

Practical Christian Living

by Francis Schaeffer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of not being ashamed of the gospel of Christ and the biblical system as a structure for understanding Christian living, highlighting the personal universe, God as judge, and the starting point of Christian living as justification.

Duration: 57:43

Scripture: Habakkuk 2:4, Matthew 6:33, John 14:18, Romans 1:16-17, Romans 7:4, Revelation 7:14

Topics: "Practical Christianity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing God as a judge. He contrasts the sweet and loving nature of a mother with the seriousness and impartiality of a judge. The speaker argues that without the concept of judgment, true morality becomes impossible and the universe becomes a relativistic social construct. He concludes by emphasizing the need for practical Christian living based on the understanding of who God is and our identity as image bearers of God.

Transcript

Now, in speaking of practical Christian living, I would read three verses from the book of Romans and centered in the repetition of a certain word, the word ashamed. In Romans 1, 16 and 17, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God and the salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God, revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith.

He says here in the beginning, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. And it is my conviction that here he is speaking specifically about not being ashamed intellectually of the system, which is the biblical system. And we tend to withdraw from the word system, but I think we have no reason to.

We aren't protracting here something merely intellectual or a scholastic abstraction, but nevertheless, the Bible presents a system. This has been well understood through the centuries, for example, in the teaching of systematic theology. So I feel in this you have an emphasis here.

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ intellectually into the teeth of the Greek and Roman world. And we must remember very carefully that Paul was not preaching the gospel in a situation which was uninstructed and ignorant. He was preaching it into the Greek and the Roman world.

And we would be very proud indeed to feel that our intellectualism had surpassed the grasp of basic problems as they were grasped in the world at that time. So I would say there I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power, the dynamite of God unto salvation that those who believe that here he sets forth his basic premise. The basic premise being I need not be ashamed in discussion, whether it's on Mars Hill to the Jew or the Gentile, the simple man or the complex.

But in Romans 5, and of course the structure of Romans is of such a nature that by Romans 5 he's dealing on a very different level. He's dealing now on the level that the people who are listening or hearing this read or reading it have become Christians. And there in Romans 5 he says, therefore having been justified, the Greek tenses are passed, having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now we often think of the peace of God here as though the basic peace was a piece of psychological peace. That is not what he's talking about. Basically the peace that he's speaking of is the fact that God is at peace with him, that he has been justified.

And that's different. There is a subjective peace, but the subjective peace is not abstracted from the object of peace. We'll spend more time in this in a moment.

But therefore being justified, having been justified in the past by faith, we have peace in the present with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith, and that's in the present according to the tenses, into this grace wherein we stand and we rejoice, all this in the present now on the basis of what is in the past, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing what tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience at hope, and then here comes this third verse I want to give you, and hope maketh not ashamed. Now here this is a very different thing it seems to me.

Here he is not primarily talking about not being ashamed to discuss into the Greek and the Roman world, but rather he says, and after we become Christians through faith in Jesus Christ, we will not be ashamed in the area of day-by-day living. This it seems to me introduces us to our subject tonight, the practical Christian living. We do not need to be ashamed.

We do not need to be ashamed intellectually of that which is presented, and we do not need to be ashamed, and we will not have to be ashamed in practice. Now in the question of practical Christian living, we must always understand that the Bible never presents a thing abstractly in a vacuum, and I think this is a failure among evangelicals today, that we act as though the Bible is merely a book of Proverbs, with a book of Proverbs being a series of unrelated statements largely. But that is not true.

The Bible is a unit. The Bible is a structure. The Bible never gives anything abstracted from the whole, never.

Consequently, in the area of Christian morality, in the area of Christian living, practical Christian living, you must always see that you cannot consider this abstracted from the structure of the Bible as a whole, and that which is taught in the Bible. The Bible, the Christian life in the Bible, in historic Christianity when it has been well taught, has always been presented in the framework of the whole Bible's teaching. And eventually, when we are confronted with the Bible and the Bible's teaching, we are confronted by the fact, first of all, that we do not live in an impersonal universe, but a personal universe.

Now a personal universe not in the sense of a pan-everythingism or a pantheism, which really isn't personal after all. This personal universe might be thought of in this sense, but the Bible says no, but personal in the sense that there is a personal God who before the creation of all else was personal on the high level of Trinity. So prior to the creation of all else, there was a God wherein there was communication and love between the persons forever.

Personality on the highest possible sense that one can think. So when one begins to set the structure of the biblical teaching, and I use it again deliberately, though it may be a jarring note, the biblical system, one begins in the scriptural teaching with the fact that we live in basically an intrinsically personal universe, which began with true personality. When we look at the universe, when I look at truth, I must not think of it in any way, if I'm going to think of it truly biblically, I must not think of it in any way except the realization that it is intrinsically personal, in a very real and basic sense, created out of nothing by a personal God who is now there.

And when I use the expression who is now there, we need not blush, the Bible does not teach a three-story universe. It does not say there's never been a Christian who hasn't believed in the three-story universe, but the Bible does not teach a three-story universe, Bishop Robinson notwithstanding. Now then, so we begin with a God who is personal and a God who is there.

Modern theology, on the other hand, begins at a very different point. Modern theology, which leads to the modern morality, modern theology does not begin with definitely the concept of the certainty of a personal God who is there. I don't know, maybe a year and a quarter ago now, something like that, I was talking to a young man who was then teaching astronomy, he's now at the British Museum, in one of the very fine British universities, a very brilliant young fellow, and I've been able to be a help to him spiritually, and about once a year we meet and talk.

And very often he has become involved in some things in the intervening year and then we talk him through. And this particular day we spent most of the day up on the mound at the castle in Edinburgh, a great big wind blowing as normal, and as we talked he defended the new theology. He did this more or less just for conversation.

And he thinks very quickly and one makes very great strides with him. Conversation's very interesting. But at the end, just before we parted at the train, he said what I thought is the key to the whole matter.

As he was shaking my hand he said, well Dr. Schaefer, I acknowledge this, that these men have made this system as a hedge in case God is not there. And I think he's completely right in this. As Clark Pinnock, who is an American but is the assistant of F.F. Bruce, a very dear fellow in the Lord really, put forth in considering Bishop Robeson's book, Honest to God, he said this is not theology, it is anthropology.

And this is absolutely true. If one takes this line, if one takes a line like this and says here are the things of man, this whole system can exist if there's nothing up here. And it undoubtedly is put forward in this way so that the church and society may maintain some kind of a structure even if there is no God there.

And I think until we understand that this is the direction of this theology, not just Bishop Robeson but the whole stream, we fail to understand really what it is and how pernicious it is and how completely it is contrary to the historic Christian faith. So in the modern theology, you don't begin with a personal God who is there. You begin in the area of anthropology and try to build.

But this is not the biblical way. The biblical presentation, that which the historic Christian faith has taught, built upon, that which our culture was built upon after the Reformation, the whole Reformation culture, including surely the United States, not that everyone was Christian but as a general basis of our culture, that was built on a different consideration. It was built, first of all, metaphysically on the fact that personality is valid in this universe because the universe begins in a personal situation with a personal God.

And consequently, personality is not a fluke in the universe. The Bible begins by saying it will not talk about morals until it talks about the universe. And by this, I don't mean an Einsteinian concept of the universe or something like this, but I simply mean all there is.

If you can think of a better word of it, that's fine. But this is my use of the word now. So this is, if you're interested in semantics, this is Mr. Schaeffer's use of the word at this particular moment anyway.

But in all that is, in all that is, the Bible says you have an intrinsically personal situation in which personality is therefore not out of line with the intrinsic structure of the universe. Now, man is presented therefore as not out of line with the intrinsic structure of the universe but rather in line with it. And though man is finite and God is infinite, yet nevertheless God is personal and man is personal.

And therefore, in this sense, can be said that man is made in the image of God. I would say that it's a very important thing, I hadn't meant to put this in the lecture, this makes it longer, but we'll see. If you begin to think of the biblical presentation of God, it is that God is personal and God is infinite.

And this is distinctive in all thought. There is no other system, there's no other religion that has ever considered such a situation. You have personal God like the Greeks and the Romans, but they're always limited.

Or you have infinite in the sense by definition of that which contains everything, a pantheistic God, but this is always impersonal eventually. But the Bible always says personal infinite. And just in passing, if you want to spend your time wrestling with this, never put it personal infinite or infinite personal, but always put it personal infinite.

Don't put one above the other. It isn't that one is more important than the other, it's just the whole structure is presented to us as a personal and an infinite God. And then what you have in creation, according to the Bible, is that on the side of God's infinities is an absolute chasm between that which he is and that which he creates.

And so you have here, you have man and you have the animals and you have the plants and you have the machines. And God has created all these things and the chasm between his infinity, his creatorship, and our creatureship, it falls here. So that I am just as much finite as is the atom.

And on the other hand, I'm just as much as creature as is the atom. But in the Christian teaching, it's quite different when we come over here. Here we have man, here we have the animal, the flower, and the machine, and the Bible puts this chasm here.

Therefore, the biblical picture has always been that man's view is upward. Man's view is upward. This is what Albert Schweitzer didn't understand when he equated himself, and don't laugh because it's serious in this situation, with a hippopotamus.

And I mean don't laugh, it's a sad thing. And the reason he equated himself with a hippopotamus, it was closer to him than anything else he could find in the sense of breathing, eating and reproducing and so on. But the biblical system is that man is really creating the image of God.

And consequently, God is personal though infinite, but man is personal though finite. And this is the biblical structure, not only of God, speaking of God, but it's the biblical structure of who I am. So now I know who I am.

Now in the area of morals, you have the same sort of approach in the scripture. The Bible never begins in the area of morals with morals as an abstraction or law as an abstraction. The Bible always begins with, again, the existence of God and the fact that the God of the Bible has a character.

He is not like a pantheistic God that includes the opposites. In a pantheistic God, all is included. He includes the opposites and so forth, they cancel out.

The final situation is neuter. There is no real difference between that which is cruel and non-cruel in a pantheistic situation. But the Bible says no.

In this sense, you can speak and you must have the courage to think of it this way in a way that God is a limited God in the sense that he does not include all there possibly is because his character is holiness. And as such, there are some things that are contrary, there are things that are possibly contrary to himself. So he does not include sin in himself.

Sin is outside of God. Sin is against God. Sin is contrary to the law of the universe.

Now, this is an interesting thought, I think, and especially for our generation. If we lived in 1900, we might not have had to speak this way. But today it is valuable to speak of there being a law of the universe.

And the law of the universe is the character of God. Consequently, there is a law in the universe. And the law of the universe is not something outside of God as a Platonic idea or a Neoplatonic idea, an idea, an ideal that's back of God, because then that would be God.

But it is the character of God himself, and God is something in this regard. Consequently, when the Bible begins to talk about the Christian life, it is not an abstraction. It is not an abstraction.

The Bible presents the fact there is a law of the universe, an objective law of the universe, objective to man himself. It does not rest upon his subjective thinking any more than the existence of God exists on the subjective thinking of man. So also the Bible says there is an absolute morality in the universe.

Now then, if you remove the fact that the Bible's law, whether it's the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching of Paul, if you remove this from relationship to God, then we must suddenly realize that all the Bible becomes is another sociological structure. And that's all. And often I feel that even evangelical people make this mistake.

They act as though the law of the Bible, the laws in the Bible, can be abstracted from God. You can talk about it abstractly without putting it in careful relationship to the God who is there. Talking about it as though the Ten Commandments would still have value if God wasn't there, perhaps, or at least you could discuss it this way.

Not so. The only reason the Ten Commandments have value is because God is there, and God gave them as a propositional expression of his own character. And that's the reason these things have value.

So consequently, from the biblical viewpoint, law is not, morality is not, an abstraction. It is not a sociological structure. It is rooted in that which is objective, the existence of a personal God who does have a character.

Now once God is not there, or you have a pan-everythingism in which God includes the whole, the cruelty is none as well as the non-cruelty, or when you come down in the more sophisticated form of this into the new theologies in which God is the philosophic other, so he cannot communicate to us propositionally an expression of his character. Once you come to any of these things, God is not there, the pantheistic concept, God is the philosophic other and cannot communicate propositionally to us. As soon as you come to any of these things, you have no more absolute law.

You are in the area then of relativism in one way or another. The Bible says no. If you want to understand about Christian living, practical Christian living, you must understand that Christian living is always in relationship to the God who is there, to his character, and to the propositional telling of us of that which conforms to his character.

Now having said that, then we can begin to speak of the beginning of the Christian life. When is the beginning of the Christian life? The beginning in the Christian life, according to biblical teaching and all good solid theology, comes a justification. You can have a certain degree of comparative goodness in a certain sense prior to justification, but it cannot be called basically Christian living.

Christian living begins with a Christian. In other words, in order if you're going to have any sense of practical Christian living, any sense of real Christian living, you must have a sense of being a Christian. What is a Christian? What is a Christian? Well, a Christian is a man.

A Christian is a man who has accepted Christ as a Savior, we would say, I suppose. But what happens when we accept Christ as our Savior? Well, again, the good Reformation theology is solid here and not to be despised because surely it's what the Bible teaches. And that is that when I accept Christ as my Savior, the first thing that happens to me is that God as the judge of the universe declares me justified.

And that's right. The peace with God is not, first of all, a subjective peace in my heart. The peace of God may finally result in a peace in my heart.

But it does not rest at this point. Everything in the Christian faith is objective to myself, structurally, in these basic things. Consequently, we must see that God is a judge.

This isn't very popular today. People don't like to talk about this. People don't paint Michelangelo's Last Judgment anymore with any seriousness.

Even Christians tend to be embarrassed with a sense of judgment. But we must understand from the biblical viewpoint that God is not just a loving father. God is a judge and he must be a judge.

He must be a judge. And once you throw this away, though most people don't seem to sense this, when you kick the concept of a real judgment on a real basis of forensic things in law over the cliff and you get rid of them, what you really kick overboard is any possibility of having real morals in this poor universe. You cannot kick this overboard and finally end up with any real sense of morality.

Morality will eventually only be a relativistic social contract and structure. Man, modern man, is finding this out. But the Bible would point out to as God is judge.

God is a judge. If you see a young mother, or if you are a young mother or become a young mother, there's something very, very sweet and causes anybody to smile. It's a bit older.

When she says to the little child, the very little child, don't do that, the little child does it, and she smiles and says, isn't it sweet? And you shrug your shoulder and you say, she's just a mother. And on this basis it goes. There's something sweet about this.

But now I'll change the picture. You have a judge in Boston. He is committed to the Constitution.

And he's sitting on the bench and there's a man in front of him who says, who everyone knows, everyone acknowledges, that this man is guilty. He has broken the law of the land. And the judge looks at him and says, oh well, it doesn't matter, go ahead home.

Nobody smiles now. Nobody smiles. He's a poor judge.

He's a poor judge. This is exactly the biblical picture of God. When man sins, man made in the image of God, man made so that he is not a determined creature.

Modern man cannot think of man as undetermined. It's one of the hallmarks of our generation. It's hard to find a modern man who at first will take seriously a concept of non-deterministic man.

It's either chemically conditioned or psychologically conditioned. But the Bible says, here is a man made in the image of God. He is really made in the image of God.

He has freedom and he deliberately revolts against God and he breaks the law of the universe. God can only act in one way, and that is as a judge to condemn in such a case. And as I say, and I say it very soberly, do not think that you're being modern and making clever advances and getting an opportunity to have a dialogue with modern man by throwing out the concept of God as judge.

Don't think you've gained anything because eventually if you face a man who understands what he's talking about, he will force you back quite properly into a place where this whole question of whether the word morals have any meaning whatsoever in the really classical sense of morals. But now then the Bible says, when I accept Christ as my savior, Jesus died upon the cross and the guilt was met. And the great reformation, and I think it's the Pauline, Augustinian and Pauline view of the whole structure, the whole teaching of the word of God, declares that the first thing that happens when I accept Christ as my savior, God is judge.

This makes a forensic declaration, and that is, at this moment, Francis Schaeffer has passed from death to life. His guilt is gone. Francis Schaeffer stands here.

He is separated from God by his guilt, a true guilt, a true objective guilt rooted in the character of God, therefore the law of the universe. When I accept Christ as my savior, that guilt is met, and as the guilt is met, the guilt is removed, the brazen heaven is removed above my head, and I stand face-to-face in fellowship with a God who is there. The true guilt, the true guilt is gone.

Three marks are put down in reformation theology, and all good theology certainly, of concerning justification. First of all, it is once for all. The classical statement of this is that there are no degrees in

justification.

You can't be a little bit justified any more than you can be a little bit married, for example. You either are or aren't for the same reason. You are justified or you're not.

There's no degrees in justification. It is a present tense matter, so that the promise of God can say, if I have accepted Christ as my savior, I have passed from death to life. It can be spoken of in the past tense, if I accepted Christ as my savior as much as two minutes ago, and that is, is a present situation based on a past thing, that at a certain, at that place of justification, I pass from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son.

The basis of justification is never myself. The basis of justification is always the finished work of Christ in history, and this is in space and in time. Today, I would suggest to you that it is a meaningless sentence to say to people, do you believe Jesus died? Unless you make very plain to them that you're talking about a real death in history, in space and in time.

The Bible says, the ground, the basis of my justification is the finished work of Jesus Christ when he died in the cross in history. So now, once for all, in a moment of time, the basis, the finished work of Christ, and the instrument whereby I am joined to this is my faith, and faith, according to the scriptural position, is not a leap in the dark. It has no Kierkegaardian portion to it.

According to the teaching of the Bible, faith is simply the empty hands that accepts the finished work, the gift. I believe what God has said. I raise my empty hands.

I receive the gift without cost and without price. This is the beginning of the Christian life. The Christian life comes at conversion, at justification.

Now, however, we must be careful because there is a form of orthodoxy that puts a great deal of emphasis on justification, and quite properly, but then fails to emphasize properly that though the Christian life begins at justification, it does not end there. The Christian life begins at justification, but then it continues. It continues.

It can be paralleled to marriage. You can say a person is as much married as he ever will be on the marriage day. This is perfectly true.

But on the other hand, there's another way of looking at it in which the marriage day is not important. What matters is the marriage life. And it's the same with Christianity.

The new birth is the most important thing in the sense that I'm not a Christian until I've had the new birth. But the other side is the new birth is not important in the sense that I'm not a Christian until I've had the new birth. And that is because after I have had the new birth, after I become a Christian, it is important how I'm living, now I use 20th century word, in this existential moment.

So on the basis of justification, it is once for all. But the Christian life, while having a once for all beginning, is an existential situation. The important thing is not just are you justified? That's wonderful.

But what about your Christian life in this existential moment? Now then, what does the Bible say about this aspect of Christian life? Well, once again, it begins at the same place. And I would suggest to you that as you think through problems that people present to you, that you always go back to the beginning. Train

yourself to go back to the beginning.

The beginning is God is there, God's existence, who he is as a person, as personal, and God's character. So when I begin to think of my life, my Christian life, practical Christian living, after my justification, I must go back first of all and realize that if there's a real Christian life, it will be lived in the light of the fact of who God is and what God means to do for me. Again, the Christian life cannot be abstracted from God.

And I think very often we do this. In England, they have an expression, pull your socks up. And it's an interesting expression.

And often you'll take a Christian boy and he gets into trouble and somebody will scowl at him and say, pull your socks up. Well, that's very interesting, nice to have your socks pull up, but it doesn't have anything to do with about this. Because you cannot, you cannot talk about the Christian life abstracted from a living relationship with God.

And we as Orthodox Christians must be very careful at this point. We give an impression sometimes as though we're saved through faith in Jesus Christ, but we live the Christian life abstracted from God, almost as a mechanical situation. But the Bible never gives, allows me to do this.

I would say there are two aspects in this matter to be immediately considered. The first is what happens when I have sinned? Because the Bible does not teach perfectionism. The Bible never says prior to the resurrection that I will be perfect.

Consequently, it is a romantic view, in the bad sense of romanticism, to think that you are not going to sin. It doesn't mean you shouldn't fight against it, all these things. It shouldn't be taken very soberly into account.

But at the same time, in considering your Christian brethren, your own children, your husband, your wife, in considering yourself, you must take into account that it is perfectly true that unhappily, after I have accepted Christ as my savior, after I become a child of God, I do not live a perfect life. What happens when I sin? What happens? Well, now the Bible introduces me, not merely again to an abstract sense of Christian living, abstracted from the whole Christian structure, but it reminds me of what I would speak of as the present meaning of the blood of Jesus Christ, or the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. You remember in justification I said three things about it.

It was once for all. Secondly, the basis was the finished work of Christ in space and time and in history. And thirdly, the instrument of sharing in this is faith.

I would say there are things which, in the Christian living, are being forgiven for the sins of the Christian life which are parallel to justification and that which is different. The thing that is different is the justification in the Bible is pictured for once for all, just like birth, just like marriage. It is a once for all situation.

Christian living, on the other hand, and the need of cleansing with the blood of Christ is not a once for all situation. This is a moment-by-moment situation. This is a thing wherein I need to know something about it today.

This is a place wherein my faith, looking to the finished work of Jesus Christ, my faith of this morning will not do for tonight. There is a moment-by-moment relationship that is pictured here. On the other hand, there is that which is similar.

Again, the basis is the finished work of Christ. You will not be forgiven by beating yourself. You will not be forgiven by getting yourself into a psychological tailspin.

You will not be forgiven merely by self-reproach. You will not. The Scripture makes very plain that just as my justification, so it is with the moment-by-moment cleansing, it turns upon my relationship, God's being there, the work of Jesus Christ, and my relationship to Him.

It turns upon the finished work of Christ. This is that which cleanses, and there is no other. It is not possible for you to work out your own forgiveness for what you consider little sins or big on the basis of your own energies, if you're a Christian, any more than it is possible for you to become a Christian with your own energy.

But there's the other side which is beautiful, and that is there is no spot so great that the blood of Christ cannot reclaim. Nothing. The Christian is to be a man with a quiet conscience, not because he is hard-hearted toward his sin, but because as soon as the sin is there, he has a right to come and confess it to God, bring that specific sin unto the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and have his conscience at rest.

I would commend to you Martin Luther's commentary on the Book of Galatians, where he spends much time on what he calls salvation from our conscience. This is the biblical teaching, sure. But there is another part, and that is the thing of positive Christian living.

How do I make progress? How do I make progress? And surely here, in much of our Christian teaching, we are amiss again, that we do say to people, give the impression that we're telling them that they should rather build up an autocratic, sealed, personal holiness. I do not think this is what the Bible teaches. I would make a contrast here between the storage battery in your car and the electric light.

The storage battery in your car is a self-contained unit. It has its own energy. It needs no wires, which is just as well for an automobile.

And if you have a storage battery in your car, it is a self-contained unit. But in the electric lights, it is not so. You pull out the electric light, and it is cut off.

The Christian position concerning a holy living is not the storage battery situation, it is the electric light. It is a personal living relationship with Christ himself. It is the understanding that as Christ really has died, he really has been raised from the dead, that the book of Romans, for example, chapter 7, 8, other places in the scripture, promises to us the power of this crucified and resurrected Lord, through the agency of the indwelling Holy Ghost.

I am not an orphan. Christ promised he would not leave me an orphan, and he has not left me an orphan. I am not left to myself to generate personal holiness in my own zip and steam.

I have a right, through faith, to draw upon that which Christ is. It is not a passivity, and I think the great illustration of this, and I think it's a beautiful illustration, is Mary. When we're told that when the angel came to Mary, told Mary she would bear the Messiah in the virgin birth, and it seems to me she had three possibilities of response, two of which would have been absolutely wrong.

The first possibility of response would have been the word no. Joseph won't like it, and she would have had a good reason to say this. And you could hardly have blamed her from a human viewpoint if she had stamped her little foot and said no.

But she didn't. I do not believe she'd have borne the Messiah if she had so revolted. The other thing she could have done would be the opposite.

She could have said, you've made the promise, now I'm going to do it. And she couldn't have done it any more than another girl can do it. She did the only possible thing.

She said, behold, the handmaiden of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy will. And what she did was to take her body as an act of love and will and put it in the hands of God that he might bring forth in her body the body of Jesus Christ. This is not passivity.

She could not do it herself, but it contained, it was an action based upon who she was as a person made in the image of God, called upon to love him and trust him. And I think this is exactly the biblical view of all true Christian living. It is not a passivity.

God will not shake me as a dog would shake a rag doll. But I am called upon to believe him, to place myself as made in his image and called upon to love him, to place myself in his hand that Christ, the risen Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit might bear his fruit in my life and this existential moment. This is in line with what we're told about the reason of our existence.

People often say to me, well modern man can find no reason for existence. What is the biblical teaching of the reason of existence? The reason for existence according to the scripture is simple. It is the first commandment to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and all thy mind.

And surely if one examines the scripture, this is not the first commandment in the sense that it was only the first commandment after Jesus said it when he was upon the earth. There's something much deeper in the structure of scripture. This is the first commandment in the sense of being the reason of existence of man.

The reason of existence for man is to be in a person-to-person relationship with a God who is there. This is the reason for man's existence. I'm to love God.

I'm to be in a personal relationship with him. Nothing else will do. There is a kind of a legalism which is wrong.

Nothing else will do. Laws will not suffice as the final screen. Remember Max Planck in his last essay, some of you have read them I guess, speaks of the fact of the question of the last screen in the physical universe.

Well carrying this over into this. What is the last screen in the Christian meaning and relationship? The last screen in the Christian relationship is a personal relationship with a personal God. Consequently we are not to be surprised if I am told that my Christian life is not to be mechanical.

It is to be this personal living relationship with this God who is truly there. Consequently my relationship to God is never to be mechanical. I think one of the great things, one of the great things that cuts the ground under our witnessing is that we say we live in a personal universe and yet when people look at us so much of what we do in relationship to God in Christianity is purely a mechanical situation.

We are mechanical witnesses. We are mechanical evangelizers. We are mechanical liver and that's death.

Don't say the Holy Spirit never uses it to see some saved. We should thank God. But as far as that for which I am called it is death.

My relationship to God must never be mechanical and it should not be primarily legal. Now there is a proper legal relationship for the reason I've said and I want to emphasize this for a few minutes. There is a proper legal relationship because there is a legal situation in the universe because God has a character so there is a law and he has revealed this to man.

So there is a proper legal relationship but our relationship to God must never be primarily legal. There is a proper legal relationship but it must never be primarily legal. My relationship to God must primarily be personal.

Primarily personal. Now in the new theology, building from the new theology's view, they have when you come to for example Robinson's little book on Christian morality today you find that they have no legal circle whatsoever. None.

So therefore in relation to sexual morals which is the thing he deals with mostly in which where the thing becomes very clear in its application the emphasis is if boy and a girl really love each other then everything's all right. Really things are right if they really love each other. But you find here a lack of any legal circle.

When I turn to the Bible it is not so. I find there is a legal circle. There is a true Christian legal circle based on the fact God is there.

God is a personal God. God has a character. God has revealed it to man propositionally and this is not an irrational concept.

Why if I made the image of God should he not communicate? And here what you have then is God is there. God is a character. There is a law of the universe.

God communicated it to man and there is a proper legal circle. Consequently in relationship to marriage the Bible says sexual relationships are to be within the legal circle of marriage. Now there's lots of problems one might say in practical discussion of this.

But that doesn't mean Christianity doesn't have an answer to it as I want to show you in a moment. The picture that's usually given is that you have to choose. Either you have to choose between a legal relationship or love.

And that's a very false antithesis. The Bible does not allow us to have to accept this antithesis. Inside the Bible the biblical teaching is sexual relationship is to be carried out within the marriage circle.

So there is a legal circle. Something that the evangelicals have not talked about for a long time but the Bible talks about something about a proper legal circle of the church too. The Bible says that a church is to maintain purity of doctrine and life.

We don't hear much of this in our own generation. But the Bible is very clear. There is such a thing as a proper legal circle of the church in which the church is to maintain biblical teaching concerning doctrine and life.

So therefore as I come to this problem of Christian living I look at the new theology and I must say no. And the reason I say no is not some minor thing but a very major one. That they have no legal structure in their morality.

It's purely a relativistic thing eventually. So we can reject the new theology. But the orthodox people, and I am orthodox, have a danger.

And at this particular point we must think of the other side of the equation. It is all too often that we who lay down a careful legal structure for marriage and for the church act as though once that legal structure is correct the whole matter is over and finished. And this is just as unbiblical as the other.

Just as unbiblical. There is nothing in the Word of God that says that my relationship to other men as a fellow image bearer of God is to end with a legal relationship. In relationship to God it is never to be mechanical.

It is not to be primarily, though there is a proper legal structure, but it is to be personal. And my relationship in marriage to my wife, with my children, in the parent-child relationship, in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, or whatever the circle of my activity is, at its highest point must be first within the proper legal circle, but second a person-to-person relationship in that circle. And if this is not there, the Christian position is not being presented to a lost world.

As a Christian, as so often is the case, when one studies church history, one comes to the conclusion that hardly any man in church history has ever been given the luxury of fighting one battle at a time, one front. Church history bears testimony that almost in every moment of church history, those who have fought God's battles have had to fight two fronts at the same time. Think of the Reformation.

It is so clear. I think it is the same here. We must stand and we must look at the new theology and say, absolutely no.

But at the same time we must turn around and then I must say to Francis Schaeffer that by the grace of God, within the personal relationship, don't forget that the end, the primary thing, is not the legal relationship, but is that living, pulsing, personal relationship based upon first who God is and then who I am. It is absolute murder to myself, to true practical Christian living, to a testimony in the lost world, to forget that I am to act upon the basis of who I am and who God is. God will never violate who he is, therefore he cannot accept us without the shed blood of the Lamb of God.

And he will never violate who I am. I am made in his image. He will not deal with me as a machine any more than he will deal with a machine as with me.

God, God is consistent. He is rooted in his own character of consistency. He will not deny who he is and he will not deny who I am.

Being made in the image of God and not just made as a machine, God will not allow me to come to rest as though the thing was finished, either on a mechanical level or simply a legal level. There must be something more. There must be the personal relationship within the proper legal circle.

With God there must be the personal relationship after I am in the circle of being one of God's dear sons on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ. With my wife there must be a personal relationship within the proper legal circle of marriage. With other Christians there must be the proper personal relationship

within the proper legal circle of a true church.

In every circle it is the same. Moment by moment, not just once for all. This is something you can't do once for all because life is never once for all in this circle, in this world.

It never is. It never is. No situation is ever presented in which we are allowed simply to be in a static situation.

A static situation is the antithesis of a living situation. A static situation is the antithesis of a personal relationship. So therefore the Christian teaching is that moment by moment there must be personal relationship, love and communication.

And this modern thought of personality turning upon the two words love and communication is not a bad idea. It's a good idea and as Christians we must think about it. Isn't it wonderful that the three things we know about the Trinity are as follows.

First of all, the Trinity existed, the Trinity exists and did exist before the creation of the world. Secondly, that Jesus says in John 17, the love wherein thou hast loved me before the creation of the world. So we know there was love before the creation of the world.

And thirdly, in the first chapter of Genesis, we hear let us make man in our own image. And in anybody's thinking this is communication. So consequently these modern concepts of personality turning upon the words communication and love.

This is an all right biblical concept. We needn't shy away from this. And moment by moment there's to be a personal relationship of love and communication in the proper legal circles.

This is practical Christian living. Not in your own strength, but looking to Christ to bear forth this fruit for you. And beauty upon beauty, wonder upon wonder, joy upon joy.

Every single time we sin anew, whether it's in my personal life or in these relationships of the church or Christian work or in marriage or the parent-child relationship, we can go back, whether it's an individual thing or I can go back together with other Christians and I can bow down and I can claim the shed blood of the Lamb of God again and have a completely new page to begin. This is the basis for our human relationships as Christians. We never, we never at a place where the thing must be full stop.

It is always possible to go back and make a new beginning. And any of us who are honest in our marriage lives, for example, and are not just playing a game and they're hypocritical, will acknowledge this is a wonder indeed. That no matter how hard we come to a crashing point, that we can go back and claim the blood of Christ and begin again.

And if your marriage is not just a static mechanical situation, you'll be glad for these words. And for those of us in our Christian relationship, a fundamental church, a Bible-believing church, but is it not wonderful that we can go back together again and make fresh beginnings when we have smashed the ship? But it must be a personal relationship. It can't be just mechanical.

It can't be this. And all other proper relationships within the proper circle, including the call of Christ in the story of the Good Samaritan, that I am to love all men. On what basis? Well, because they're my kind.

They're my kind. The Bible divides humanity into two groups, into those who have, are still in rebellion against God and those who have come back as God's children. But on the other hand, it also reminds us we are of one kind, we are of one flesh, we are of one blood.

Find a man where you will. It's possible to bear children with this man or this woman. We are of one kind, one blood.

And the Bible's call to us is to live in this personal relationship, understanding there are two classes of men, one saved and one lost. Yet nevertheless, on the level ship of man to man, the level of man to man relationship, this thing is to be carried over as Christians into every realm of life. Every realm of life is the very opposite of a static situation.

Love is never static. Marriage is never static. The parent-child relationship is never static.

Any true Christian living on a true Christian basis will not be static. It is a living thing based upon, not a fluke that I have been kicked up as a man out of an impersonal situation, but because of who God is and the fact that of who I am as made in the image of God. Therefore, coming to the conclusion tonight in this very rapid summary of practical Christian living, and one could go on, of course, for a whole series in this study, long series, but I've tried to give a rather rapid summary, an introduction for all these lectures.

Therefore, in summary, the Christian life is a life lived in practice within the structure of the whole Bible's teaching, not as an abstraction, not as a bare doctrine, though doctrine is good, good doctrine is good, but not as a bare abstraction, not as a scholasticism, but in the structure of the whole Bible's teaching of two basic facts of who God is and then who I am. And who I am at two points. First, I am a sinner, and so I need the blood of the Lamb of God.

But secondly, to remember that I am an image-bearer of God. I'm not a machine. I'm not a plant.

I'm not an animal in this sense. I'm an image-bearer of God. Who am I? I am a person.

I am Francis Schaeffer. There is a unity here. This is who I am.

Now, I know who I am metaphysically and in morals. There is a practical Christian living which is not just hung in mid-air. There is a practical Christian living that is fit into the very structure of what is there and of God and who he is and who I am.

This, I think, would be a summary, only a summary, of something that could be spoken of as the wonder of the biblical teaching in our own generation that cannot find any kind of meaning to morals. The wonder of the biblical teaching, of not only an abstract morality, but of the topic it was assigned to me. And that is practical.

And my emphasis now would be practical. Practical Christian living. About the most difficult thing of this talk was putting a title on it.

I'm not quite sure what the title is. Maybe we could have a vote after the third lecture as to the proper title. There would be two possibilities.

Thinking of it in traditional Christian terms, theological terms, we might speak of it as Christian apologetics for the second half of the 20th century. Or we could use a title of the 19th century. And that would be the title of the relationship in contrast to the thought of the 20th century and the historic Christian faith.

I would say, beginning in the more classical sense of thinking of it as apologetics, in consideration of what Christian apologetics can mean in our own generation, that there's two ways of thinking of apologetics, and two ways of thinking of bringing together the historic Christian faith and contemporary thought. One would be from a somewhat negative viewpoint. Here I am, and here are the people for whom I might be responsible as a pastor, something like this.

And in any age, you have a certain amount of shooting at any position, and that would be true, surely, of the Christian position. So the first thought would be a thought of defense that we must bring together. We must think of giving an answer into the century in which we live in defense of myself and my people.

One mustn't be embarrassed about the use of the word defense. This is not a negative thought, because after all, in any conversation, in any communication, it's really dialogue. There must be answers given as well in answer to the objections raised.

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