

# The Gifting and Calling of God That We Might Serve One Another

by Devern Fromke

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing and responding to our gifting and calling to serve one another, and how God builds in to us according to His design and purpose.*

**Duration:** 1:09:25

**Scripture:** Judges 9:8, Romans 12:1-3, Ephesians 1:3

**Topics:** "Serving One Another"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the theme of serving one another and how God often uses natural examples to teach us spiritual lessons. He refers to a parable in the book of Judges where the trees go to annoy the king and ask the olive tree to rain over them. The preacher highlights the different ways people are inclined to serve, whether it be working with people, ideas, or things. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing our own strengths and weaknesses in order to serve in a balanced way. The sermon also references Romans 12:1-3, which encourages believers to present their bodies as living sacrifices and to think soberly about themselves and their measure of faith.

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## Transcript

It's a wonderful joy to be with you again. I've been looking forward to coming back since I was here last year. I can't help but look at all the faces that we've known through the years and do some reminiscing.

Would you allow me for a moment to thank you for praying? One of the things that has come to my attention so much the last couple of days, for about 10 years, I was very privileged to minister at various times with Brother T. Austin Sparks. Just the thought of him brings a real fond remembrance of the hours we've spent together. He taught me many things that I'm just discovering the real value of them.

As I look back through the years, I recognize how little I grasped of what he was saying. Our wives would be visiting in the kitchen and he would sit in our living room when he came to Indianapolis and he would say, now, Brother Fromke, in order that we don't dissipate the day, let us bow and pray for an open heaven. That was not too meaningful to me.

I expected he was saying, Lord, give us some revelation and some insight. But you know, through the years, I've come to appreciate in a new way what an open heaven really is. God Himself comes to minister

and to speak to make Himself very real.

He also had one more thing that he kept saying to me that has grown in importance. He would say, the anointing is everything. The anointing is everything.

I'm learning, I think, a little of what that means. But the thing that has been so significant to me the last couple of days since we've come is a principle he said one day. I believe we were in Switzerland together.

He said, you know, I was off in an aisle away in ministry far from London on a road. And he said, I suddenly was gripped with an awful fever, and I believe it was a sickness of some kind. And he said, there was almost a whole of darkness that came upon me alone.

Here I was away from the body. And he said, for the very first time in my life, I learned to stand in the prayer, in the value of the good of the prayer of all the saints. He said, I knew the time they would be praying back in London for me.

And he said, I somehow entered into the value of that and claimed their prayer in behalf of that situation. And he said, within an hour, within an hour, the darkness, the heaviness lifted. And he said, my temperature changed.

He said, I believe God touched me. I heard him say that on a couple occasions as we were fellowshiping. And it left a real impression in my heart because since that time, and that's many, many years ago, I've had opportunity to cry out, oh God, I need the value of the prayer.

I need to stand into the good of the prayers of all the saints. And this has been one of those weeks. We came with great anticipation only to discover we've had a bronchial condition and have been washed out and really in bed quite a bit of the time.

I have had to just say, oh God, help me to know how to stand into the good of the value of the prayers of all of you. And I want to report to you tonight your prayer works. Can you say amen to that? God has, in a very real way, demonstrated to me the fact that He has a family that are concerned.

So I've looked forward to coming, and then I get here and question whether I would be able to do much sharing. But we're starting out by the grace of God to share with you the theme that's been given to me. Actually, I guess I chose it.

I have to confess. You see, one of the three subjects, serving the Lord, serving the house, and serving one another. And I understood that Brother Ed had chosen or been given.

I'm not sure which. And then I looked at serving the house, and I said, how in the world could I speak for three hours on serving the house? And I said, but I know somebody who can. How many of you? Dane and I have been together quite a little ever since we first met out on Long Island.

What is it, 40 years ago? Pretty close to it. And Bradenton in California. Been in Brazil together.

And who knows where. Anyway, I have discovered that Moses isn't so slow of a tongue as I thought. So here we are tonight.

My particular burden is to share with you serving one another. I am convinced that God usually has a picture of the natural first, and then He gives us the spiritual. And I just thought tonight I'd like to take you

back to a little parable in the Old Testament.

If you'll turn to the book of Judges, please. I'd like for you to see one of the parables back there that's always intrigued me. The book of Judges.

Here is a very lovely lesson. It has to do with how God in creation, in nature, has a lesson to teach us. In chapter 9, beginning to read with verse 8, it says, "As the trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them, and they said unto the olive tree, rain thou over us." Look at me a moment, please.

Don't peek ahead. How many of you think you know what the olive tree is going to say? You didn't peek, did you? I think the olive tree might have said, well, I'm glad you found me. I'd sure like to be king.

Well, let's read and see what the olive tree responds. Verse 9, "But the olive tree said unto them, should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honor God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?' Something interesting. The olive tree is finding fulfillment in fulfilling the purpose, and there's contentment.

So the convention goes on. Verse 10, "Then the tree said to the fig tree, come thou and rain over us." Look at me. You're not peeking.

What do you think the fig tree is going to say? Some of you know the story, don't you? Well, let's see what the fig tree says. "And the fig tree said unto them, should I forsake my sweetness and my good fruit and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, come thou and rain over us. And the vine said unto them, should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?' All three of these have a contentedness in fulfilling their purpose.

And I think God is saying in this little parable back here in the Old Testament, oh, if I could bring some of my people to understand that fulfillment and fulfilling purpose brings contentment, everything else leaves man with great emptiness. You see, if I understand from the very beginning, God who created all of us is the great caller. He's been calling.

Brother Cong has been speaking about the human spirit. The human spirit is reaching out for something to fill the emptiness within. And I believe it's God who does the first calling to man.

We might think we're calling to Him, but the psalmist said, deep calleth unto deep. I believe it's God Himself calling to the human spirit. The Spirit of God calling to our spirit.

There's an empty room. There's a place that He wants to come and to dwell, to occupy. He made it for Himself.

Somebody said, it's like a God-shaped vacuum. Only God will fit there. So the calling of God to our spirit.

And He has made man with this longing for fulfillment, to reach purpose and meaning and value. This is why I believe the human spirit is crying out and calling out. It says, in another place, God has placed eternity in their hearts.

This is His way of saying, I've made man for something much more than just this, for life and eternity. Eternity in their hearts. So there's a responsiveness within man that calls back and says, oh God, why am I here? How can I fulfill purpose? How can the calling that You have be accomplished through my life? The trees do it naturally.

It's built into the fabric of the way they function. Of course, these trees don't. You understand.

It's His natural way of saying, first the natural picture. Then we get a hold of the spiritual. Now, when I read a little further in that verse, "'Deep calleth unto deep,' one of the translations says, "'at the call of the fountainhead.' And I sensed, oh God, You are the fountainhead, the source, the beginning of everything.

The fountainhead calling out. And our response is back to You. I'm believing tonight that God has been bringing some people together these days.

And in the midst of our calling out, oh God, what do You want in my life? How can I fulfill the purpose for which You brought me here? God is saying, I have a unique gifting and calling for each one of us. That's my burden tonight as we look into this little portion. The gifting and the calling of God in order that we might better be able to serve one another." So, I thought I'd just take you back to the book of Romans for a little bit.

I thought it was so appropriate today as our brother, Kong, was moving through 5 and 6, dealing with all of the saving work of the soul and all that God is doing, and getting us to the place finally where there's going to be the presentation of our body to Him as a living sacrifice. So, we come into chapter 12 now. And we're introduced to service.

All the preparations from Romans 1 on through 11 until we get to chapter 12. There we have service presented to us. We are not only going to serve the Lord and the house, but discover how we can better serve one another in the daily ministrations.

Now, there's some things that have always intrigued me in this portion. Chapter 12, we'll begin reading, please. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto Him, which is your reasonable, your intelligent service.

And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. For I say through the grace given unto me to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

And here's the particular verses I want us to look at now. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy, according to the proportion of faith, or serving a ministry, let us wait on our ministering, or he that teaches on teaching, or he that exhorts on exhortation, he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity, he that ruleth with diligence, and he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness. Now I'm quite aware of the fact that in years gone by, there was quite an emphasis on the gifts.

And I've moved beyond that, but it seems like the Lord keeps to bring me back to the fact that there are some very interesting lessons that we can learn from the way the Lord gifts individuals. I like to think of us as a tree that God is going to make a fruitful tree, and that in many ways, every tree has a particular root life, very distinct. Many individuals who have studied and have taught on this have suggested that these seven particular gifts that are mentioned here are motivation gifts.

They are the unique gifting that an individual has in order that he can fulfill his calling, the thing that God has for him. For example, I think there are individuals who have a definite gift to speak, the prophetic gift. The words flow out.

If this would be their taproot then, we would say that individual gifted to the body to be able to minister, to speak. You look a little further in that portion and you see it says, according to the gifts differing, let us prophesy according to proportion of faith or serving or ministering. There are individuals who I believe are uniquely endowed with the ability to see the needs of others.

They're always there serving. I look back in our ministry and fellowship throughout Indiana at the variety of individuals God brings into an assembly. We particularly have one brother and his wife who are, I believe, so uniquely gifted in serving in their ministry that we don't know what to do when they're gone, especially to Cuba.

Then there are those who learn the ability or the gifting to teach, the ability to take concepts, to develop the very concern that God's people will be well-principled, understand the things of the Lord. What I want us to see tonight is this. Through the years, the emphasis has been everybody needs a main taproot.

And I believe that we will serve out of that main taproot and everything we will do will have its focus there. But I've come to recognize that probably if God is going to develop us as well-rounded individuals, in some ways we need to have some side roots to balance our life out. Let's just say tonight you discover that you are a teacher by gifting, the desire to see principles.

And this is the way you function. In one sense, God wants to balance us as individuals and I think He says, well, we'll just teach you a little bit of mercy too. And we'll teach you how to organize.

We'll teach you how to serve. We'll teach you how to give. We'll teach you how to exhort or encourage.

What's the next last one there? There are seven different and I think that in some ways we can see the need for balancing out our life. How do you believe everybody ought to be a little merciful? Even though that might not be the taproot by which I look back and my dear mother, watching her through the years, the little town we grew up in, I think about half the people died in her arms. Mother had a ministry of mercy.

Always, always showing mercy. Probably that's why my brother became a doctor. I think he inherited some of it and his three sons are doctors.

Anyway, there is what we call the side balancing factors. If you have developed a taproot in your life and you're able to do this, we thank God that He is enabling us by the grace that's given to function. Now, I need to fill in this last 10 minutes.

So what is the one I missed there? Mercy, giving, serving. We'll get it here in a moment. The prophet.

Thank you for your patience. Can you see that back there at all? Okay. So we're asking tonight then that God will help us to begin to recognize that if there is going to be a real functioning in our life, the thing that we do the easiest.

I think there are people who would like to take on certain taproots, but it's not the easy thing. It's not the way that God gifts them and the grace is there. And I thought, well, let's just take a little testing tonight and see how many of us can figure out our own response.

How we would react in a given situation. Let's see if this will show up. Here are seven individuals who are seated at a table and they represent the seven different giftings that we have just mentioned.

Young lady comes in with a platter. Dessert falls off. And immediately you have seven different responses.

The prophet is pretty apt to say, that's what happens when you're not careful. I see some prophets already out there. Some wives are getting pointed to, I mean, some husbands.

Are you there? Okay, well, you know who you fit. Anyway, here's the server who says, oh, let me help you clean it up. The desire to fulfill a real need.

Now the teacher says, the reason that it fell is that it was too heavy on one side. Seeking to discover the principles of balance. Are you there? The exhorter says, next time, let's serve the dessert with the meal.

Correct the future. The giver says, I'll be happy to buy a new dessert. Desire to give to a tangible need.

Mercy says, oh, don't feel badly. It could have happened to anyone. Relieving the embarrassment.

And guess what the organizer says? Jim, would you get the mop? Sue, please help pick it up. Mary, help me fix another dessert. Well, how many of you, let's just stop for a moment, have a little fun.

How many of you think you know what your response would be? Anybody, you know, you don't have to tell me. Just do you think you know what you are? I think if we know ourselves at all, we begin to recognize the immediacy of how we would respond to the situation. And we need to encourage one another.

If that be true, to recognize then, this is my tap root. But just in case you need some balance, you need mercy, you need all of the side roots to keep you really in a balanced way. So we're saying tonight that God has a wonderful way of balancing out service in the church.

I discovered years ago from a friend of mine in Yakima, he said, and I've never gotten away from it, that people generally fall into one of three categories. People like to work with ideas. Some people like to work with things or their hands.

And some people like to work with people. And I've observed that through the years. Some find it very easy to work with people.

Some like to work with ideas and concepts. Some like to work with their hands. He had three sons, this brother who was sharing this with me.

And would you believe they fit into one of those three? I watched him one day, he gave a job deliberately to the three boys down in the basement, something to do. And he said, within an hour, now you go down and you'll see what's happening. The fellow who worked with people had convinced the other two.

The one had the concepts and the other guy was doing the work. I saw that with my eyes. I said, I thought, oh God, this is really true.

Now, you say, why did you do this, Lord? In order that there can be a diversifying so that we get the broader scope of things. The trouble is, so many of us pick something we'd like to do and sometimes it's not according to our gifting. We don't do it easy.

We try to pour people into, well, let's take another. I think I've got one more transparency here that we'll just see how you do with this one. Well, someone moves into the hospital and John's in bed, sick.

The server says, here is a little gift I brought in your mail. I fed your dog, I watered your plants and washed your dishes. Mercy says, I can't begin to tell you how I felt when I learned you were sick.

I really prayed you would feel much better today. The organizer says, don't worry about a thing. I've assigned your job to four others in the office and they're doing very well.

That's comforting, isn't it? Makes you want to get out right away. The prophet says, what is God trying to say to you through this illness? Perhaps there is some sin you haven't confessed yet. Let's just take a look.

How many prophets do we have? I got a fella down here who's pointing to his wife all the time. She's a real prophet, I guess. Anyway, the teacher says, I did some research on your illness and I believe I can explain what's happening.

Consider this principle. The giver says, do you have insurance to cover this kind of sickness? If not, I can help. The exhorter says, how can we use what you're learning to help others in the future to avoid this sickness? Would you consider? Now, I'm not just wanting for us to have fun tonight, but I am convinced that God has a way of building into the very fabric of things so that we don't, you know, run over one another, that the fellowship of people will find their place.

And I thank God for this because, you know, I'd rather teach you than anything else. But I'm not very organized, as you'll see before we get through. But I'm working on it, knowing I need some side roots.

And so the principle we're after tonight is this. God, in his wonderful way, imposes some things into our life. He has a way from the very beginning of building in to us.

One of the things that's amazed me through the years is to discover what I like to call the according to, the according to principle. That'll be meaningful now. I want you to turn to the book of Ephesians for a moment.

We need to just get a little glimpse of how God designs and how he works from the beginning. In Ephesians chapter one. Oh, let's begin reading with verse three, shall we? Chapter one.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he has chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy without blame before him in love. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself.

Here's the first one. According to the good pleasure of his will. According to the good pleasure of his will.

Jump down just a bit to verse nine, verse seven. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded. Verse nine.

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself. I would just like to call to your attention now so that every time you read this from now on, you'll get a hold of what I call the according to principle. God does everything according to, according to, according to.

I think the best way I can explain that is to say that way back in his father heart, in eternity, there is a picture of all that he wants to work out and accomplish in his eternal purpose. The problem we run into is individuals have a tendency all the time to have a reference point or a touchstone, a reckoning base in God, and they start with some aspect of God's nature or character. For example, there are those who start with God's sovereignty or you can't spell right in tongues.

The touchstone that they begin with is the touchstone of God is sovereign. We all believe that. There's another touchstone or reference point that people will start with, and it's the moral nature of God.

And out of this moral nature, we have the freedom, the choice that God gives to man. So we have two things that are in constant warfare. I call it the conflict of the ages.

One is what we call control, and the other is what we call freedom. Totally a part of God's program. And yet, when you start with that and you begin to make it as your main touchstone for beginning, you'll discover something.

The whole concept of things is that if man is free to choose to do anything he wants and you push it so far, pretty soon, you can have man as the master of his own fate. Man determines what he's going to do. He is the one who makes all the choices.

You have, on the other hand, those who say, oh, but God is the sovereign God in the universe. He's under control, and what will be will be. Now, you pursue either of these as your point of reference, and eventually, you're going to run into some difficulty.

Freedom always brings us, man comes to what we call humanism of the day. Man in control, everything centers around man. Man totally in dominion.

You have the opposite extreme up here, it's what we will call bringing us finally to fatalism. Now, the reason I'm emphasizing this tonight is simply because when it says in the book of Deuteronomy, your rock is not our rock. Your God concept is not our God concept.

I am finding, and you've discovered it already, and just merely alerting you to the fact that the great majority of the religious world has a reference point in something that God does, something of His function, of His nature and character, but they've somehow missed what we call the Pauline vision of who God is chiefly, before, above, and beyond all else that He is. This is why, as we read a little bit ago, I like to say that God, God is a father from the beginning. He's a father.

He didn't do anything to become a father. He's been a father by nature and heart. And you follow through and you'll discover that the only way you can really reconcile the conflict of the ages that keeps going on is to start with the proper touchstone, the proper reference point.

It gives you meaning then to everything that God does. For example, when you look out at the conflict that's raging today, there's two basic streams in the universe right now. There's the whole system that says Allah is the sovereign and submission is everything that matters.

And they look down at the Western, they look at all the rest and they say that's Satan. They do not understand God. So we've got two complete different streams taking place tonight.

We live in this area here and probably humanism has been reigning pretty much right here. Two are in mortal conflict. For years, I struggled with the fact that was I really a Calvinist? Was I really an Armenian? I grew up hanging on to God to keep saved.

It was the most wonderful day when the grace of God came to my life and I saw, oh God, oh God, I'm not hanging on to you, you're holding on to me. That which I have committed and you're the one who does the holding. And for the first time in my life, I came to rest.

I saw the grace of God. I saw what he was doing. And so I moved from trying to hang on to really recognizing the wonderful privilege of his grace.

But I've discovered through the years that if you start with some touchstone or something in God that's other than his person himself, who he chiefly is, you're going to end up with a difficulty. This is why we've said it before. I said it last year, repeat again.

I believe that the central theme of the book, the central theme of the universe is the father, his son and sons, we call it sonship, and the family that's eventually going to be like, conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus. Now this began to bring some real rest and confidence because I read one day, one of the reformers had said, God could cast a million infants, a span long into hell without blinking an eye. And I said, it's not the God I know.

That's a God, that's a God who has raw sovereignty, but there is no divine nature back of it. And so trying to say to us tonight, the conflict that's raging all over is between two mainstreams. How do we reckon with the fact that God is a father who exercises control? How much? All the control that a father needs to exercise.

I used to say it this way, the only safe sovereignty is paternal sovereignty. Let me run that by again. The only safe sovereignty is paternal sovereignty.

It's the father's heart limiting control. How much does he control? All that a father knows is needed. The only safe morality limited is a paternal morality.

That is God extends just so much liberty, so much freedom. Not total to the moral universe. So we're saying tonight that the according to principle now is that God does everything according to the secret desire, the hidden purpose, the something in his own heart way back in the beginning.

What was it that our father desired? What was it that he from the very beginning planned to have? Well, I believe that if I understand something of his father heart, he didn't wanna sit in the universe and enjoy just to have it all to himself because we come to another principle we're wanting to get at and this will sort of round things out tonight. It's what I like to call the ultimate, the ultimate glory of God. Now, let me take you back for a little bit before we unfold all this.

Let me take you back to one day in Switzerland. We were at AC Switzerland. Never forget Brother Sparks walking out before about maybe 200 people, French on one side, English speaking the middle, German on the other side, double translation, everything.

And I remember looking over that group and saying, what is glory? What is glory? Give me a definition of glory. Well, my heart was responding and I was, you know, glad that I didn't have to respond because I knew he was going to. But he waited for four or five minutes.

He said, I'm not gonna tell you until you think it through. And I thought of all the stupendous, colossal, enormous, I get all the, when things finally come to the culmination of fulfillment. What is glory? He did finally tell us.

He said this, glory is best described by one word, satisfaction. You know, I thought I can improve on that. I didn't tell him that, but I've been thinking about it ever since, satisfaction.

And you know, when you begin to consider the fact that God in the very beginning, with all the universe around, all that he could have done, all that he could, there's something of an ultimate glory that God is going to bring about. And I think the key to it is this little word, mutual satisfaction. You see, you can't really enjoy something alone.

I was 34 years of age before I was married the first time. And every time I would travel, I went across the country, a hundred trips, drove back and forth those early years. I got to Boulder Dam.

I got to various places. I said, I can't enjoy this. My mother needs to see this.

We were very close. There was something within me that said, if she could just see this, I would enjoy it. We would enjoy it together.

There's what I call the mutuality of enjoyment. And I did, I took her in many places, Canada, all the places we could. It was something of the satisfaction that comes in mutuality.

Then I got married and many of you knew Anita, loved her. And we had a wonderful time for 44 years till the Lord decided he would pluck the flower and take her home. But I went through the same thing.

I could not enjoy this alone. I needed to have her see it too. Anybody in the wavelength with me? How do you really enjoy something alone? Imagine God sitting off in heaven, Father, all alone.

The nature and the character of who and what he is requires that there be somebody to enjoy it with. Then I discovered once again, after 44 years, empty seat inside of my car. I said, oh God, I can't enjoy these things alone.

Enjoyment has a mutuality about it. It requires others participating with you in it. That being true, I said, Lord, I really plan to finish the race alone, but sure nice to have somebody in that empty seat next to me.

And God began to work in my heart. You know, the whole body of Christ began to pray about that time because I got calls from all over. This is the family room tonight.

Being very, very open with you. Are you following me? We're brothers. We have been together, some of us, for 47 years or longer.

And this thing of mutuality, and I began to say, oh Lord, I know the principle. He that has a wife has a lot more distractions. That's what Paul says in Corinthians.

And my heart has been gung ho to finish the race 100% with no distractions. But one of my dear friends who lost his wife kept phoning me and saying, it's not good for a man to live alone. Did you ever read that in Genesis? So I was in the conflict between two principles.

Not good for a man to live alone. He that has, oh, I won't go into the other. Anyway.

What do you do? What do you do? I kept saying to Jack, some of you might know Jack Taylor, my close friend, kept saying, Jack, it's all right for you. You lost your wife a couple of years ago. You're 10 years younger, but you know, I think it's a matter of wisdom.

And so I, you just pray, but I've not any intentions. And one day he phoned and he said, I need to tell you a story. Now it's time for a story, isn't it tonight? I've been, you know, up to this point.

He said, this is the story of Mary and James. James lost his wife and he was so lonely and he would walk through the park. And one day he noticed a lady sitting on the bench and he walked up and he said, would you mind if I sit here and visit with you a little bit? And Mary responded.

She said, no, James, I think that you told me your name. Sit down, let's visit. And in a matter of three or four minutes, Mary and James really had conversation going.

Mary's husband had died just a few years before and James had lost his wife. And they discovered that they were both Baptists. And James says, I'm a Baptist.

And Mary said, I'm a Baptist, but I'm a born again Baptist. James said, born again, well, I can do better. I'm a separated born again Baptist.

And James said, well, to be very honest with you, I'm a spirit filled, separated, born again Baptist. And Mary said, so am I. I mean, you talk about two people finding wavelength in a matter of 15 minutes. It was as though God had been bringing them together.

Well, Jack's telling me this story on the phone now, you remember. And he said, James really got to the point where he was so encouraged. He got his handkerchief out, spread it down in front of Mary and he knelt and he said, Mary, I need to ask you two questions.

Mary, I really believe God has brought us together. I'm so sure of it. Will you marry me? And Mary says, well, you know, we've only known one another 15 minutes, but I think maybe it is God's will.

And she said, yes, James, I will. What's your second question? And he said, would you help me up? Mary said, James, I'm waiting for somebody to help me up. Well, it was the process of weeks and months that sort of went on like that.

And my week, I will say it that way. My heart was beginning to be drawn and concerned. And so I thought, well, Lord, if the body's praying and all my friends are praying, maybe there's a Mary someplace for James.

But I really need more assurance than that. And one day I got a call from Richmond and there was a name you would recognize. Well, it was Max who it was.

Max's words were something like, Vern, are you sitting down? I said, yes, I am, Max. What are you gonna tell me? And he said, did you know Brother Kong was married? Now we're having fun tonight. Are you following me? And I thought, oh God, if somebody I honor, and we don't get into all that.

Anyway, the essence of what I'm saying is this tonight. Satisfaction has to have in it mutuality. God has built it in the fabric of the universe.

The desire to serve, the desire to give, the desire to be part of. And when I recognized what Brother Sparks was saying and it came back in a whole new way. Oh God, glory is the satisfaction of God.

But God as a father could not be satisfied alone. I suppose he could have enjoyed his son in eternity, but he decided he'd like many more sons just like him. Fact is, this is why he speaks of the whole vast family that are all going to be conformed to the image of the pattern man, the Lord Jesus.

That's why I really believe that the central theme of the universe is fatherhood, sonship, and the final consummation of a family that are going to enjoy him forever. And then one day I began to discover why the old divines, when they were dealing with the Westminster Confession, they said the chief end of man is to, you know it, tell me. The chief end of man is to glorify God.

And I thought, oh, that's really true. The chief end of man is to glorify God. And then the little phrase, and enjoy him forever.

And you may have discovered sweeping the country now is a real new emphasis on the fact that probably they should have said the chief end is to glorify God by enjoying him forever. If you read John Piper, you'll get interested in what I'm saying. Anyway, here we have this whole principle then of God building a universe for a family with whom he can have mutual enjoyment and satisfaction.

And when our brother Ed Miller yesterday was saying, the God who enjoys our giving is the God also who enjoys giving back to us. I said, oh God, that's the mutuality principle. You see, so much of my life has been an enduring instead of an enjoy.

And I have to tell you tonight, God has done a whole new circumcising work in my heart. It's all right to enjoy. Is there a place to endure as good soldiers? Oh yes, there is.

But there's the enjoying, and I've come in a whole new way to understand enjoying the Lord, enjoying, enjoying his presence. And when we consider now, as we round out our concern tonight, that the theme that's developing in the universe is God is before, above, and beyond all else, a person. And we come to his personhood.

We come, as we said last year, to deal with what I call principles. And then we have what we call purpose fulfilling. It is a person-centered universe who is using principles.

It's a principle-governed universe, but it is purpose fulfilling. One of the struggles we have is when people get a hold of a principle. Is sovereignty true? Sure.

Is morality true? But don't let that be your reference point. Don't let anything, God is love. Yes, God is holy.

God is, you can name all the various touchstones or reference points that people use. I've appreciated the folk here because I believe from the beginning, our emphasis has been God is a father. Fatherhood, sonship, the family that he's bringing about.

And this helps us to realize then that if it's a person-centered universe, it's the Father we exalt in his ultimacy. It's the person of the Lord Jesus who is central in the Father's whole plan and purpose. And the Holy Spirit is more than just someone who works.

There's the honoring of his person. I've been so keenly aware the last few days. And I just need to say, if there's anything that I believe that's gripped my own heart, it's the sense of the presence of the person of

the Holy Spirit, the person of the Lord Jesus, the person of the Father.

We sat this afternoon as Brother Khan got through. There was a holy hush, not imposed. It was there.

Why? Dr. Tozer used to say, the emphasis is on the work of the Holy Spirit, not on the person honoring him. And I've been trying these last few months to say, oh God, teach me how to really honor the person of the Holy Spirit. Who is here in his own way to exalt and to honor and lift up the Lord Jesus.

And in exalting and lifting him up, you come and get occupied with the Lord Jesus. And he said, oh, by the way, have you seen my father? It's interesting. People often come to me and say, I don't know whether I'm giving too much emphasis to the Spirit or to the Son or to the Father.

Because when I go to the Spirit, the Holy Spirit says, behold the loveliness of the Lord Jesus. I go to the Son and he says, by the way, have you seen my father? I'm a window. I want you to be occupied with him.

I go to the Father and he says, behold my lovely Son. I call that the divine runaround. No problem in heaven.

Why? Why? Each for the other. The person of the Father and his ultimacy. The centrality of the Son in his rightful place of preeminence.

The availability, the sensibility of the Holy Spirit working well. We do have tomorrow, don't we? I just needed to say to you tonight now, there's the according to principle. We'll get at it.

You can read it. Hope when you see over and over again, according to. He says in Romans, according to his purpose, we are called according to his purpose.

Everything that God does is according to. It has its roots back in person. The fulfilling through principles.

We've said before, the principles of attention that are always there. The conflict that's going on. And there's only one way you can ever recognize the final fulfillment, the natural or the mutual satisfaction that God is going to bring about when one day ultimate glory is realized.

The Father is satisfied. The Son is satisfied. The Holy Spirit has a dwelling place.

And we're all beholding. Father, we bow this evening to acknowledge we are gripped by the fact that you long to share yourself with us. Through the Lord Jesus, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, we are so privileged tonight.

And I look out over my friends, many of them with their own gifting, their own unique calling. And it is our desire that as we learn to serve one another, the whole mutuality principle will be flowing. We will discover that the satisfaction that we receive in sharing, in giving, in exhorting, whatever our particular part might be, the mutuality of it brings a deep inner joy.

Oh Lord, what I'm not able to explain tonight, I pray you will impart. Make very real to us the fact that we are in a tremendous thing that you're doing today. So much bigger than we could have ever realized.

The conflict of the ages is upon us. We refuse to give place to mere principles that are in conflict. We make our reference point your own father heart tonight.

And all that you plan to do in and through the Lord Jesus, and all that you're going to eventually accomplish in a family in whom there will be mutual delight in joy one another throughout all eternity. Seal this to our hearts tonight. And we'll give you the thanks and the praise and the honor that you're worthy of.

And everybody said.

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