Father. Amen? In fact, we marvel at it sometimes. I can do nothing of mine own self.

I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me. This was the way that Christ walked with his Father. He walked in the anointing of the Holy Ghost all day and every day.

He knew when to get away. He walked all day long, but he also knew when to get away. He knew when to go into the mountain aside to pray.

He knew when he needed to get up a great while before day and pray so that he could walk with his Father. And he is our example, brethren. We'll say more about it tomorrow, but oh listen, if we don't get this one, we have nothing.

Christ has shown us by example how this whole Christian life is supposed to work. More on that tomorrow. When I think of the moment-by-moment dependency that develops in the life of a missionary or in the life of the persecuted Christians, again I see this beautiful walk with God developing in their life.

Like many of missionaries have said to me, life is so challenging, I am continually praying and saying, God, help me this moment. Boy, that's a beautiful place to be. But you see, we don't need that, do we? We don't need that kind of dependency.

We're not stretched out of measure every 15 minutes not knowing, what am I going to do with this? But the missionary is, and all the blessings that come down upon that dependent soul who looks to God continually for grace, for the next moment and the next one. Behold how he walked with his Father, brethren. Number six, behold his heart of compassion as he walked through the peoples of this world.

Behold his heart of compassion. His bowels were moved in him continually as he confronted the poor, the weak, the sick, the maimed and the tormented. Let me say it again.

His bowels of compassion were moved continually in him as he confronted the poor, the weak, the sick, the maimed and the tormented. And he had a word fitly spoken for this one. And a walk to Jairus' house to raise his daughter.

The widow's son raised from the dead as she's standing there weeping beside the coffin. A father's plea for a son that is sore vexed with the devil. And he ministered to the needy world as he walked through it day by day.

Now, we Americans, we are pretty well insulated from this world of needy people that Christ walked in the midst of. We're, let's just be honest, we're pretty well insulated from it. Oh, it's not that they are not people like that, but we just live pretty far away from them.

Amen? Awful quiet in here. But let me tell you something, brethren. It is that walk through a poor and needy third world that has so changed so many of our young people.

It is that walk through that poor and needy and hurting world that has so changed so many of our young people. We live pretty far away from those people, don't we? Missionaries have immersed themselves in the poor and needy world of an unreached people group. They have immersed themselves in it.

It never goes away. They're there every day. And there's that little boy whose father put a curse on him.

And there he is dragging a leg down the street because it won't work anymore since his father gave him away to the enemy to get some power for something else. There he is dragging his foot down the road in the village. And he's there tomorrow.

And he's there the next day. And the next. That'll change your life, brethren.

And a fountain of compassion has been opened up in those who live like that. And they are blessed. Oh, they are blessed.

This is the life of Christ, brethren. And number seven. Behold how He preached the gospel of the kingdom and laid down His life for a lost humanity.

Jesus said these words about Himself. He said, The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many. I'm the King.

I'm the Lord of glory. I'm the one sitting at the right hand of the Father in heaven. And I didn't come that everybody would minister to me.

I came to minister. I came to get down there in the dirt and the grub of a herding in the needy world. I came to walk among them.

I came to bear their burdens. I came to bear their iniquities. I came to minister, not to be ministered unto.

And by the way, when I finish ministering, I'm going to lay down my life as a ransom for those souls that they might be saved. That's the life, the example of the Lord Jesus, brethren. Now, I know that makes us all feel pretty uncomfortable.

But that's the life of the Lord Jesus. In a sense, all the previous points are wrapped up in this one last point. All of them.

And they all take meaning in this one. Jesus said these words, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Now, there's a lot of ways we can look at that verse.

We could say, am I a fisher of men? No. Then I'm not a follower of Christ. Because Jesus said, follow me, and I'll make you a fisher of men.

Peter, James, and John, remember? Remember when Christ told them to let down the net, cast it out over there? And Peter, James, and John said, Lord, we toiled all night. We didn't catch any fish. Nevertheless, if you say throw it in, we'll throw it in.

And they threw in the net. And of course, you know, we know the story. Those nets were so full of fish that they couldn't get them all.

And the nets started breaking. They had to get another boat over there to get all the fish. And Peter, James, and John, they were so excited.

I mean, they were fishermen. I mean, when a fisherman catches fish, he gets excited. Amen? And Jesus seized the moment there and said to Peter, Listen, Peter, if you think that's exciting from henceforth, you're going to catch men.

And if you think catching fish is exciting, you'll wait until you get to catch a few men. You'll never want to pick up that fishing rod again, Peter. Henceforth, thou shalt catch men.

Catching the lost souls of men is pretty exciting. You stand back and watch twenty heathen men in a village turn from idolatry and begin to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. That's exciting! I mean, talk about a rush! You know, they talk about the rush that you get when you're out there in the woods and that big buck is coming up there, you know.

Listen, you want to rush! You go over there to the other side of the world and watch those twenty men get down on their knees and repent of their idolatry and begin to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll get a rush like you never knew! Back to the missionary and the persecuted brethren. This is what the missionary is doing.

All the other points point to this one. And those missionaries, oh, they are tasting the life of Christ. What about the persecuted? The persecuted are persecuted because they won't stop preaching about Jesus.

That is the only reason why they are persecuted, by the way. I mean, the devil has come to multitudes of them through their persecutors saying, you know, you don't have to sit here in this jail any longer. Wouldn't you like to go home with your wife and family? All you've got to do is promise not to open up your mouth about Jesus and we'll let you go home.

Can't you see the serpent in those words? But the persecuted are persecuted because they won't stop speaking about Christ. And there are many, many wise things hidden in here that I don't have two hours to give you this morning, so you read between the lines. So the persecuted are persecuted because they won't stop speaking about Christ.

And all these previous points come into their lives because they won't shut up. And they are also experiencing the life of Christ. And we know it, don't we, brethren? You know, we read the magazines.

You know, the voice of the martyrs comes to my house. I read those magazines. I know what kind of life those people are living.

I know the difficulties they're going through. But you can also see this beautiful life also of Jesus being manifested in their mortal flesh. I'm telling you, it's there.

They're a great challenge. By the way, I stumbled on this sermon yesterday. I should have known, but I was ignorant.

I was. I simply sat down and started going through the Gospels looking for the major points of the example of Christ. And all of a sudden, it dawned on me.

Christ was a missionary. Christ was a missionary. I mean, yesterday I just knew, okay, the example of Christ is next.

Okay, here we go. That's the next one for me. And somewhere in the evening, this thing just started opening up and I realized, Oh Lord, this is beautiful.

You are a missionary. And that's what You want all of us to be. Both here and over there.

Yes, Christ was a missionary. He was a sent one. He was a soul winner.

His heart beat for the lost souls of humanity. His heart beat for the glory of God among all the nations. He saw souls from every tribe and every people on the earth gathered around the throne worshipping His Father.

And it moved Him forward. He was a missionary. He saw a church on the earth glorifying His Father.

And He was moved forward. Gave up His life to a gruesome, agonizing end. May the land that was slain receive the reward of His suffering.

The reward? Souls. Souls! Souls from every kindred and nation and tongue and people gathered around the throne worshipping the Father and worshipping the Lamb. And so, what about us? I'm not a missionary.

We don't have any persecution. What about us? Is there no hope for us? I'm not a missionary. I don't get any persecution.

But I want this inspiring, enlivening, challenging life of Jesus Christ. So, what do I do? Well, brethren, first Christ lived it. Then He commanded it.

He always did. You know, His theology and His reality were always like this. So, it shouldn't surprise us that we have seen a missionary walking around in human flesh for three and a half years.

And just before He goes back, He gives the command that He's been living out to us, His people. Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, Jesus said in Mark chapter 16. As the Father sent me, so send I you, He said in John chapter 20.

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and make disciples among all nations, all peoples of the earth, Jesus said. Acts chapter 1 and verse 8. Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you.

And after the Holy Ghost has come upon you, ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and under the uttermost parts of the earth. First Jesus lived it. Then Jesus commanded it.

And went back to glory and said, occupy yourself till I come. I've given you something to do until I come. And I don't understand all those things, but somehow it seems to me that those two are tied together.

Somehow, how much God's people have occupied themselves with this last command that He gave. And when He comes back, somehow those things are tied together. And so, we roll along one generation after another generation after another generation after another generation.

And hundreds and years go by and still we're here. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you. And brethren, I want you to notice this.

The power is given that we can be witnesses. That's what the power is given for. That we can be witnesses.

And I want you also to notice this in Acts chapter 1 and verse 8. He said, and, not or. He didn't say, ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem or Judea or Samaria or under the uttermost parts of the earth. He said, and.

And there's a big difference between or and and. Agreed? All of us English students. There's a big difference between or and and.

And I believe it's God's heart if we can. Let's see if there's a marker around here. Is there such a thing? Yeah, here's one.

I believe it's God's heart that the church of Jesus Christ, any church of Jesus Christ in any locality comes to that place where they are established in Christ Jesus, they will begin to branch outward from there. And yes, they will reach their Jerusalem, which is right around them like that. But as they continue to grow and mature, they're not going to stop at Jerusalem.

They're going to go further than that. They'll be also reaching out to Judea. And as they reach out to Judea, they will continue to grow and mature and become strong.

And more leaders will be raised up and they will eventually begin to reach themselves out to Samarica, Samaria. And once they have continued to grow and mature, there will come a day when that mature church will reach out under the uttermost parts of the world. Not all the uttermost parts of the world, but the uttermost parts of the world.

And that's God's heart. And that's the command that Jesus left the church. And I believe to the degree that we engage ourselves and our churches in this last command of Christ, to that degree we will taste this beautiful life of Jesus Christ in our own lives.

But I also believe to the degree that we do not, we will not have that kind of life. Has the church in America missed something along the way? Must I remind you of the words of General MacArthur as the occupation forces took over Japan after World War II? And the Japanese authorities came to General MacArthur and said, Our gods are not powerful like your god. Please send us missionaries that we may learn about your god.

And General MacArthur said, Send me a thousand missionaries and a million Bibles. Quick! They didn't go. There weren't a thousand.

Not one thousand? Out of millions and millions? Do you suppose maybe we missed something here at this American church? To the degree that we engage ourselves and our churches in this last command of Christ, to that degree will we taste this beautiful life of Jesus Christ. And I believe just like all theologies lead back to Christ, so also all commandments lead back and support this last and final command of Christ. You think about it.

I challenge you. I welcome your input. All the beautiful things that are taught in the New Testament, I believe in every one of them.

I believe in the godly home. I believe in modesty. I believe in living a holy life.

I believe in the church being a testimony in the community where they live. But all those principles fall underneath this one. Amen? I mean, God didn't say, Raise a godly family so you can have a nice little museum for everybody to look at.

God said, I've given you children to be Nazarites and prophets. Raise those children for God and shoot them out into the world and let them go win the lost world to Jesus Christ. That's why God gave us

children.

Amen? Isn't that right, brethren? To all those other beautiful principles, though I believe in every one of them, they all fall underneath this one. There's a reason why we're here, brethren. If God wanted us to have a good time, He would have taken us to glory when we got born again.

He left us here with something to do. And I think we've missed it for the most part. I know.

I know. We are evangelicals. And I mean that in the biblical sense.

There is an evangelical stirring within us, a desire that others would hear about Christ. I know that's here. And I praise God for that.

But I wonder how much we've missed it. Just like all theologies lead back to Christ, so also all commandments lead back or support this last and final command of Christ. And it seems to me that Acts would bear that out.

These are guiding, enlivening, protective principles that we dare not neglect, brethren. We dare not. I mean, some would say, Oh, if you get involved in evangelism, your church will become worldly.

So let's not get involved in evangelism. Guess what? Your church will still become worldly. It will just have a different coat on.

But it will still become worldly. These guiding, enlivening, protective principles, we must follow them. If we neglect them, we will neglect them to our hurt, brethren.

To our hurt. Jesus said, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength. That's the Christ-centered life.

Fixed on Him. Then Jesus said, And love your neighbor as yourself. That's the Great Commission.

In a nutshell. Pretty simple. I thought about it this morning, you know.

Self-denial. The Bible speaks a lot about self-denial. Suffering.

Difficulties. You know, all that. But if you take those and let them sit over here all by themselves, and separate them from this beautiful gospel enterprise that God has given us, they don't make any sense at all.

I mean, who wants to sit around and suffer just for nothing? Amen? Who wants to deny themselves just for the sake of having a miserable life and an empty stomach? I mean, nobody's going to do that. But I'll tell you what. If you take all those things and you put them in the context of this beautiful, glorious gospel enterprise, then all of a sudden it becomes a passion that is so sweet and lovely that you'd go through anything for it.

Amen? I mean, think what that deer hunter goes through just to get that dumb deer. He doesn't care. Cold.

Raining, you know. Miserable out there. No place to go to the bathroom.

What a miserable life! But if you put a gun in his hand, and you let him see that deer running across through there, all those things mean nothing at all. Amen? It's the same way with this gospel enterprise,

brethren. It's exactly the same.

Have we lost our cause, brethren? Is there not a cause? Is there not a reason why we're here? Have we missed the reason why we're here? Have we let it fall back into the wayside? Is it just way back over here? Is it just one of those many things that we'll do it every now and then when we get around to it, when God put it right there in the forefront of everything? And though we may not realize it, it is our very life, our very strength, the very salvation of the next generation, and the very enlivening strength of our local congregations on a day-to-day basis. We'll die if we don't evangelize. We'll die! I promise you we'll die! Christ was a missionary.

He was a missionary. And He said to us, before He left, Go and do likewise. And He disappeared out of their sight.

And He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High, and He's praying for you and me. What do you suppose He's praying about? We all know, don't we? Let's pray. Oh, Father, we quiet our hearts before You, Lord.

Oh, how beautiful. How beautiful, Lord. Yes, You said it.

How beautiful upon the mountain are the feet of those that preach the gospel. Yes, Lord. I pray.

Lord, write this one on our hearts, God. Our Lord Jesus, His example. Lord, write it on our hearts, God.

Help us. We implore You, Lord. Do not pass us by.

Don't let us get off, Lord. Don't let us get too far off, Lord. Keep us on this gospel center.

All the days of our lives. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

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