

The Main Thing, Part II, Divine Counterparts

by Devern Fromke

The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing, and to understand that it's not just about being rescued, but about running the race and being conformed to the image of Christ.

Duration: 1:20:55

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:1-3, Hebrews 12:5-6, Hebrews 12:14-15

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of the 'main thing' in the universe. He emphasizes the importance of staying focused on the main thing and not getting distracted by other aspects. The speaker shares his personal experience of being focused on soul-winning, evangelism, and missions, and how consecration was the main thing for him during that period of his life. He then moves on to discuss the importance of discipline and hardships in our lives, and how they shape us for God's purposes. The sermon is based on Hebrews chapter 12 and encourages listeners to stay focused on the main thing and trust God's disciplining process.

Transcript

What a privilege, joy to be with you again tonight. It's been a wonderful day, I've enjoyed the fellowship. I see some new faces, some have come in, some from a distance.

How many are here tonight who were not here last evening? Okay, lost half the crowd and gained a new one. My real reason for asking is, I don't want to presume to build too much on what we were sharing last evening. But I do need to say this to you.

I was asked to give a testimony last night, and I decided we would take a little bit of the history and the background of God's dealing in our own life the last 50 years. I'm celebrating 50 years in ministry. Someone said, that's wonderful.

And I sometimes feel like I've had one year's experience 50 times. Oh Lord. And I asked you to consider, let me see if I can find the transparency that I want.

I asked you to consider this as we looked at the main thing is the main thing. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. I'm not trying to be clever, just to get your attention.

How many of you are sure you know what the main thing is? Let's just boast to the Lord. Have you been on the way all these years? You know what the main thing is, do you? Alright. How many are so sure you'd die for it? I mean, there's people of conviction.

You've had a revelation? You'd die for it. Now raise your hands. But you know, in some ways you have to qualify this.

You can talk about the main thing in the universe, which is primarily what I'm dealing with. You can talk about the main thing as it relates to certain aspects. Last evening, in our dealing with God's own history and working in my own life, for those of you who weren't here, I will just suggest we talked about the mainstream of God's working and I dealt with some of the little eddies and the things that I'd been in.

The first one we considered was a whole period of life in which my emphasis was soul winning, evangelism, world vision, and missions. And I suppose you'd say the main thing to that kind of individual would be your consecration. And I need to say to you tonight, every now and then I get into an area or in a group and I see things that are stalemate.

Folk, until the vision of what God really wants is laid hold of us and there's a consecration that's willing to lay aside and sacrifice everything, our group will not grow very far. That's a deep, deep need. I just leave that there.

I told about how in God's own timing we came to see that just being busy and active was not sufficient and God brought us into the message of the cross, holiness of life. We went through a whole phase and came to realize that there is a separating from and a separating unto. The great majority of people are separated from things, but the real separation is unto.

And of course you know that the Lord himself is our holiness. He really is. I remember back in those days hearing a young man who had just entered into a victorious life.

He was a pastor, a young pastor in a church. He came back after a real crisis of victory and dedication and he began to preach to this little Baptist church where he was ministering Six months went by and he kept telling them, folk, I have found the victory. I have the victory.

God has brought me to a new level of separation unto him. And it was so real to him. After six months the folk were getting a little weary of it.

One Wednesday night I think it was, as the folk were leaving, dear old Grandpa Brown, who had been in the church for 50 years, walked with God, knew God. And the young pastor at the door met him and said, well Grandpa, do you have the victory tonight? And I guess the old fellow thought, maybe it's time to help my brother. And very quietly he said, I have something better.

Well, that caught the young preacher. Something better than the victory? He said, Grandpa, after 50 years of going on, what do you have that's better than the victory? He whispered and he said, I've got the victor. There is far more in that than you realize.

I thank God for every victory experience. But I finally came to realize in my ups and downs and so forth, that if I had the victor, he was my holiness. He was my support.

Are you following? Well, I could spend an hour on each of these. I was just going to review. What we were saying is that it's so easy to get off and decide at ease and spend time there.

And I'm glad I've learned some of it. But tonight I want to go on and deal with a lesson. And before we get through, hopefully we'll answer the question a little more.

What is the main thing? I'd like to read a portion tonight beginning in Hebrew. If you'll turn there, please. Hebrews chapter 12.

I'm not sure which version you have, probably most of you the NAS. I'm going to read from the NIV, if you'll permit me. Beginning with chapter 12.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood, and you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons. My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son. Endure hardship as discipline.

God is treating you as sons, for what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined, and everyone undergoes discipline, then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us, and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live? Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best, but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees, make level paths for your feet, so that the lame may not be disabled but rather healed.

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and be holy. Without holiness, no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one misses the grace of God, and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

Verse 15 Father, we do bow this evening. We handle your word and read it and recognize that there is one you've sent to be our teacher. We honor him tonight.

Oh, I pray, Lord Jesus, that you will have a special encouragement, warning or exhortation for each of us according to the measure of our need. We look to thee. We say, Lord, be pleased in our midst.

We ask in Jesus' name with thanksgiving. And everyone said, Amen. I really wanted to lay this as a background before you this evening and consider the theme.

I think we'll call our lesson tonight Divine Counterparts. We could say Divine Completions. There's something very interesting about God's working in bringing us through into the full thing, the purpose that he's really after.

I like to say that God, when he created Adam in the garden, placed him here at a gateway of choice. Adam could have, I believe, yielded himself to the will and the purpose of God and exercised moral choices that would have accomplished what God wanted in and through him. We say that man, because he had a certain free moral choice, turned to his own way.

And in his fallen condition now, God redeems or brings him from his fallen state through the work of the cross, brings him back not just to the line that Adam was on, but to a higher line. Adam had natural life. He was all that God could make by creation.

He did not have the life of God. Adam had never eaten of the tree of life. It's not imposed, it's something chosen.

Anyway, God redeems man and he brings him, as it were, to the race course. The first thing that I need to make clear to us in these Divine Counterparts is two things that God, I believe, joins and we need to keep together. When man, in his fallen condition, having turned to his own way, needs to receive the work of the cross, the work of the Lord Jesus, man needs a rescue.

In order that, he might get back to the race course and begin to run the race. Would you believe that the great majority of Christendom tonight live in what I sometimes call a little box. The all important thing is, I'm saved.

I've been rescued. How many can say, but that's wonderful. We would never minimize it.

Not at all. But, as we're seeing, God has a much larger box. I believe that he planned for man to run the race.

This was in the initial design. And so, one of our problems is, in the religious realm tonight, it's the people who say, well, brother, I'm saved. I've been rescued and we say thank you.

But they don't realize that there's a race. Here are two things that I believe must be joined together. There are people who are trying to run the race who have never been rescued.

Two things we need to always keep together. Notice, as we look into that portion, this is coming from Hebrews now, chapter 12. Notice what he is saying.

As we sing, we also are compassed about. With so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. I don't need to spend much time on this, because we're, I think, clear tonight.

And the fact that God has more than the little redemption box, He has the larger eternal purpose, and so we'll say we are content to know that we've been rescued, and now we're running a race, and both are important. As I look into that portion, I discover two more things that I believe need to be kept in clear perspective. Read with me, he says, Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

I think the first 25 years of my ministry, at least, I had a very strong emphasis that we were to endure as good soldiers. Paul writes to Timothy. How many believe that enduring is a real vital part of running a race, and really going on? Would you agree with that? My problem was, I was kind of like a one-winged bird,

and I'm coming more and more to see that in God's dealing, there's always the right hand and the left hand of truth.

Whenever we have one to the exclusion of the other, we've got difficulties. Do you know that a bird with one strong wing goes round and round in his flying? I can't prove this, but they say that the reason so many people, when they're lost in the woods, walk in circles, is one leg's a little shorter than the other. How many have had a short leg? How many have been round and round a little bit? You know why? I believe God is trying to develop in us.

We're running now, we're on the race course, and He needs to develop in us these things that need to be joined together. Well, one day I'll never forget, I was ministering in Akron, Ohio, and the Lord whispered a little word into my heart that morning, speaking to a small group, and the little word was, Enjoy. And I almost felt like the devil might be whispering to me, Enjoy? Why, this is endurance.

And I intend to endure to the bitter end. But there's times when you know that you hear a word from the Lord. And I got another wing.

And from Genesis to Revelation, you know what I saw? Enjoy. Why, here's Adam in the garden. He says, there's all these trees.

You can eat of all of them except just one tree, Adam. How many of you know that eating is enjoyment? I could see enjoyment every place I turned. Is it wrong? No.

You say, well, brother, how do you put these two things that are antithetic, how do you keep them together? That's not my problem, that's God's. He just said endure, but He also says to me, I believe it's alright to enjoy the Lord. I'm speaking to folk here.

I've been with you enough. I believe you enjoy the Lord. What we're afraid of is the people over here who always get into the tangents.

You know the folk who enjoy, pretty soon they only come because they have a little happiness cult. How many of you have been afraid? You know you're not, but you know some folk that are in a happiness cult. They're only interested in their what? Personal happiness.

And of course, in our extreme, being sure we don't get way over there, maybe we emphasize I'm going to endure. And I've gone through this. I'm just trying to say to you, if there's such a thing as a happiness cult, there just might be a suffering cult over here.

One day after I'd given one of my strongest messages on endure, brother said, brother is suffering so wonderful, we ought to build more hospitals. How do you answer that? Are you folk with me yet or am I? How many have been in either ditch? Don't raise your hand. Do you know what I mean? Thank God, when He has His way dealing and working in our life, I believe by the Spirit, He will help us to run with both legs.

And my burden tonight is to encourage you that there is an enduring. But in the midst of it, there is an unspeakable joy that God gives to you in your spirit and the joy of the Lord is a strength. You can say amen to that.

So we're both those wings, right? No circles. I'm an enduring, enjoying person. Hallelujah.

At least I know the concept of it. Well, let's go on. I need to cover some ground quickly.

I always say what God has joined together, no man put asunder. Both the rescue and the race, the endure and the enjoy. Now here's another that we need to understand.

Begins in verse 3. We read of the NIV. Let me take the end. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Ye have not yet resisted blood striving against sin, and ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening or the child training of the Lord. I believe that those who are going to run and finish the race will do so because they know God's disciplining in their life. He said as we read it, Every father who really wants to bring his son into fullness is careful for child training.

The disciplining. Endure hardship as disciplining. I need to say to you that disciplining or child training would be very grievous if it weren't for this box.

What does God couple with it in order that I can go through the child training? The disciplining. Because this other dimension is added. I need to stop for a little bit now and say this.

God from the beginning has marked us out or predestined us to two things. You all know Romans 8.28. All things work together for good to those who love the Lord, to those who are called according to His. But what is it? Verse 29.

For whom He did know, He did predestine or He did mark us out. And you know that the key thing there is, God in the beginning as a father, I believe had such total delight in His lovely Son, I can almost hear Him say in heaven, I want many more like Him. None of you have a son like that, I know.

He may be wonderful, but the Father found such delight, I want many more like Him. And so all the purpose of God, all the disciplining, all the things that we go through as we're running the race, is to bring us to this first thing He speaks of, the first predestination I refer to, it's to be like Him. Everybody in agreement? You've heard that so many times, conform to His image.

But this one sort of slipped up on me. If you'll turn over in Ephesians, keep your finger here in Hebrews. Turn over to Ephesians for a moment now.

And you have the other predestination, the other thing that He mentions. Chapter 1 of Ephesians, speaks in verse 4 of chosen us in Him before the foundation. And we get to verse 5, it says, having predestinated, or marked us out, unto the adoption of children, of sons, by Jesus Christ to Himself.

Now we need to be clear in this. When God speaks of the adoption here, the Hebrew word, or rather the Greek word, is a combination of two words, H-U-I-O-S, which means son, and thesia in the Greek means placing. So the adoption means the placing of a son in his rights.

I'm just going to put this little word down. The placing, in position, a privilege. Wouldn't it be terrible if all of the disciplining, the things that we go through in the race course, wouldn't it be terrible if it didn't have this other wing, this other aspect? Discipline for what? Every father who disciplines or child trains his son, it is that the son, that boy, might come to a place of maturity.

I think a father looks forward to the day, biblical, when he can turn over the reins, turn over all that he has. Our problem in the West here is we speak of adoption as somebody outside the family being brought in.

That's not Bible adoption.

Bible adoption is someone who is already born into the family, coming into the place of positioning because they've reached a place where they have the mind of the Father, walk after the will of the Father, the purpose, the spirit of adoption is working to bring us to that place. When I began to see this, folks, it changed the whole of my spirit and attitude when it came to hardship, going through crucibles and difficulties. Because all the time I'd been saying, why? Why? Lord, I'm Yours.

I love You. Why do I go through this? And when I saw that all the hardship and the disciplining was unto the placing, bringing into the place where as a son placed in maturity would be able to take over some of the reigns or the privileges, that placing was wonderful and my why said, oh, how many have had your why turned to oh? Are you there? I've got three little grandchildren and they're full of questions. I just enjoy when they come up, why, why, why, why, why? And little David who's now nine, when something breaks and he says, oh, thank you, Grandpa.

That's wonderful. Are you following me? Why? Oh. And he sees something.

Here are two things. Wouldn't it be terrible if God placed some people in positions of authority who had never been through disciplining? A lot of people today, I meet them all the time in the evangelical world, and I say, I can hardly wait until we get there. Mac, I'm going to have two thrones.

How many do you want? I'm serious. People who think they're going to reign, who can't reign now over their own body and their own home and their own life, reign now? Never. What is God bringing us through in this whole area of the disciplining of the hardships? Why? I'll tell you, changing clothes in a rapture won't prepare you to reign.

Putting off this body. It'll never do it. It's an inward reality.

God's going to work in a life. So I just kind of rejoice to say tonight that there are two predestinations. One is to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus.

Ephesians 1 tells us that in the adoption, there is the placing. And this is where we're going to be able to do. He's predestined us.

Isaiah put it this way in the Old Testament. Unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given.

But it doesn't stop there. Why did He say a child? Why did He say a son is given? Why did He say in the next verse, and the government shall be upon His shoulder? Why? God doesn't want just look-alikes. He wants some lives in whom disciplining and some exercise has been wrought out in order that we will be able to, even as the Lord Jesus did, exercise some reign and authority.

Now you look at me so strange, but I have to tell you, God is going to share with His lovely Son, and those of us who are part of the body are going to be privileged in this. Marked out for what? To be like Him, and to what? Do, placed as mature sons. I was speaking in a morning camp out in Oregon years ago.

The man who had been sharing that morning was speaking about all the crowns and all the rewards that the Christians would have. Just so clear yet, everybody was excited as we were leaving the tabernacle that morning, going down the little path. Two sweet little sisters, I'm sure in their 70's and 80's were just aloft.

I heard one of them say, Oh, how wonderful. We'll get to reign with Him. How many cities do you want? I'll take five.

And I wanted to pull my arm around and say, Thank God, that's good. But how many of you believe that before God positions or brings into placing, there needs to be some preparation? What are you going through? What have you been through today? And you've said, Thank You, Lord. It's for the placing.

Thank You, Lord. All the hardship. All these things.

I don't say why anymore. I say, Oh, thank You, Lord. Am I just talking or is it real? Well, here is two things.

Disciplining without being unto something or expecting to have a divine placing, authority or position without the preparation. Here's another I think is interesting. You read in Hebrews 12.

Let's pick it up with verse 11. Now no chastening or disciplining for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down in the feeble knees and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men and holiness. Follow peace with all men and holiness.

Here are two more counterparts. When I think of one of them, let's just say holiness, I think of basically separation. God has called us to be a holy people, separated people unto Him and be very easy for us to just emphasize one aspect, except that when He speaks of follow peace with all men, I think of another side here which I call involvement.

How many have had some trouble in being in this world and not of it? How many have said, Lord, this office I work in, I could really be a shiny example and really be separated if it weren't for? What do you do? Change offices. Until you run out of places and then you go to a monastery or a convent to get all alone and separated. And after there a while, you discover you have yourself.

Don't you? Anybody besides Vern struggling with the need to be involved with people in their circumstances, in the situation, follow peace in all these situations, and yet keep yourself unspotted, unblemished. How many say I need help? Okay, I don't need to go on with that one. I remember reading years ago a mother and father who sent their son off to college.

He'd been reared in a Christian home. He went off to a secular university and they were concerned and they were praying, but it was his choice to go there. He didn't write home very often, but he did write just before Christmas and he said, Mother and Dad, I'm going to come home and if you'll permit me, I'd like to bring my roommate.

I know you'll like her. And you better believe that they struggled over his penmanship at that point, him or her. I mean, they were really adrift.

How many of you know young people can wear a suit of clothes and conform and have a lot of outward religiosity, but never have much inward reality? We've got a lot of folk today who wear clothes, religious garbs. I don't know about this young fellow, but I know that he'd been conforming all the time he was at home and now he was out on his own and he'd gotten into a situation, very compromising, and that Mother

and Dad began to pray. The trouble is, they were different in their temperament.

Dad would pray, Oh God, you need to help my boy and we need to stand with a holiness standard of separation under God. Mother was continually praying, Oh God, let us have peace in this situation. Peace with all men.

How many of you know two people can really be riven by their temperament and makeup and mothers are saying, peace now. And Dad's saying, we've got a standard. We've got a hold for righteousness.

What do you do? What do you do? I'm waiting. What do you do? Well, the rest of the story is interesting. Very interesting.

One morning they were reading Hebrews chapter 12 and they came to this very verse and Dad was reading and he said, follow peace with all men and holiness. And the light bulb went on. And he said, Mother, I know what we'll do.

We'll invite them to come home. We'll have two rooms and make sure that everything's in order. But we'll have peace.

Now, you may not agree with that. My wife doesn't. I only share this when she is the Lord.

See, I'm the mercy person and she's the... Are you there? How do you stay involved with people, love them, hurting people, needy people? Be involved and yet not become contaminated. What do you do? Well, you set up a little principle. We never do this or we always do this.

And people who live by the never and always principle play it safe because they don't have to think and they don't have to ask God each situation. I'm for principles, but I know there are times when we are utterly, utterly cast before the Lord. Lord, here's a wedding we're invited to.

All the relatives will be there. There'll be a drunken before it's over with. What do I do? I look in my little rule book and say, we never go to weddings.

No problem. Or I look at the other rule book and say, we always get involved because maybe we can, which is just as bad. What do you do? Remember our key verse this evening as we started out with, looking unto Jesus.

I'm so glad you can be wrecked on Him all the time. God, you mean every day I need to come with every new situation where I work or what I do and ask for His help in every situation? Yeah, you do. Looking unto what? Jesus.

You say, that's awful. Every day I have to be dependent. That's what it's all about.

Do you catch what I'm trying to say? Well, this whole set of things, I can't answer for you tonight how to walk in a holiness and a separation before the Lord and continue to be involved in the hurts and the situations of people. I just know that every day in a whole new way, I'm utterly cast before, oh God, oh God, oh God. I'm meeting Wednesday mornings with a group of businessmen and we pray for about an hour before they go off to their work.

I would never have chosen this group. They're all entrepreneurs, men in real position. The other morning as we were fellowshiping, here are men in high finance.

Two of them are bankers, one's retired. They really love the Lord and yet it's amazing how easy it is to walk in light and yet have a little bit of shadows come in. All the light and yet a shady or a shadow area comes in.

I'm convinced, folk, that an awful lot of the mixture and the problem today is among God's children who say, we walk in the light, but they ignore a little shadow or shady area. We were praying that morning and one of them said we're in the midst of a negotiation. One billion, 1.2 billion dollars.

That's so much, doesn't even mean anything to me. And I said, what are you praying about? He said, well, it's international, it's foreign. And he said, there's some possibilities, there's some risk.

In just that moment, I saw light and a shadow. Not a vision, but it's a principle I've known for some years. And I said, anything that's risky, you see in the midst of it, they were going to get for the negotiation 40% of the whole thing.

And that's a red flag. Anytime somebody gets 40% for a negotiation. To shorten the story, it was all going through Canada because in order to get to China, it couldn't go by way of the United States and I could only say, that's darkness.

That's not even shadow. Are you following me? That's shadow. That's not shadow.

That's darkness. And one of the men said, yeah, it is, isn't it? Right then and there a choice is made. I don't like to be involved with people like that.

I'd rather be with holy people like Max. Are you following me? Instead of having to get involved with very needy people out here. But for the last three months, Wednesday after Wednesday, I'm amazed at the openness and transparency and the way God touches situations.

And would you believe, they're just as hard on me in my blind spot or where I would walk in a shadow. That's enough of that. Anyway, I'm really headed for this last one, which I think we need.

Let's read chapter 12. Here is another combination that's very helpful. Let me see if I can find another transparency here for a moment.

Read this verse 15. We started out with verse 2, looking unto Jesus. Now we come to verse 15, looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God.

Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you and thereby many be defiled. I need to give you a little picture here before we... I'll just put these down. Here are two things that need to be in our lives.

I call it the root and the fruit. Let me illustrate it like this. In these years of going on with the Lord, I've been continually aware of the fact that God speaks of his children as trees that are planted.

Not only trees, but we are planted by a river of grace. And the reason is that our roots can go down to the river of grace. We can be rooted to get the supply that we need.

There are some of God's children who are like the heath, the tree in the desert that Jeremiah speaks of, who do not know what it is to have real root life. Their roots go sort of like this. They never get down to the river of grace.

In order to understand this, I need to say to you that there is an initial grace, Romans 5, this grace wherein we stand. This is a position that we have in grace. How many of you can say tonight, I'm a tree planted.

I stand in the grace of God. One definition of grace is, is unmerited favor. We didn't deserve or earn or warrant it.

He just took us out of what we were in and planted us. So we stand in grace. But there's another aspect of grace that's largely missed in the evangelical world.

And it's the one I want to deal with. Grace is God giving the desire and power to respond to every life situation according to the will of God. You can't read that, so I'll read it for you.

Grace is God giving the desire and power to respond to every life situation according to the will of God. When he says in verse 15 that we should not fail of the grace of God, I believe that it is this enablement that God wants us to have our roots go down in a difficult situation to somehow take the desire and the power to do what I could not naturally do. Let me illustrate that with this.

Some of you have heard this before years ago. I remember being in Hagerstown, Maryland years ago, speaking in a Christian school, high school. I've been there five days, and that morning, the Friday morning, the headmaster said to me, we have a senior boy that's beginning to create some real problems.

I've invited him into the office after the chapel this morning, and I'd like to have you come in and we'll see if we can find out what his trouble is. Never forget this tall, lanky senior coming into the office and slouching down as though by his attitude to say, well, I'm here, but don't expect me to talk. And he didn't.

He sat there, insolent, withdrawn, quiet. The headmaster was trying to draw him out. Suddenly, he burst forth with an explosion.

He said, you'd be angry too if you had a father like mine. Then he explained. His father boarded special horses at a barn with hayloft full of good hay.

He said last month, the pigeons, my pet pigeons, were messing up the hay in the loft, and my dad shot all my pigeons. And he said last week, my little dog walked down the aisle of the barn and vomited, and he shot my dog. Then he blurted out and he said, I have a right to be angry with a father like that.

I'd been listening up to this point, asking for help. I could see the bewilderment and the frustration in this young man and his reasoning. And I turned to him and I said, let me draw you a little picture.

And I drew the picture of two trees. And I said to him, you're confused at one point. You say you have a right to be offended and angry with your father.

No, you don't have a right. You have a reason, but not a right. Why don't I have a right? I said, the reason you don't have a right is because whenever we are put into situations that are difficult, the storms of life come and blow on our tree.

If we know God's way, if we humble ourselves, our roots can go down. No wonder James says, humble yourselves. Peter says, humble yourself.

If I will humble myself before God, God will give the desire and the power to respond or to forgive your father for what he did. I'm not condoning what your dad did. This is an unfair world.

But I need to tell you, young man, you have a reason, a reasoning, but you don't have a right. How many are with me now? Let's make sure. Why didn't he have a right to be angry? First of all, he was a tree planted, right? Second, if he would do one thing, he could receive from the river of grace the desire and the power to forgive his father.

I never forget, the Holy Spirit came into the room that day. He saw it just like that. Yeah, I've got a reasoning.

Paul says, casting down reasonings. Everything that exalted itself against the knowledge of God. Next thing I saw him doing, he knelt at the chair.

He said, God, I need for my roots to go down. Give me the desire and the power to forgive my dad. And he got up with a glow on his face and he said, I have.

God did. Now, let me tell you this tonight, because I'm working toward, I think, something that's so significant in the body of believers today. I'll preface it by saying, if you can be offended, sooner or later, you will be.

If you can be offended, there are storms, there are situations that are going to come and you will be offended. Not out in the world. Guess where? You say it.

In the church. Among God's people. You know why? Because we all mean well.

But we don't do well all the time. And I'm so keenly aware of the fact that this thing of being offended. A young man was offended.

Father was a deacon in the church. Shouldn't have done that. But in the spur of the moment, shot the pigeons and the dog.

How many of you can believe that if it hasn't already happened sooner or later, there's going to come something in your own life that's going to cause you to cry out, God, you didn't ask me to understand. You just asked me to commit it to you. Don't let me fail of the grace of God.

And let a root of bitterness come in, whereby many be defiled. I guess maybe I can share this with you because I've been exhibit A of being so close, so close to being offended. Oh, so many times.

Nursed my wounds. All my reasonings justified myself. Then I began to read through this whole of the Scripture and discover how many times it speaks of being offended.

Let me illustrate. Here is John the Baptist. Jesus' forerunner.

John has come on the scene. One day, by the Spirit, he announces, Behold the Lamb of God. Jesus comes in.

And he announces, Here's the Messiah. And then he says, He must increase. I must... How many of you think John knew what he was saying? I don't.

I don't think any of you. I don't think we do. It wasn't long after this all John's congregation are following Jesus except for just a couple of disciples.

Do you know where John is? He's in prison. And when you're in prison and isolated, you begin to reason. A lot of things didn't add up.

Was this really the Messiah? Is he really the one we've been looking for? Is this really the Christ? And so John sends a couple of his disciples to go to Jesus to find out. And Jesus turns to these disciples. John's in prison.

He turns and he says, Go back and tell John about the miracles, the wonderful things that are taking place. You know the story. And then he sums it up in one word.

And then tell John, Blessed is he that is not offended in me. Tell John, Blessed is he who is not offended in me. How many of you believe that a cousin ought to visit his cousin in prison? You know John and Jesus were cousins.

Just naturally speaking now, wouldn't you kind of feel offended if your cousin didn't come after you turned your whole congregation over? Didn't even bother to visit you? Are you there? I think John had a good reason. But no rights. But no rights.

Why? And so the disciples leave. They go back to John. And then you know what Jesus says? Among men born of women, there's none greater.

Why didn't He send that word to John? That would really go good with my being offended, wouldn't it? But He didn't. Among men, there's none greater. He didn't tell John that.

Blessed is he that's not offended. Now I need to say this. We're living at a very critical hour.

And I don't think things are going to get better at all. Everybody's hoping to get back to normalcy. There will never be any normalcy.

The only normalcy will be it's getting worse. But my big concern among God's children, if we can be offended because we misinterpret or misunderstand something that the Lord allows us to go through. I don't have a bit of confidence in Vern Prompty.

I have to be honest with you. I've been offended too many times. I know all the principle.

But rejection, isolation, misunderstanding. Nobody cares you're offended. But I know a principle.

You know what it is? Both James and Peter say, if you want more grace, what do you do? Humble yourself, oh God. I don't know. You haven't invited me to understand.

But I believe you can give me the desire and the power in the midst of this difficult thing to respond the way I ought to respond. This thing in the whole religious world tonight of God taking us through to develop root life. How? The disciplining.

The enduring. The things we go through. It's the abiding life we were talking about last night.

And if we are rooted, I believe that God who has planted will bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby. Do you know there are people who want fruit here without much root. It goes like this.

You read a book and it says all you need to do is claim. You ask anything, claim it. What we forget is this.

It says if you abide in me and my words abide in you, you can ask what you will. Which part do you like? A or B? Well, I like ask what you will. Don't you? Ask what you will.

But A part comes first. If you abide in me. How many believe that there are lovely fundamental Christian people who are getting more rooted and more rooted and more rooted but never have any fruit? Guess who am I after? Are you following me? Getting deeper.

Getting more rooted. Suffering and enduring. Going through more.

Why? It's your turn. Why? God wants some fruit out of our lives. How many of you can believe tonight that he is able to say to an individual rooted in his purpose and will and what he really wants.

He says, go ahead and ask a little more largely. Claim a little bit more. Not a Cadillac.

Not this claim something more for me and the kingdom. This is getting touchy. I better quit.

I am convinced that we look at certain faith people who are claiming too much. All fruit without any root. But we're all root without any I won't say that.

Without much fruit. And my heart cries tonight. Oh God.

Would you work in us? Would you work in me? What I like to call a rooting so that in being conformed, I will not only know what it is to be, but be able to exercise more of the kingdom right now than we've ever exercised. The church doesn't begin to take over some privileges and begin to exercise, take some lives, release. If we don't, waiting till Jesus comes, we won't ever do it.

I'm not just talking to you. It stirs my own heart. Because I want both wings.

I want to finish the race. Well, I think I wrote down some place here some of these little things I'd like to conclude with. If I understand God's dealing and working, I would just say something like this.

Whether I finish the race somehow or triumphantly is determined by whether I am offended or established. If I falter on the race course and just somehow, somehow, somehow get through, but not triumphantly, it's determined by whether I'm offended or whether in the midst my roots are going down and I'm established. I just left my mother and dad back in Florida last week.

Dad's 94. And I have to say these last years the triumphancy that God has wrought in his life is amazing. Physical needs, taking care of my invalid mother who's 93, been fed by a tube now for almost 3 years.

I've never heard once a murmur or a complaint. He sits at the breakfast table when we are fellowshiping and while I'm reading he'll say it's my turn, son. I'll just quote a chapter for you.

So he quotes Philippians 2. Amplifies it a little bit. And I sit and weep. Triumphant.

Dad's grown up in the background. You know, didn't they? He's in the Alliance Church now. Last Easter when he knelt at the altar they had a community went forward.

He phoned me the next day and he said, I claim healing for my body. The doctor said his heart would explode any time I saw the echocardiograph. He just shook his head.

For over a year my dad keeps phones two or three times a week and he says, God's good. Hallelujah. Not charismatic, but he sure loves the Lord.

Triumphant. I mean, it speaks to me. I thank God for a heritage and a remembrance.

It causes my roots to go down and say, oh God, he's not offended. The other day he whispered, he said, we were coming back from the grocery store, he said, son, I'm going to live to be 100. That kind of triumphancy, unless the Lord comes, he might.

That's not true with my mother. She's been the more godly one in the early years. Taught me and so forth.

Mother's ready to go, but she's not eager. God spoke to me the other day because her two sisters that I've been with, an unusual family, they were both eager. Not only ready, but eager.

Do you know what I mean? I heard both of them whisper, oh God, we've finished the course. We've run the race. We want to see your face.

Eager. And every night when I kneel at the bedside and I say to Mother, another good day. She can't talk.

She has Parkinsonism. Very frail. And I finally whisper, I'll see you in the morning.

I explained to her what the morning was. Resurrection morning. She whispers back, morning.

But she's not eager. Then the Lord speaks to me and says, I know you're ready, son. How eager are you? Are you following me? How many are eager tonight? You're all ready.

How many are eager? Mother could be. I think there's some limitations in her concepts. Let me see if I can enlarge on that.

Say this, God will often offend your natural mind or reasonings in order to expose your heart. That was going to be a whole message. I won't get into that one.

How many have had God expose your heart by something you couldn't understand? Your natural reasonings. Let me see. Let me see here.

Often a person or a place is locked up or limited at some point by a misleading conception or by circumstances or by consequences. I don't think it'd be amiss to tell you. I think everybody's locked up or limited in some ways unless there's a total release in their life.

And through the years as we've gotten to fellowship and just get back into the inner chambers of lives, you begin to see locked up situations or limitations that are there less than the full thing that God wants. And the reason is because so often there are controlling conceptions that we hold, strongholds that need to be broken. Or there are circumstances and sometimes you can't do anything with them.

Or sometimes I've seen people, now they're getting the consequences of a situation and they have to learn to live with it. I sat with a young man some time ago who had married, very unfortunate situation, and his consequences of it. Now with circumstances.

Limitation. And you know, in the midst of all of this, I think my spirit begins to sift out. Sometimes people are offended and they're open about it.

I've got to write. They'll express it. But do you know how many times people are offended and it's hidden in the shadows of their spirit.

It's subliminal. It's not in the threshold of their understanding. And yet they're offended because God didn't respond at some time.

Wait. And they'll say, I love the Lord. I'm walking in light.

Everything is clear. But their spirit's offended. I just came from, told you last night about new tribes.

Worked with them for some years. I was on a plane. We left Chico going up the coast towards Seattle and Spokane.

I got off the plane. Twenty-three missionaries. We've been stopping in mission meetings.

Really challenging people for a lost world. Said goodbye to them. They went off.

Took off from Miami. Flew down to South America unwisely. Wired or phoned ahead and said, keep the lights on at the airfield.

We're coming in late. And the lights weren't on. They wandered around.

Crashed into the mountain. Twenty-three friends went to be with the Lord. I remember when the word came to me.

Here were choice people. Really dedicated. I was ministering in a camp that summer when I got the phone call.

And I went through weeks of saying, Lord, you can do anything you want. Everything's alright. But I had a wounded spirit.

And I couldn't rise above it. I couldn't rise above it. Never would admit it.

Wouldn't admit it. But there it was. And the insinuation of the enemy is basically, you really can't trust God.

Because He might take you through. So one day God began to really deal very severely and show me what my spirit was like toward Him. Why there wasn't triumphancy.

There wasn't joy. I didn't plan to get into this. But I just need to say to you tonight.

Dear ones, if we're not running triumphantly with real endurance, real enjoyment, really pressing, it just could be we've been through something. We've been offended. I go back and give you at least three or four other things.

You say, how do you know tonight you're not offended? How do you know tonight you're not worse nursing some wounds of disappointment and discouragement in your spirit? Maybe there are scars. I believe there are scars there. But I know I can say this before God.

God, it's like an open book before you. I worship you and I trust you and I say what you do is right. I know your ways are right even if I don't understand.

And you haven't invited me to understand all that you do. But I humble myself. Thank you for the desire and the power that you give.

I close. Am I talking to anybody tonight who's been deeply hurt, really wounded, and you've nursed it for a long time? You don't need to. It could be husband and wife.

It could be some of the dealings in the church. All the unfairness. All the situations that we run into.

If you can be offended, you will be. But you don't need to be. You don't need to be.

You don't need to be offended. We bow before you this evening, Father. Don't let me try to do what the Holy Spirit alone can do, but in your own faithful way, I pray, you will touch any vulnerable area, anything that has deterred us from really running, really moving on in the race course.

I leave it with you tonight, Lord. Here are my brothers. Some of them know so much better than I. They understand.

Encourage hearts. Here are sisters that have been through some very difficult things. I thank you they understand how to send our roots down.

He giveth more grace when the burdens grow greater. You do. Don't let us fail of the grace of God.

Become wounded or hurt or bitter, and with it, defile. Cause others to be affected. Oh God, hear our cry tonight.

And we'll give you the praise for what you're doing. We ask it in Jesus' lovely name. And everyone said, Amen.

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