

Love Never Faileth

by George Warnock

The sermon emphasizes the paramount importance of love as the foundation for truth, righteousness, and spiritual growth in the life of a believer.

Duration: 1:10:08

Scripture: Psalm 51:7, Psalm 51:15, Isaiah 8:18, Jonah 1:17, Matthew 18:21-22, Luke 2:34, Hebrews 4:12

Topics: "Love"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of truth and wisdom in our inner being. He quotes from Psalm 51, where David asks God to purify him and make him clean. The speaker also discusses the role of knowledge and love in our spiritual growth. He believes that we are in a time when God is calling for truth to be established in us, and that love is essential in enduring and not giving up. The sermon concludes with a reminder of the need for a vision in our lives, as stated in Proverbs 29:18.

Transcript

I remember it's become somewhat of a, one of our theme songs. I remember how the Lord seemed to give us various theme songs at different times. That one about the finder's fire, how we sang it so faithfully for several months.

And it seemed somehow that we lost the zeal for that when the Lord began to answer our prayers. And I remember we sang the one about search this world, search me, search me through and through. And many of these songs became a prayer, I think, that we prayed in our ignorance.

And the woman doesn't mind that, because I think from our hearts we meant it. And God deals first of all with the heart. When it begins to penetrate our minds then, of course, we get the understanding of it.

We understand it as God sees it, but he deals with the heart first. What's the heart, men believe, of under-righteousness? We don't understand it. But in time to come, with our minds, we appreciate what God has done with it.

Not only our hearts, but with our minds. So it seems that the Lord very recently began to impress upon us that he desires truth in the inner part. And through the years I think the Lord has been faithful, leading us into truth, causing truth to become very real to us.

We rejoiced in it. And it has been truth with a vision. There's no vision that people perish.

And if we do not have a vision, what are we going to pursue? We don't have a vision. We'll just become like any of the other groups or churches, rejoicing in what God has done for us, but having no hope for anything more. We should always rejoice in what God has done for us.

But Paul says we're saved by hope. And unless there's a living hope for more, for God to complete the work that he started, there's really nothing to encourage us to go on. And so I believe the Lord has given us a little knowledge.

But as we've often mentioned, unless the knowledge God gives us is that which will encourage us to go on with him, that knowledge can be very detrimental to us. It hinders. If it becomes something that we rejoice in in our minds, but something that doesn't penetrate the heart, the innermost parts of our being, then it can become detrimental.

And so we pray that God will continue to balance any knowledge of truth that he gives us with the outworking of that truth in us. Because if we do not allow the Lord to do that, that knowledge is going to puff up without edifying. And the original Greek, if you translate it literally, it would give us the meaning a little clearer.

Knowledge puffeth up, but love buildeth up. And so, you know, we've got puffed rice and puffed wheat, and there's just a kernel that's been enlarged seven or eight or nine times. Nothing more there.

Full of air. And so knowledge will do that. It won't change you.

But love will build up, line upon line, stone upon stone, until there's something substantial. I thoroughly believe that we've come to the day in our life when God has required that truth become established in us. I don't believe he's going to let us go along as we have in the past, rejoicing every Sunday morning in a little nugget of truth, to rejoice our minds and warm our hearts with no thought of it changing us.

And we're at that time. We're at that day. If it's the day of harvest, then the time comes, the day of harvest, when all the blessings of the past, all the rain, all the sunshine must come forth and bring forth the full corn in the ear, or everything that has transpired before that is lost.

Eric was mentioning the tragedy as he beheld the crops up north there, weighted down with rain and moisture, and they can't harvest. And just to think that the hopes of the gardener for all these months as he saw it growing, the hope he had of bringing forth a harvest lies in the ground. And somehow our husband has been waiting for the precious fruit of the earth, has had long patience for it until it received the early and the latter rain, that in the time of harvest he would have a good crop.

And he's going to do it. He's going to have the precious fruit of the earth. It's not going to fail.

He's going to have the precious fruit of the earth. For many, many years I've longed to be associated with a people who, because of God's dealings and his grace in their lives, would be in that image of Christ. I want to be associated with that.

I want to be a part of that company. So having been dealt with as a Lord, come forth in that image. It's my hope.

If it was just a case of having a lot of people come together and build up a church and have something to show, you know, for your efforts, well, I wouldn't be here. And you people wouldn't be here. Because our

hearts have longed for reality, God has brought us together, desiring to work in our hearts and lives.

Such grace that in the fullness of his dealings in our lives, God himself might come forth, the Lord Jesus might come down and rejoice in the harvest that has come forth in his people. And so the final aspect of all this knowledge, not that it's that great, but you and I it seems great, all the knowledge that he's given us, the final outcome of it all is that it might be wrought within us. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. He goes on to say, O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thine.

But all that, that true praise that God wants to bring forth, perhaps we do lack in that vocal praise here. It doesn't worry me. I'm not too concerned.

I'm not interested in trying to pump up a beautiful praise service so that people can say, well, they sure know how to praise God there. I want to see that people come forth with truth in the inward parts, whose mouths will be closed in the awesome presence of God, until God has dealt with them, cleansed them, purged them. And then they're going to have to pray with David, Lord, open my lips, and my mouth might show forth thine.

For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. Thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not describe.

That's the sacrifices that God wants, and that's the sacrifices of praise that God wants. I wish people would understand the quote of Scripture, God wants the sacrifice of your praise. I wish they'd understand that it's this kind of a sacrifice.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not describe. The contrite heart is the bruised, the crushed heart. That's the meaning of the word contrite.

Broken, yes, but contrite, bruised, crushed. Many people have been bruised, many of our fellows have been bruised and crushed. And so we go on saying, thou desirest truth in the inward heart.

And God does it, and there's a bruising, there's hurts, there's crushings. And we're all in the mills of God, and so we all feel it, and we don't realize that God is doing it. That God is doing it because he wants a bruised, a broken, and a crushed, in order that he might receive from his people the sacrifices of a broken spirit.

God wants truth in the inward heart. And the final revelation of truth, the final revelation of truth is when the love of God is, that's final. I mean, we can know this and know that, and know that this is right and that's wrong, but if we do not come to that finality of it all, where love is recognized and manifested as something beyond our way of worship, beyond our praise, beyond our musical instrument, beyond gifts of miracles and healings, and beyond knowledge and wisdom, we haven't arrived.

We're a long ways from it. And so Paul says, I've shown you a more excellent way. Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become a sounding brass.

Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, all secrets, and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. Any man who

could come to this city or any other city with a mighty gift of prophecy, and have understanding in all mysteries and knowledge, and have tremendous faith so that he could move mountains, whether they're literal or spiritual mountains, you know that he could build up a church. There wouldn't be a building in town to house the people.

And yet if he doesn't have love, God says he's nothing. Nothing. Not just falling short.

Nothing. Why? Because God does all that. Externally.

And that man can be carnal and unloving and do all those things. And it's nothing because God wants truth in the inward part. That would be hard for any Christian in this town to receive.

It would be hard for us to receive, wouldn't it, if we beheld such a mighty thing happening. Gifts and miracles and wisdom and knowledge and prophecies, genuine prophecies, and love laughing. God says, it's all nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, that had not love, had prophet, that's me, nothing. So we have to love one another. And so we quote the scripture, Beloved, let us love one another.

Rightly so. And it goes in one ear and out the other. Because we all love, yes, you know, that nice, soft, sentimental thing that you just, you know.

So Paul has to come forth and describe what it's like. Otherwise we'd read it and say, oh yes, I know, I've got to have more love. Paul has to go into a little detail and show us what he means.

This sentimental thing, you know. Come on, everybody get up and go and hug one another. Well, I think love will prompt you to do that.

And if God prompts you to do that, in this meeting, do it. But you can't manufacture love by doing that. It's got to be there.

Charity, love is long-suffering. Love will suffer long. Don't give up.

Don't give up on your brother because you see some unlovable truth there, so you give up on him. Love doesn't do that. Love is unchanging.

Love doesn't change with circumstances. Well, I love him because he's been good to us. He'll go out of his way to help us.

He seems to be a very neat person, you know. And we share truth together, and so we love one another. And so there's a going forth of love from our hearts because we find compatibility.

And we find that they love, and so we love. I love them. They love me.

And so there's a response to our love because there's incentives there. Kind, helpful, until we respond. Suddenly something happens, and they're not as kind as they used to be.

A little more difficult to get along with. They seem a little harder. They seem to be walking in disobedience.

They seem to be proud. Oh, I don't know. You name it.

And so our love stops flowing. Why? Now the love isn't being returned, and so our love stops flowing. And so we say they lack love.

Well, has our love ceased to flow when they changed? Well, then the problem's in me. Not in them. Oh, I'm not saying I have problems there.

But the real problem's in me if my love is altered because they have changed. Love doesn't change because your brother changes. It should not change for the better if he changes for the better.

Nor should our love change for the worse if he changes for the worse. Love doesn't change. So, Lord, now what's wrong? I used to love this one so much.

Well, Lord, he's changed. He's not. Has my love changed? Did Jesus' love change for Peter when Peter cursed and swore and said, I don't know the man? Did Jesus' love change? No.

It continued to flow. But it is in a different flow, in a different channel. Love will always find a channel in which it can flow.

As far as the quality of love is concerned, it never changes. The channels through which it will flow, they can be innumerable. They can be innumerable.

And so there's no problem in a one-man-to-man relationship, you know, if there's compatibility. And I do him favors, he does me favors. I share a truth, he shares a truth, and we get along.

But he changes, so my love stops. And I don't realize the problems in my heart. He has problems, well, maybe.

But let the Lord deal with that. But what about my love? Why did my love suddenly change if it wasn't Peter? We hadn't tapped the source of unchangeable love. It is a love that depended upon that individual whom we love.

If he didn't return it, my love stopped. Very short and long-suffering. Very short.

And the fact of the matter is that God's love will continue to flow if we let it. We'll take a deeper working of His Spirit in our lives. But you and I all know that God will not work a deeper work of grace in our lives until we come to recognize our need for it.

And when we truly recognize our need for that deeper work of grace, our hearts are exposed to Him, and He will do it. Let's not always prolong the working of God and say, I mean, God's going to do this great work, and I can't do anything about it. God wants to be doing it little by little, here a little, there a little, line upon line.

And every time there's a bruising and a crushing, the Lord allows it. But because of the bruising and the crushing, there might come forth this hurt. I never heard that illustration of the hurt fruit tree.

Never knew there was such a thing. Brother Ava in there mentioned it. Some fruit trees, they do everything for it, and nothing happens until they take an action, they chisel, they know how to do it, chisel out the bark in a certain place, and they call it hurting the tree.

They still don't know why it happens, but it starts to bring forth fruit. There's a lot of hurts amongst God's people. Crushings, bruising.

We blame our fellow because we're all on the same millstone. And the millstones of God are crushing us all, and so we look at our brother and blame him. God grants that we might quickly come to that spirit of Joseph.

But he was able, in the final moments of God's dealing with his brethren, to be so crushed, so broken, so humbled before God, that he turned to his brethren who had sold him into slavery and said, Now listen, boys, don't condemn yourself anymore. You met us for evil, but God intended it for good, that he might work a great deliverance. You're hurt, you're bruised, you're crushed.

Don't blame anyone. God knew a lot of them. You saw this iniquity of my heart.

You discerned the iniquity of your servant. I wasn't responsible for that thing he accused me of. Maybe not, but I was responsible for many other things that they did not even mention.

And those things were might compared to what God saw. And when I used to chastise my children, sometimes I'd make a mistake. You know, wrong information.

I didn't go around bemoaning the fact. I'd apologize, but they knew that they got away with things a hundred times without being chastised. And so, well, I guess that sort of helped.

I did that wrong, but you missed it a hundred times, so I'm not going to worry about it. God's been so merciful to us. Overlooked and overlooked and overlooked a hundred times.

And so if you're unjustly accused or unjustly treated here and there along the way, just take it. Well, God had to do that to break you, crush you, to cause you to know what it's like to suffer for no cause of your own. Be misunderstood.

You don't like to be misunderstood. I mean, that's devastating to be misunderstood. If you didn't and you were caught, fine.

But to be misunderstood, to suffer for something you weren't responsible for doing, that's devastating. That's crushing, that's bruising. It causes contrition of heart.

The Lord hath broken and hath contrite heart, thou wilt not dispute. Joseph never deserved the misunderstanding that came his way that caused him to suffer in prison, but it wrought a contrite heart within him. So much so that in the days to come, when his brethren were in a similar situation, he knew that God was working great grace in their hearts when they were suffering for something they were not responsible for.

Simon of Jacob was completely devastated. But as you pursue the pathway of priestly compassion and priestly contrition of heart and priestly mercy, I think that other goal will almost fade away, almost forget it. Lord, I just want to have a heart after the heart of God.

I want to partake of your suffering because I know that if I do not, then I'll never be like you. If you don't hurt this fruit tree, fruit will not grow. So prune and take away everything that you know to be extraneous.

And if necessary, bruise me for no cause that I can utter, if so be that the fruit of the Spirit may come forth in my heart. For Paul tells us that every high priest taken from among men is ordained for a man in things pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. And then he mentions the qualities of a priest who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

And so a priest has got to have compassion on the ignorant and on them who are erring in their way. A priest has got to have compassion. You want to be a priest? A priest has got to have compassion on the ignorant and the erring.

A priest has got to come to that place where love will continue to flow when the man is responding in love and kindness or when he's going in his ignorant ways and erring in the pathway of the Lord. A priest's love cannot change. The channel might be different.

Instead of flowing forth in beautiful communion and fellowship, that channel might not be open. But there'll be a channel, and there'll be a channel of patience, long-suffering, compassion, which will produce a burden for that one, prayer, intercession. Love will continue to flow.

You can't stop it if it's God's love. It might not be, oh, I love you because you love me. It might be, I love you because I see that you're missing out on God.

I'm afraid you're erring from the pathway. I'm afraid that you're slipping. We can see that.

We can quickly tell them. Chances are they could well be further along in their walk with God than you are because you're so right and they're so wrong. But in being so right, you're lacking compassion, love, mercy, truth in the inward parts.

And right as you are, you're perhaps more wrong than you're right. Because righteousness in the sight of God is not that hard, cold thing where everything is legally correct. True righteousness in the sight of God is being able to show love and mercy and truth and forgiveness.

That's true righteousness in the sight of God. So what if I'm right and you're wrong? If I'm right and unforgiving and cold and harsh and you're wrong and tender and broken, you're more right than I am. Because those are the true attributes of righteousness.

God help us to see what true righteousness is. Do you know that Jesus Christ became the very incarnation of righteousness when He hung on the cross and took the blame for the sins of the world? When the reproaches of those who reproached God fell upon Jesus and He bore it, that became His righteousness in the sight of God. Let's come to appreciate and understand what true righteousness is.

Not measuring up to some legal standard, but measuring up to the character of Him who is God's righteousness. Let us nurture that truth until truly in our hearts we'll know that righteousness in God's sight because of redemption is not measuring up to a list of thou shalt not do this and thou shalt not do that. But true righteousness in the sight of God is that which measures up the standard of the cross of Christ.

Who could bear the reproach of others, who could bear the hate of others, who could show forth the long-suffering of God, who could cry out, Father, forgive them for they know not what they do. That was true righteousness. That was righteousness.

And so Paul, in all his writings, admonishes the Christians. Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor be put away from you with all malice. Rather, he says, let forgiveness flow even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven him.

You say there's a just cause for this. No, there's no just cause for enmity, pride, hatred, ill feeling, resentment, bitterness. There's no just cause for it.

There's a logical cause for it because as long as we give way to the carnal nature, the logical thing is, if they hurt me, I'll hurt them. If they misuse me, I'll have tinges of bitterness toward them. That's the logical thing.

There's no just cause for it. What am I saying? I'm saying this. If there is this feeling of superiority, if there is a feeling of unforgiveness, I mean from the heart.

Here's the problem. Forget about those problems out there for the moment because you're not going to be able to minister mercy and truth and righteousness and love to others until it's wrought within your heart. You can go and tell them what they ought to do, but you're not going to be able to minister true righteousness, peace, mercy, kindness.

You're not going to be able to impart it to them until it's within. I don't believe it's all that difficult. I know we've got a long ways to go, but I believe we're in the final round where God is saying, I desire truth in every part.

Not enough to say, well, yes, we've had differences between us. And you forgive me? Yes, I forgive you. You forgive me? Yes, I forgive you.

Shake on it. I don't say you don't do that. You've got to declare it.

But you've got to seek God earnestly until you feel it. You've got to seek God earnestly until you really mean it. Peter, you know, thought... He had this... I don't know if one of the disciples or someone that had wronged him I guess seven times.

He felt pretty good about it. And he thought he'd get a little pat on the back in front of the Lord. He says, a man sins against me seven times and I forgive him.

Is that what you require? Oh, good old Peter. You mean, Peter, you've got that kind of grace? Jesus deflated him right there. No better.

Not seven times. Seventy times seven. And he didn't mean by that that once you've done it 490 times, Peter, that... He was just showing him, Peter, it's not one, two, three, four, five, six, seven times.

It's got to be something that's flowing there. It's there all the time. Why? Because that's the only way you and I are going to be free from guilt and condemnation is when we let forgiveness flow.

We received forgiveness from the Lord. Wasn't it a blessed day when you knew you were forgiven? I'll never forget it. I just knew I'd receive forgiveness.

But for you and I to retain that beautiful sense of forgiveness and just to know the efficacy of that cleansing blood and the forgiveness of His grace, for you and I to retain that, we can no longer be recipients of His mercy. We've got to be channels of it. We've got to be channels of it.

Until forgiveness is something within us longing to come forth, just bursting to be revealed. And that's how God forgave us. He didn't wait until I come to Him and said, I'm sorry, Lord, will You forgive me? It was there all the time, but I had cut myself off from it.

I didn't partake of it. It was there. Don't say, well, He hasn't come around yet.

I'll forgive Him if He comes around. Let it just be. And in the meantime, how are you going to promote that? Reconciliation.

That love of communication, that love of fellowship, that love of joy and pleasure in your brethren. A wall has come there. If you've got God's love, it will continue to open up other channels.

The flow, you can't stifle it. If you really have it, it will open up a channel of prayer, intercession, concern. Godly concern.

Searching your own heart. Why, Lord, if You have given me a priestly ministry of mercy, why doesn't it become effective? Why can't it flow and break down these walls, these barriers? You seek God. Lord, what's wrong with my life? What's wrong if You made me to be a priest? Why can't I show compassion in a way that will break the stubborn will and the stubborn heart? I want to forgive, Lord.

How can I let it flow? I've forgiven, Lord, but there's still a wall. He hasn't received it. Do you realize that if you do not forgive, you're holding your brother in the bondage of guilt and condemnation? You're holding him in that bondage.

I saw the Corinthian church. There was a wrong, a very grievous wrong. Paul wrote to them, deal with this wrong.

You've got to deal with it. It's a horrible thing. But they didn't have the love of God.

And they dealt with him in cruelty, in harshness. And Paul had to write back and say, well, you dealt with it, but where's the love? He says be sure that you don't let Satan gain an advantage over you by not being able to forgive. And he says when you Corinthians are able to forgive him, then I can forgive.

I can go along with you. Lest Satan gain an advantage over us. And I never saw that connection until some months ago.

That if unforgiveness remained in the Corinthian church, Paul says Satan might be able to gain an advantage over them. Don't be suspicious when someone says, will you forgive me? Well, yeah, I forgive. But I want to see the fruit of it before love will flow again.

Grasp any opportunity that there is to let love be released. If you're convinced that it's word of mouth only, don't let love be stifled. Let love continue to find these channels of patience and long-suffering and mercy and compassion because nothing is stronger than love.

And you can break down those walls if you have love. Instead of standing back, well, when he changes, let love penetrate. Let love break down the wall.

Let love flow. That will break down. We pray a very serious prayer when we pray the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, even as we forgive those who trespass against us. Do we really overlook and forgive the trespasses of our brethren? Or do we say with word of mouth, I forgive you, but I don't forget.

I forgive you, but I hope you'll change so that we're not really forgiving. We are praying in that prayer, Lord, forgive me as I forgive those others that sin against me. Do you know that you're praying, Lord, you forgive me even as I'm forgiving my brother? How do you want God to forgive you? I'll forgive you, but I'm going to put you on probation.

I'm really going to keep an eye on you. I'm really going to watch you. I'm really going to make sure that it's sincere before there's total forgiveness.

Know He freely forgave us all trespasses for His own name's sake. And then having forgiven us freely, oh, He'll just manifest all manner of grace and virtue to change us. But it doesn't nullify His forgiveness for us.

He forgives us freely. And then He'll do what He can in virtue of His great high priestly intercessory work. He'll do what He can to change us in mercy, in love, in compassion, in patience.

He'll do what He can to change us. So we pray, Lord, forgive me even as I forgive my brother. As you forgive your brother from your heart, you are inviting the Lord to hold nothing back by way of forgiving you.

But Jesus said if you forgive not every man his trespasses from your heart, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you. Well, hasn't He already forgiven me? I know. I believe He's speaking about that ever-present forgiveness that flows through us.

And we'll discover if there isn't a forgiving spirit, you're going to discover feelings of guilt, condemnation, always accusing yourself, always condemning yourself. If God would grant the grace, you and I, say, Lord, I'm going to forgive and forget. I'm not going to let love be stifled because I see some unlovely thing in my brother.

We discover that instead of guilt and condemnation, we find the cleansing of His blood, the cleansing of His Spirit. We discover it would be there. And God forgives, and when God forgives, He forgets.

He justifies. He declares you righteous. Do you know that God looks upon you and I when He forgives us? He goes a step farther and He justifies us.

They're not the same. Justification, that's stronger than forgiveness. Forgiveness is negative.

I don't hold anything against you. Justification is that work that God does where He looks down and He says, your sins are so forgiven and so washed away and so put away from my mind that I see you as one having never sinned. I see you righteous in my sight.

I know that it's difficult enough for you and I to forgive and forget. I'm talking about forgiveness from the heart. I don't find it particularly difficult.

I'm sorry for this, George. Oh, that's alright. But the thing that bothers me is I'll remember that.

Keep on remembering. And I'd really like to come to that place where I could really forget what the offense was. I think I have in some situations.

Someone's come along and, you know, sort of, oh, I'm sorry. Oh, goodness, I forgot all about it. I did, but it's probably some very little thing.

Some real offense and to forgive and for the Lord to so wash your mind that you've forgotten all about it. I'll never forget it. Brother was over in one of the Iron Curtain countries.

God was moving in the meeting. And they were coming for prayer and repentance and contrition of heart and telling him all the horrible things that they'd done. And he'd pray for them and love was flowing and forgiveness was flowing.

But afterwards, he said, he felt sort of unclean because of everybody unloading their cares. He said, Lord, cleanse my heart and my mind from all this. And a few minutes later, without anticipating an immediate answer to prayer, he said he looked around.

He couldn't remember one thing that those people had confessed. What was it? Cleansing of the spirit and the blood. The water and the blood and the spirit flowing.

The people were cleansed and the priest himself was cleansed. Oh, what a day of cleansing is coming. There's such an openness of heart, such a contrition of heart, such a breaking of heart that the Spirit of God will flow in our midst and the blood of Christ will be so effective that not only are sins cleansed, but they're forgotten and wiped from our minds.

And if perchance someone happens to recall it, it'll be so far in the past they'll have to laugh about that. The pettiness that caused such a major change in your affection for your brother. Some little thing that may have come from a deep-rooted aspect of carnality in your life.

Maybe so. But in view of the cross of Christ, so insignificant. We need to have that revelation of the cross of Christ.

We need to read the story of the crucifixion and meditate upon it and ask the Spirit of God to unfold the true meaning of the cross to our lives. That we won't only look at Jesus crucified and say, He did that for my sins. He did that to forgive me.

But we'll really realize that I deserve everything that He suffered there. I deserved it. When they beat Him on the head.

When they put a crown of thorns in His head. When they beat Him on the back. The cat-of-nine-tails until the blood flowed from His flesh.

He was, as it were, pulp. Isaiah saw Him in vision and he says His visage is so marred than any man. Another translator says that His visage, His appearance was so marred that He did not resemble a son of man.

Such a gruesome appearance as He was offered as our sin offering. Now we love Him because He did it for me, but oh, that that love will penetrate our hearts until we say, I deserved all that. And coming to the realization that I deserved all that, how can I hold any little thing against Him? I deserved all that that He suffered.

And God help us then to continue to cherish that working of His Spirit in the inward parts. Until love will flow unfettered, unhindered, no matter what happens. And in closing, let you and I recognize that if love is hampered and love does not continue to flow from our lives to our brother, no matter what he has done, the problem is in me.

There may be a problem in him. Let God deal with him. But if love ceases to flow with that same intensity that we knew when we experienced first love, the problem is in me.

That's where the problem is. May the Lord continue this work of humbling, of contrition, of breaking, until the same love that was in Jesus is in us. May that love become so abundant within us that we will not be recipients of His love.

Not recipients, but channels. Because when His love becomes great within us, we can't hold it. It has to burst forth in channels.

And then we'll become true priests of the Lord. Like Samuel of old, rejected by the people of God. Stood before the people of God as God's mouthpiece for a people who had become unthankful for what God had done in raising up a true voice in the land and desire to have a kingdom like the nations.

What did it do to Samuel? Oh, you rebellious people. I just hope God deals with you. Samuel said, I'd be sinning against the Lord if I stopped praying for you.

He says, you've done wrong and your hearts are not right. But I'm going to continue to pray for you. And I'm going to pray for your king.

And God forbid, that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you. God, make us channels of your love and not mere recipients. Cause that old nature that we have to literally crumble in His presence before we're going to rise into the heights of His own nature and His own life.

First of all, there's got to be a fall. And so, Jesus is set for that. And when Christ comes into our life, sure as that we might rise to be seated with Him in heavenly places.

But before we're going to know that kind of a life in any experiential sort of way, we're going to have to know the following. There's got to be a coming down. There's got to be a humiliation.

There's got to be a crumbling. So, He's set for the fall and the rising again. And for His sign which shall be spoken against.

A sign. He points in a certain direction. He changes your direction.

God's people. God desires that His people should be signed. We want to see the signs.

And it's a wonderful thing when we hear of signs and wonders that are happening. We don't want to be followers of signs. God doesn't want us to be followers of signs.

We read in the Old Testament and Paul quotes it in Hebrews. Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given unto me. That's as far as it goes in Hebrews, but in the Old Testament they should be for signs.

And Jonah was said to be a sign. God wants His people to be signed. Oh, we'd like to perform signs, but no, I'm not talking about that.

Before God's people are going to perform the kind of signs that God wants to perform, they've got to be coming. They've got to be a people who point to the right direction. They've got to be a people who are saying this is the way with authority and with power.

So Jesus was a sign not because He performed miracles, but He was a stumbling block. People came up against Christ and either stumbled or they found a new direction. One or the other.

People either stumbled at the stone of stumbling or they built upon the solid rock. God wants His people to be signed. That when we come face to face with this evil generation, they're either going to stumble or they're going to say, wait a minute, I'm going the wrong way.

Can you point me to the right way? A people who are crossing the world. They're antagonistic to the world. They're opposed to it.

And they become a sign. And Jesus was a sign. Over the first 30 years of His life, He lived in more or less obscurity.

He didn't cause any confrontations or the like because God was preparing Him. When God sent Him forth and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit, immediately He was a point of contention. He had to be.

Because He came a light into the world. And if He came a light into the world, it was to cause those which see to be made blind or to cause those that were blind to see. That's just how it was.

He says, the world cannot hate you because they were living too much like the world. But me it hated because I testify of it that its works are evil. Now I know there's a lot of people saying, this is wrong and that's wrong and they're pointing out all the sins that are going on in the world.

But they don't become a stumbling block nor do they become a foundation upon which people can build. They can see lots that's wrong. But they're not that kind of a sign that God wants His people to be.

When God's people come into this place where they've been confronted with the sun and their lives have been changed and they bear the light and the glory of God, they too will be able to say, I'm come a light into the world that those which see not might see and that those which see might be made blind. It's going to happen. When God's people come into that place where God wants them to be, they're either going to be a stumbling block or they're going to become a rock upon which the people are going to want to establish their foundation.

And then Simeon went on and he said, Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul Just a little parenthesis there to Mary. A sword shall pierce through thy soul also. Mary, the mother of Jesus.

When God brings forth His people in the earth, God's going to bring forth a people as truly as He brought forth the Christ through Mary. He's going to bring forth a corporate Christ through the woman that clothed with the sun that we read of in the book of Revelation. Just as truly as He brought forth this pure, holy Son of God through the Virgin Mary.

He's going to bring forth a pure, holy, corporate people through that woman, that pure church that God is bringing in to be. And so He says to this people, A sword shall pierce through thy own soul also. And we, like many a barren woman in the Scriptures, find ourselves barren and helpless.

Like Hannah, we've been barren. Like Rachel, we've been barren. And many of God's heroes of faith in the Old Testament were born of barren women.

Because God would teach us that only when that people have come to that place of total helplessness in themselves and seeking God all the while they are existing in this state of barrenness, only then are they going to bring forth fruit for His honor and glory. And we've mentioned so often that it was not until Hannah made the supreme commitment that God heard her prayer. God loved Hannah.

God kept her barren because He alone would be glorified in this one she would bring forth. It wasn't until Hannah found grace in her heart to say, Lord, if You'll give me this son, then I'll give him back to You and he'll be Yours to all of these individuals. It wasn't until then that God heard her prayer.

So we say again, God is waiting for the ultimate commitment. I know we make commitments. I know oftentimes we make them very lightly.

Well, I'll be Yours, Lord. I'll do what I say, Lord, and I'll give You all the glory. Bless us, Lord, enlarge us, make us to be fruitful, and Lord, we'll give You all the glory.

And perhaps we mean well, but oftentimes we don't know our own hearts. We're not going to deal anymore with that because I want to come to this last point that Simeon brought up, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. We don't know our own hearts.

We don't know our own hearts until God, by His Holy Spirit, shines in the light of His own presence and reveals the state of our hearts. We don't know it then. My prayer is that God will do this, that He'll begin to reveal the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

He's going to do it, and I believe He has done it in measure. We understand from Paul's writing through the Hebrews, chapter 4, that it's only when the Word of God goes forth as a quickening one that the thoughts and the intents of the heart are going to be revealed. The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing, what does Simeon say? A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and the marrow and as a discerner of the thoughts and the intents, dividing asunder of soul and spirit.

By and large, the Church doesn't know the difference between soul and spirit, and yet it's as different as night and day. And without going into all the theology about soul and spirit, let's just point out very briefly that soul is the life, this natural life that we have, the life of this natural body. By which we think and see and hear and feel.

It's just the life of this body. It's the soul life that we have. Paul speaks about the natural man or the natural life or the natural mind.

He uses the word psuchikos, from the Greek word psuche, which is soul. All he's saying is it's the soul life we have. It's the soul mind we have.

And that's that which we receive by birth. But there's another life, another kind of life, which we receive when we're born again. It doesn't mean to say that when we receive that life, that suddenly our nature has been changed.

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