

Mercenary Christians

by Glenn Meldrum

Glenn Meldrum's sermon challenges the audience to examine their motivations in faith, warning against a mercenary approach to Christianity that prioritizes personal gain over genuine devotion to God.

Duration: 58:12

Scripture: Proverbs 13:4, Proverbs 18:9, Matthew 6:33, 1 Corinthians 15:58, 2 Thessalonians 3:10, Hebrews 6:12

Topics: "Critical Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the issue of a mercenary mentality that has infiltrated the American church. He uses the story of Simon the sorcerer from Acts chapter eight to illustrate this point. Simon, who had previously used sorcery to deceive the people, believed in Jesus and was baptized. However, he still held onto his old mindset of thinking he could buy the power of God. The preacher emphasizes that Christianity goes against the idea of giving to get, as salvation cannot be earned through money or any other means. He urges the audience to examine their own thinking and remove any obstacles that hinder them from experiencing a true move of God.

Transcript

For more messages by Glenn Meldrum and in his presence ministries, go to www.ihpministry.com You are welcome to make additional copies of this CD for free distribution. Well, actually, I want to begin this evening with some disclaimers. And this is a message, the thought of this message has been brewing in me for a while.

I've just, in a couple of times in preaching, just threw out the idea within the midst of a message, but I never preached on it. And so I've been working through this thought, and I just want to say a few things because I don't want anybody to be offended with me. I want you to listen to this message.

I want you to listen all the way through. And I'm going to bring out some issues here that are political, but I'm not trying to be political. And nothing I'm going to say has to do with being Republican, Democrat or anything else.

It just has to do with being a Christian. And what I'm going to do is I'm going to address some issues of our culture. We say we want a move of God, but preparation always precedes revival.

And if we're going to see a move of God, we got to deal with the reality of our culture. Guess what? I'm an American. I think you're all Americans, right? And you know, this is just simple here, but this is the reality.

We can't escape it. It may be so simple sometimes we don't see it, but we think like Americans because we've been born and bred in America. So we have the thoughts of America.

And sometimes we think because we think like Americans, what we think is right, just because that's what we've always done. That's all we've known. That's all we've been as Americans.

And there are things within our American culture that are good. There are things that are evil. And the problem is sometimes we don't know the difference and understand the difference.

And if we want to see a move of God, we got to begin to deal with the junk that has gotten into our way of thinking, our way of believing that we might remove them, get them aside and remove obstacles that's going to stop us from seeing the move of God, stop us from being the men and women God wants us to be. And so I just wanted to give a disclaimer there. So listen to the message.

Don't get out, get up and walk out on me and get huffy or anything else. If there's something I say that you don't like, then talk to me afterwards. But listen to what I'm going to say.

This is a little different message for me. And what I'm going to be sharing here is some different thought. And I feel this is the night I need to share it.

Let's look to Lord in prayer. Father, we come before you now in the precious name of Jesus. And Lord, I'm asking that you give each of us ears to hear.

Lord, help us hear the word. And Lord, I'm asking for mercy upon this preacher that I might share your word and do it with integrity and truth, dear God, faithfully. Lord, I ask most of all for the anointing that would touch our hearts, that you might bring change to us.

And Lord, if there's anybody here that's not a true believer, God, that you'd bring them home to you in the precious name of Jesus. What I want to look at this evening is an idea of my own. And so it's not that I've gleaned it from someplace else, but it's a term that I use once in a great while.

And it's the idea of mercenary Christianity. I want to look at mercenary Christianity and what mercenary Christianity is. And to help us understand the phrase I'm going to use, and I'll go back to again and again through this message, I'm going to try and lay out this thought of what a mercenary Christian is.

First, let me define what a mercenary is. All right, let's look at what a mercenary is. A mercenary is a person working or acting for money or for other reward.

So it's somebody that's for hire. So it's a hired soldier. Commonly, it's a hired soldier.

And the soldier, it will serve in a foreign army or some guerrilla organization. And he does it because he does it for pay. He is for hire.

And with this idea of him being a professional soldier for hire, it means that he doesn't really care about the cause. The cause is irrelevant. All that matters is that he gets the pay, what he's looking for, what he wants.

And so he will fight for whatever cause, hire himself out, put his life at risk, because they're going to offer him X amount of dollars, and he could care less whether it's good or evil, right or wrong. He is a man for hire, and he does it because he's for hire. It's also the idea of putting it on a more general basis, moving away from the military idea of just a hireling, someone who works for pay with little concern for the work, little concern for the business.

It's kind of like you go to a McDonald's and have a guy back there flipping hamburgers, and he wishes he wasn't there. He's doing, he don't care about the business. He don't care about the customers.

He don't care about whether the place makes money or not. He's just putting his time in, because he's a man that's for hire. That's it.

That's all it is. Has no desire for anything else other than that. So what is a mercenary Christian then? A mercenary Christian is a person who primarily serves God for personal benefit, with little concern for the work of God.

So they just serve God for what they can get from God. All right, they're for hire. I will follow you, God, if you give me what I want.

If you don't, I may just go follow some other God. Just for hire, whoever pays me the best price, I'll follow. And if it works for me, great.

If it's not, well, then I'm out of here. I'll go back to drugs. I'll go back to sleeping around.

I'll do whatever it is I want to do, because, well, you know, I went and tried this God thing, and it didn't work for me. They were just a Christian mercenary. That's all they were.

A Christian mercenary is a person who serves God so that God might make them happy, that God might prosper them, that God might make them wealthy or healthy or make them an important person. And so they're for hire, in essence. They go to God.

They may not say those words, but that's what it really comes down to be. I'll do this for you if you do this for me. And I'll go to church on Sunday and put some money in the offering, so long as you give me tenfold back.

And so we're just mercenary. I'll tell you what, mercenary Christianity is preached on TBN all the time. Mercenary preachers tell you, give your seed faith, put some money in, and you'll get tenfold back.

They're just breeding a mercenary mentality. That's all it is. They're not breeding that which is giving to God.

They're just hoping that you will gamble that their lottery is better than the state lottery. They're not asking you to give because they love you or because they care for your life. They want the new Rolls-Royce, and we'll send them money so they can have their private jets.

I mean something's crazy with us that we would do it, but we become mercenary Christians and we figured we'll do this thing and we'll get something out of it. Here's where I want to touch on some things. I don't want you to be offended here.

I'm not trying to speak politics. I'm trying to speak culture, the culture we live in. What I'm going to say here has a deal with whatever culture, wherever they're at in this in this world, whatever race, whatever economic situation, but you see this mercenary mentality, this mercenary Christianity is a welfare entitlement mentality.

Okay? Now you understand what I'm saying here, welfare mentality. I pastored almost 12 years in the city Detroit. In our church in Detroit, we had a very large food pantry.

We went through a couple tons of food a month. My wife ran it. She was very evangelistic, trying to reach out to every person that came in there, trying to share the gospel with them.

And we saw the horrors of welfare where you would have a mom come in and she'd be pregnant and come in with her daughter that was pregnant with their granddaughter, little granddaughter, pregnant as well. The whole curse on the family, the whole welfare mentality, just give me the handout. Now this happened to be with the government, but you see that same welfare mentality is in the church.

I'm just coming here to get what I want, what I need, and I expect you to meet my need. If you don't, I'm out of here. You understand that's a welfare mentality.

It's a mercenary mentality. It's not about the aspect that we're in love with God and that God has called us to a local body and we will serve that body with everything that's in us. We have the mentality that we deserve.

They are obligated to meet my needs. If they don't meet my needs, I will do something about it. We do that with our government.

We say our government should be our little sugar daddy, meet all of our needs, take care of all of our problems and all of our wants, and it's a lie. It's a twisted way of thinking that has come into our culture and has come in a little bit at a time, not as a flood. If it came with a flood, man, our eyes would open up and we'd say, whoa, what is that? It came in with a little bit at a time, a little bit, and began to saturate more and more of our culture, more and more the way that we think.

We deserve. It's this idea that we deserve. This is a great deception.

I deserve. I deserve for the government to take care of me. I deserve for this.

I deserve a new Ford today. I deserve more money. I deserve.

And rather than having an understanding that says, God, thank you, you haven't given me what I deserve, we think everybody owes us. Now, do you know what I'm talking about? Do you know people that have that idea that people owe them? I mean, that's in the world. All right, that's how the world thinks.

And the world can't stop thinking as the world thinks, because that's what the world is. I can't expect the world to think like a Christian, because they're not a Christian. But when we come to Christ, there's this thing, speaks very powerfully in Romans 12, 1 and 2, that when we give our bodies as living sacrifices, and we're not conformed to this world, he wants to transform our minds so that we can walk in God's good and perfect and pleasing will.

Our minds need to be transformed with how we think, because we've thought worldly ways for so long. You know what happens when we think worldly? We live worldly. If we have a Christian mercenary

mentality, it is going to define our faith.

It's going to define how we do church, how we do family, how we do everything, because this way of thinking has crept into our worldview, and that's how we live it out. How are we going to see a move of God when everything is about me? It's about my happiness. It's about what I deserve.

It's about what God is obligated to give me. Well, you can't show me where God's obligated to give you anything. If God is obligated to give you anything, then he's not God, because he's not free.

He is limited. He is, in essence, enslaved to us. God does what he does because of who he is, not because of what he's forced to do.

Now, God does do some astounding things where he will bind himself to his promises and fulfill his promises because he has committed himself to that, but that is by his own choice as God, not because he was forced to. I want to look at an example in scripture of mercenary Christianity. Turn with me to the book of Acts, to the eighth chapter.

Now, you know what is really difficult, church? You know what's really hard? It's when we begin to be confronted about the wrong way we've been thinking, and we're going to have one or two responses. Either we're going to sit down and say, okay, man, this is, I didn't understand. I didn't understand how deep it was in me.

I didn't understand how it affected my life, and God helped me to change, and you begin to do what it takes because you understand you're not going to change the way you think overnight. It has taken your whole life to get where you are, how you think. It's not going to change overnight.

God's work of change, you can begin tonight, and to go deeper in it, but it's a process still that you got to begin to unfold this more and more in your life and see, how has this mentality become so much a part of my way of thinking as a human being that it defines my face? How do I overcome this mercenary mentality that has come into the American church? In Acts chapter 8, beginning in the ninth verse, But there was a certain man called Simon, which before time in the same city used sorcery and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that he himself was some great one, to whom they all gave heed from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of And to him they had regard, because there for a long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip's preaching, the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also, and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.

Now when the apostles, which were at Jerusalem, heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto Peter and John, who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost, for as yet he was fallen upon none of them, only were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.

But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may

be forgiven thee.

For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of inequity. Then answered Simon and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me. Let's look at Simon just for a moment before conversion.

Let's see what this man was. You see, the man was a sorcerer. He was into witchcraft.

He was into the demonic realm. You know, if you don't believe in the demonic realm, and you don't believe that there's power there, then you have never really understood it, and you've never looked very far to see the reality of it. There's a devil.

Now, he's a wee little itty-bitty thing, like a little gnat compared to God. He's like nothing. But it's not the denial that he doesn't have power.

You go into third world countries, and there's those that are into voodoo, and other aspects of the occult, and witchcraft, and everything else. They have their witch doctors. And there's power there.

There are things that go on. And we got to understand that's a reality. It's not make-believe.

I know some stories myself. But you know, there's stories out there that would boggle the mind if we heard what was really taking place. It's demonic.

It's from hell. It is not for the well-being of people. It is for their enslavement, their misery, their sorrow.

It's not for their good. This man had power. He had such power in Samaria that they thought he was a man of God.

He thought that he was the voice of God. The one that God was using. And they didn't understand who God was.

And it was all obscured in their minds from their superstitions and everything else. So Simon was a man famous in Samaria for the works. When their people were sick, they came to him and he did his rituals.

When they had need, they wanted blessings, whatever it was. He did the things for them. But it was always about money.

I'll take care of your sick. You give me money. I'll bring the blessing upon your new home.

Give me the money. Everything about money. Because that's what it was all about for him.

And so he was a man that grew wealthy. He would have been a man of great importance. But he was a man full of self.

He became so full of self because everything in his life was about him. But he wasn't a believer. He was following the devil.

And then all of a sudden what happens? A layman shows up. Philip, he wasn't an apostle. He was just a layman.

Here's this layman that comes up and God's doing signs and wonders to him. People are being healed. Blind are seeing.

Lame are walking. Whatever miracles took place. But these tremendous things are happening.

And as the people began to see, they saw that there was a great difference between the power of God and the occult. They felt the difference. They felt something clean and beautiful with God.

They still felt the hellish, ugly, evil dirtiness of the occult and what Simon was doing and what he was giving the people. And so they turned to Jesus. They saw not only a greater power, because what Jesus was doing, the sorcerer could not do.

But they felt the presence and the glory of this wonderful God that was coming down and revealing himself to them. And so many came and were baptized and began to follow. And it tells us that Simon did.

So let's look at Simon after his conversion. So Simon came and converted. And what does that mean? He believed in Christ and he turned away from practicing magic.

There's some accounts that's in the Bible, but also in history, where so many people came to Christ out of the occult. Huge mounds of occult books and artifacts are being burned and destroyed. I do not doubt that this man probably burned all of his stuff, maybe turned it over to the apostles or to Philip.

The apostles weren't there yet. And turned it over to him so he could destroy it and be way with... I don't doubt that he did something quite radical with that. But when Peter and John show up, in essence, the revival that was taking place with Philip was elevated now.

It went further. Signs and wonders were there. The salvations were taking place.

Now what happened is people are being baptized in the Holy Ghost. And I'm not going to preach on the baptism of the Holy Ghost here, but it's just a phenomenal point that's here. You see, people are being baptized in the name of Jesus.

There is a distinct difference presented here in Scripture between those who are saved, who have been baptized in the name of Christ, which is an outward profession of the inward work. Okay, that's all baptism is. Baptism doesn't save.

It's a testimony of who Jesus is and what He's done in our lives. So here they have come into the faith, but they've not yet had the baptism of the Holy Ghost. It's a separate thing.

And the evidence, I believe very strongly that the evidence was speaking in tongues, and it was so evident there and evident with everyone that was filled, that Simon is seeing evidence, such clear evidence. He says, I want that power. So something was taking place so clear, so undisputable that the man says, I want that power.

Well, I do not doubt in the least this man being a young convert was missing the praise that he once had. Missing the applaud of the people that he was some great man. And I do not doubt within him, there was this desire to be great once again.

Does that get into the Christian ministry today? Huh? All right, we want to be somebody great. We think we can preach a little bit, then all of a sudden we think we're going to be God's gift to the world. You know,

we think everything's going to happen.

We got that pride in us that we can be like Simon so easy. And Simon, still full of himself, wanted this great power. He was a mercenary Christian, you see.

The mercenary Christian. It's not that he wanted that power because he loved God or because he cared about the people. It was all still about him.

All still about what he wanted. Still about his happiness. Still about his prestige, his fame, his pocketbook.

Because he understood how he got wealthy before. Well, why can't you do it now as a Christian? Okay, I was a sorcerer and I sold my goods so I could get wealthy. Why not now? You know, it's like what you got out there.

You're going to have your cell of prophecy type of thing. You call up the guy and for 300 bucks, he'll give you a prophecy. I'm not kidding.

It's crazy stuff that's out there. And so Simon offered him money. Thought he could buy it.

No, I can't tell you. There's nothing there told about how he came into the demonic power that he was. And I'll guarantee you he had to sell his soul.

There was a process. He was probably taught by others before him. And maybe he progressed more than others because he gave himself so fully to it.

But he is now in this situation. He's seeing these men of God, these apostles and the power of God that's manifested there. And he wants to buy and he offers him money.

Now, here's the problem that we have. It's the idea that we can give to get. And this just doesn't have to do with the prosperity gospel.

This has to do with everything in our life. It's the idea that we give to get. And guess what? All of life is about this, okay? All of life is about that.

Our entire monetary system is about you. You go out there, you work, you get money. When you get money, you have money so that you can spend it.

It's how everything works. It's how it's worked for thousands of years in whatever culture you've been in. Whether it's changing paper money or gold or gems or fish or chickens or whatever.

It's this thing that happened. It's what culture revolves around in this fallen world. People want to get rich and all the things that are about it.

And some people are just trying to survive. But it's still the idea that we give something to get something. If I go to the store and I give you 20 bucks, I walk out with this in my hand.

You don't go to Walmart and say, here's 20 bucks and walk out and not take anything. Right? It doesn't work like that. You go in and you give something and you expect something in return.

How does it work with relationships? Basically the same thing. We can have all of our love stories, but it's still the idea that it's going to be, okay, if this is going to work, you're going to have to give to me and I'm

going to have to give to you because if there's not this mutual giving, it's not going to work. Everything in life revolves around this idea of giving to get except Christianity.

Christianity goes 100% against that very mentality because he says you can't earn your salvation. You can't give me enough money to spend one hour out of hell in heaven. You understand? We don't comprehend that.

So that whole process that is defined by this world, not just American culture, we've just refined it in our democracy in that, but it's been in the world at large since we've been around. But it's not in the true faith. It has become a part of American faith, but not the true faith.

And how easy it is for us to be mercenary Christians, that we become people that we start giving to God, whether it's time, whether it's money, whether it's servants, whether it's our talent, whatever it is we give to God and we expect now that God's going to do something in return, that we think somehow we have now obligated God to do for us. That's a serious issue. How are we ever going to see a move of God if everything is about trying to earn something? And he says, you can't earn this.

You can't earn the move of God. What have we tried to do? Let's really be honest. We thought because we prayed, God would move.

So we thought we could earn the move of God by praying. Is prayer part of it? Yes, it is. But when you look at 2 Chronicles 7, 14, what is it all about? If my people first will humble themselves, not the first thing about prayer, the first thing is about humbling themselves.

You see, God has a whole different thing about it. Because in that humbling of ourselves, we're not coming to Him and say, I deserve the move of God. Look at how much we prayed.

Look at what we did. We've done all this stuff and we deserve it. Why don't you come down? Because we've done all the things to make you move.

There's no humility in that. It's in the humility that we come and fall before Him. We're going to say, God, we are so desperate.

We're so thirsty. We're so needy. We cry to you for mercy.

Not because we deserve it. A whole different mentality comes into it for those who begin to truly pray in the move of God. Because it's not no more the demanding.

I'm not saying faith doesn't have a boldness. But true faith has a humility that's tied into that boldness. And so here, we have a situation on how easy it is for us to give to God to get something back.

We work for wages, right? And after we get our wages, we buy to receive goods. But we're told in Isaiah that, Come buy from me that which cannot be bought. And when he begins to speak of that, he says, You've got to come to me.

We'd be willing to give up everything. Everything. And if you give up everything, you're not buying your salvation.

You are just returning to what was the original intent that I had for mankind. That you would serve me with every fiber of your being. But what we do as mercenary Christians, we only go so far.

We only want to go so far in our faith. How many in this church this evening that you have been in the faith for years, and you should be teachers. You should be serving in this church.

But the mercenary mentality that you have had, have kept you sitting in the pews and doing nothing with your faith. Because that welfare mentality was about you sitting there to get because you deserve it. But you don't want to give yourself away.

What would happen with this church, if the saints in this church would crucify that mercenary mentality, the welfare mentality? This church could explode. Because what would happen is people would begin to be what God created them to be. They'd begin to serve the church to build the kingdom of God and reach a dying world.

It'd be no more spectator sport. Coming so that we can be blessed. So that life can be happy.

That I have needs. That if you make me happy, I'll stay. If you don't, I'm out of here.

It's the idea that I've been called to be a son, a daughter of God. And I'm to give myself away. I am to live for Him and for His desire, not for mine.

You see, mercenary Christianity is all about the love of self. All about me. All about my love.

If it's in ministry, it's about the aspect of me being a somebody. If it's the aspect of me just coming to church because I want something out of it. And if you don't come and take care of my needs, I'm going to be angry.

I don't know. I just know this is a fact. It happened to me as a pastor.

I know it happens to your pastor. How many people have copped an attitude and had a hissy fit because pastor didn't come up and give him a hug after service? What a simplistic mercenary idea. I'll come to church if I get a hug.

If I don't get a hug, I'm out of here. Because, well, you don't love me, you don't care. It's not about the aspect I've come to adore you.

And Lord, what I need more than anything is a touch from you. You see, we had a mercenary mentality. We came for hire.

And says, God, I will serve you if you bless me. If you don't, I'll be out of here. It's not the idea of loving him.

Because you see, this Christian life is to be about selfless love. That I love him whether he ever blesses me again. He has done more for me right now in my life.

Done more for me if he never blessed me again. He has done more for me to forgive me of my sins and to give me a pathway to heaven that is worth the serving of him. Even if I never get one thing and all the rest of my days was difficult and painful and sorrowful.

But when we got that mercenary mentality, we have these hissy fits against God. I prayed and I didn't get. I asked and you didn't do.

Why were you in my pain? Where were you in this one? Why weren't you there? And we start copying attitudes at God because we think it's all about a sugar daddy God that's a jump to our attention when we say the name Jesus. And as a result, we think that it's all going to happen the way we dreamed. You see, there's this priceless gift of the kingdom of God.

It's paid in full. You can't give one red cent for anything from God. It's either by grace or it's not by grace.

You cannot earn grace. Does that grace cost us everything? Yes, but it's still a free gift. You don't deserve it, have never deserve it, never will.

It's paid in full. Imagine if it's your birthday and you get in the mail a card from an uncle that is a billionaire and you're pretty excited. Oh, man, he's never sent me a card before.

And you open it up and you pull out the card and there's a \$10 bill in it. You're going to be happy. You see, you didn't deserve that \$10.

But because of your mercenary mentality, you're going to cop a big attitude. That guy could have put in a thousand dollars, a million dollars and wouldn't even affected him. And he gives me a measly 10 bucks.

You didn't deserve the 10 bucks. And you're grumbling over and you didn't get more. Aren't we crazy? I mean, how ridiculous.

So you don't want to speak to the man again because he gave you 10 bucks for your birthday. But you know what? If you all of a sudden you get another card in the mail and you open it up and you pull this out and it's by another relative, but this guy's a homeless man and you open it up and there's 10 bucks in it. You are humbled because you say, this man, this was costly for this man to give me this \$10.

You see, Jesus. Paid the greatest price. The richest that there ever could be the God who owns everything, who became the poorest and gave up everything to take upon himself the sins of the world.

And you see, he offers us this infinitely great gift of eternal life. And we complain over it. We grumble over it.

We think it should be more. We think it should be different. We think it should be easier.

We think there should be greater blessings and we complain against God because we don't get what we want when we want it the way we want it. And we don't understand that he's given us treasures beyond anything we can dream of. It was probably now a couple of years ago.

One day I was in prayer. While I was praying, I was just starting to draw near to Jesus and starting to have a good time. And I just started looking at the reality of my sin and just saying, God, I am so tired of my sin.

God, I just want to be a good son. I'm tired of being a brat. And I just began weeping as I'm crying out.

I just want to be a good son. You know, we can be some real brats. We can get angry at our kids at their little snottiness.

You know all that we've done? We've just refined that as adults. It's not that we've been delivered from it. It's that we just refined it.

We made it acceptable, supposedly, as adults. But we don't like it in our children. And so we still have this mentality that is driving us.

Let's take a little bit of time and look at Simon's sin. Let's understand the sin of Simon here. Peter ended up saying, and this is how it reads in the King James Version.

He says, For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of inequity. And many preachers are wrong with this. Where they refer to the idea that Simon had a problem with bitterness.

Bitterness is nothing of the subject at all. The way mouth New Testament brings it out better. And it reads like this.

For I perceive that you have fallen into the bitterest bondage of unrighteousness. You see, Simon's sin was not bitterness. You can't see that in what's going on with the man.

That's not what it's about, about bitterness. The gall of bitterness is what they call a Hebraism. And what's a Hebraism? It is a distinctive Hebrew expression.

I have a friend of mine that he went and became a youth pastor in Hawaii. And so he's working with the youth on the street. The way he talked to me about this, he says, they speak another language.

It is street language, you know, street language. Okay, they got their own words, their own phrase. He says, I've been on the streets.

I've ministered on the street. This was street language like I never heard before. And you couldn't talk to them unless you learned the street language.

We have our little statements, our little ways of speaking in our culture, right? Our little phrases. And, you know, you get somebody that's from another culture, another city even. And they don't even know what that means.

That little phrase is unique to them. Well, that's what was in the Hebrew language. They had their little phrases.

And so this was one of them, the gall of bitterness. What is gall? Well, gall is this yellowish green bile that comes out of the liver. Very yucky stuff.

And the idea of being in the gall of bitterness is a forceful expression of the wretchedness of this man's condition. It implies the poison of his spirit, soul, and mind. A poison got into the man's spirit that caused him to be so corrupt that he thought he could buy God out.

This is a serious thing. Bitterness is serious. And if it was literally bitterness, Peter would have spoke it differently.

He's speaking something that speaks, that addresses the problem, not of one sin that he did, but of the character of the man. Do you understand what's going on here? Paul is confronting the man about an ugly character that he had on the inside. And he didn't want to deal with it.

The man wanted to be someone great, but he had never even learned how to walk with God. He wanted this blessings and prosperity and stuff, but he wasn't willing to surrender himself. He still had all this ugly

garbage inside of him and didn't want to take the way of the cross to conquer it.

This man is being confronted of evil that is in his character, and he didn't want to deal with it. We want God to bless us, but we don't want to do anything about the ugly dimensions of our character. We go to God and say, Oh God, do a work in my life, but we don't want to commit to the church.

We don't want to become involved in ministry. We say, God bless me here, bless me there, but we want to only give a portion of ourselves to this God. And so he's dealing with this issue with Simon.

You see, mercenary Christian is a character issue. It's a problem of our character. It's a wrong way of thinking.

It's that I begin to think that God exists for me to make me happy. Look at the creation story. We were created for Him.

We turn it all upside down. We put ourselves at the top and God at the bottom. We make this thing about us, not about Him.

We turn it all upside down. We think wrong. You know what happens when we think wrong? We are going to act wrong.

When you act wrong in the marriage, it's because you are thinking wrong. You grow angry at your spouse, you cop an attitude, you grow bitter because you are thinking wrong, because you think, well, they should act in such and such a way, but you don't look in the mirror and say, how am I supposed to act? It's a mercenary mentality that's there. It's dealing with our own wants, saying, God, I want, I want, meet my needs, satisfy me.

Besides being a wrong way of thinking, it's a wrong way of loving. It's about self-love. You know what happens when love of self is at the core of our lives? It destroys marriages.

Right? When it's all about me, a marriage is all about me. It's kind of like you look at marriage. You look at two selfish people.

They are totally selfish and they get married. And the man is looking at this woman and he's saying, meet my needs, meet my needs. And the woman's saying, no, meet my needs, meet my needs.

And they're yelling and screaming at each other, meet my needs, meet my needs. And they're never meeting each other's needs because they're so self-absorbed, they can't see beyond their own selfish ambitions. Good marriages happen because selfless love begins to define the husband and the wife.

And the deeper that selfless love defines them, the more beautiful that marriage becomes. Because that is what defines a good marriage. Not a mercenary mentality in the home which says, I'll stay with you so long as you meet my needs.

If you don't meet my needs, I'm out of here. There's another man down the street that said he'd love me. Did you hear what I just said, man? This is crazy stuff that we've got in our culture.

It's crazy stuff. And we've let that way of thinking in the church. We've taken the baggage of the world and we've brought it into the church and we've incorporated it in our way of thinking about Christ and about our faith.

And Jesus is wanting to set us free from the cultural ideas that are ruining our faith. Because he wants to do a deeper work through us. And so it's a wrong way of loving.

It's all about the love of self, not about the love of God or the love of others. You see, we are in desperate need, church. We are in desperate need of a spiritual revolution.

But you know where that spiritual revolution comes? It comes right here in my own heart. God, I need a revolution right here. It's right here, I need it.

And until we're willing to do that, you know what we're going to do? We're going to look at others, say, well, you need a revolution. You need one, you need one. And we'll point at everybody else, never look at ourselves.

And so it will pass us by because we will not deal with it and we'll continue in that mercenary mentality. Let's look at Simon's judgment. So we looked at Simon's sin.

Let's look at his judgment. Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. You know, I want to say this right, but I am terrified for all those preachers out there that are lying preachers that are preaching, you give and you'll get back.

I am terrified for those men. They will stand before God and they will give an account of how they have robbed the poor, the widow, on how they have their private jets. Some of them, some of these guys, they have two private jets and you talk about multi, multi-million dollar a piece jets and then the hundreds of thousands of dollars a year it takes to just maintain them.

It's unbelievable, the greed and the evil that's behind it all. And they don't understand they're going to give an account for every penny that came into their lives. Every widow that they went and abused, they will give an account for it.

Every single one on how they lied to them and gave them a humanistic religion and taught them mercenary faith that was unbiblical and made everything about them. And so now you've got these Christians that are living out a life of Simon and they're trying to buy God. They're mercenaries saying, I will do for you if you give me more.

I'll do for you if you give me a better job. I'll do for you if the price fits what I want. If Simon did not repent, he would perish with his wealth.

That's what Peter was saying. Your wealth is going to perish and you are going to perish with it. You are going to die, Simon, in your sin because you're not willing to repent of this mercenary Christian mentality because you don't understand the extent of the evil of what it really is.

You see, Christianity is far more than reciting a sinner's prayer. Far more. I mean, I pray with people at altars and I'll lead them through a type of sinner's prayer sometimes.

But you know what I will not do? I will not tell them they're Christians because I don't know if they're Christian or not. The Holy Spirit can do a better job of that than me and if the Holy Spirit hasn't told them they're a Christian, whoa, if I do. Do you understand? God knows how to save and He knows how to confirm that in the heart.

How many people are going to end up in hell because they were at a salvation army and to get the meal they had to go and listen to the sermon, they prayed the little prayer and now they think that they're Christian. I'm saying this because of work I've done on the streets. People I've ministered to, homeless shelters and stuff like that and now they think that they're Christian because they prayed the prayer but they aren't walking with Jesus.

But that's in the Pentecostal church as well. Pray the prayer but not walking with Jesus. You see, I really believe that people can backslide, that they can forsake the truth and forsake their salvation.

There's nobody that can take us out of the Father's hand. He is a place of security. The devil can't, the world can't, pain and suffering can't but you know what? I can jump out.

I'm the only one that can do it and there's so much in Scripture that speaks of that. And so I'm not Calvinist. I don't believe in that aspect of Calvinism.

I don't believe it's biblically sound but there's one thing about Calvinism with this that I really do believe that we Pentecostals need to embrace. You know what that is? They end up saying that they believe in spurious conversions. And you know what? I think there's a lot of spurious conversions.

People that come to an altar and really didn't give their life to Jesus. It was a spurious conversion, not a true conversion. Not truly saved.

They really, truly didn't give themselves to Jesus. They walk out of the church the same person. Maybe they come to church now.

Maybe they give a little money in the offering and they think they're okay but they've not really surrendered to Christ. And Simon's judgment was because of that mercenary mentality. Peter said to him, he says, thou hast neither part nor lot in this manner or that would refer to the ministry though you don't have no part of this ministry for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.

You know what's so strange about this? We can do church without Jesus. We could have what we might even call a holy ghost showdown. We could have all the music and you have the people jumping around and God never even be in the midst of it.

Because really, let's get down to the nitty-gritty. We have a hard time understanding what is excitement and what is the holy ghost. You can go and you can see some secular movie and end up being moved to tears.

I guarantee you it has nothing to do with the holy ghost because somebody can move you to tears doesn't necessarily mean it's the holy ghost. We need to understand the difference between the Holy Spirit and when he's moving and what is just man. And so we can do church.

We can do it well. We can build organizations. We could build churches of 30,000 and never have God show up in it.

It's not about the aspect of whether we can do church. We can do that. We've proven it.

Jesus was at the door of the Laodiceans knocking on it. Let me in. They did church well without him.

But we can't build the kingdom without him. You see, that's a very big difference. See, we think that if we do something for God, we deserve something in return, right? That mercenary mentality.

God, I'm going to do a little ministry for you. I'm going to do a favor, God. Hey, I got, I'm going to do some ministry.

And I want you to make sure that you reward me and you give me back what I deserve. You know, I'm just saying that because preachers have a terrible time with that. That's just the reality.

It gets in our hearts deep. It can get in our hearts. You know, we think now we begin to deserve.

Look at all I've done. Look at all I've sacrificed. I've seen ministers leave the ministry because they suffered.

And before they left it, they thought God owed them something. And they didn't understand that God was calling them into the privilege that they might suffer for Jesus. They didn't understand because they thought it was about prosperity.

They were Christian mercenary pastors, not just Christian mercenaries in the pews. Salvation is free. It is absolutely free, yet it costs us everything.

This may seem like an oxymoron. This may seem like, like opposites. And though it is opposite, so it's true.

It costs us everything. You cannot buy it. You have to come to this Jesus.

If you want salvation, you have to come to this Jesus. And you have to admit that you're a sinner. But that still doesn't make going to bring you in the kingdom of God.

You can't repent your way into the kingdom of God. All you can do is come before this God. And in confessing your sins, we can rest on his promises that he responds to authentic repentance, that he will save those who will turn from their sins.

But the saving is always what God does, not what we do because we cannot earn it. Salvation is totally 100% the gift of God. But then he demands of us, I am giving you salvation.

I'm demanding of you everything in return. And he has the right as creator and redeemer to demand whatever he would want from his creatures. Salvation is free.

You know what? America is obese. With preaching and teaching and conferences, we are obese. But there's a famine in the land for want of the practical application of the word.

We're obese with it. Do we realize if you've been in this church for any number of years, you have more than enough knowledge that you should be out there spreading the gospel, that you should be in the ministry to some form or another. You should be doing something with your faith.

You should be committed to the church. You should be actively reaching the lost. You have more than enough knowledge.

You don't need another conference to do more. You don't need another sermon from an evangelist. You have enough to accomplish it right now.

The problem isn't the knowledge. The problem is the heart. It's that you have a mercenary Christian mentality and you want a nice little safe Christian life.

Bless me, make me happy. But I want to do my own thing. I don't want anything that's too costly.

I don't want anything that's gonna get me out of my comfort zone. But you know what, you look at Peter and John, you don't see mercenary Christians there, do you? You see, they weren't for sale. Here's this man that came up and offered him money.

Now, I'll almost guarantee you, I'm speculating here, but I think it could be pretty real here. This man from his former business as being a sorcerer, he had probably accumulated a lot of money. He was probably a very wealthy man.

When he came to the apostles to offer this, I don't think he was going to offer them \$20. I think he was willing to offer him some big bucks. Come aside, Peter, John, I got an offer for you.

I'll give you a million bucks if you give me this gift. You understand? They weren't for sale. They weren't mercenary Christians.

You look at the end of their lives, all the apostles were martyred. John was martyred, but he survived it in essence. And then they put him on the Isle of Patmos after they blinded him.

The men were not for sale. They had given themselves to Christ. They were not mercenaries.

They were true Christians. They were willing to follow Jesus, whether it was hard, whether it was difficult, whether it was painful, whether it was costly, whether everybody would believe them or nobody would believe them. They were willing to follow.

They were willing to commit themselves. You see, they did not have a welfare mentality. They didn't think the world owed them.

They didn't think God owed them. Right? Isn't that a core issue of a whole welfare mentality? Somebody owes me. And we begin to look to those people that we think owe us.

And if we don't get what we want, then we cop an attitude. Well, you know, when it gets into the church and we think God owes us. How often is it that within the church, because we have this mentality, and I've mentioned this already, but I want to say this again.

This happens all the time. That people come and they begin to walk with God, but they're saying, God, if you bless me, give me what I want. I'm going to stay here if you give me enough.

If not, I'm out of here. And a little bit later, they're back in drugs or they're back sleeping around. Now, there are people here that you should be in leadership positions.

But because you had a mercenary mentality, you can't be in leadership because you're not been faithful. Because you didn't commit yourself to Christ and therefore commit yourself to the service of God for the glory of God. Do you understand what I'm saying? This mentality has so crept into church, it immobilizes the church because the church can only advance as far as the people will take it.

As far as the people will rise up to fill the positions and the need so that there can be an army marching to conquer a dying world. And what happens, you have the mass of people in the church. The mass of people in the church don't want to do anything.

Do not want to commit. Do not want to surrender themselves. Do not want anything that's going to cost them discomfort.

They want to go home, be able to veg out at night on their TV and they don't want anything to disturb them. But the apostles' faith here was a faith about giving themselves away. Wasn't about what they were going to get.

You see, they were giving themselves away. When Jesus told them to go, they went. And it wasn't about, am I going to get something back out of this God? It was that they so loved their Savior that they were looking forward to anything He'd command of them.

And because they loved Him so much when He commanded, they said, Yes! Yes, Lord! It wasn't about, am I going to get something out of this? What's in this for me? Am I going to get some advancement here? Am I going to get some more money? Am I going to have some prestige? What am I going to get out of this? It was just about loving obedience. And they understood the cost of salvation, that it was costly. When Jesus told them so long prior to that, follow me, they understood to follow Jesus meant giving up everything.

Let's take a moment, look at Simon's repentance. And so Simon heard the judgment and he was terrified. I believe that man was terrified.

He saw men with power. He saw signs and wonders taking place, men that had authority. When those men spoke judgment on him, I believe he was trembling.

And he did repent. He says, pray to the Lord for me that none of these things will come upon me. That was good.

But you know what? It was still a selfish repentance. He wasn't repenting because he wanted Jesus. He wasn't repenting because he had broke the heart of God.

He was repenting because he didn't want judgment. And, you know, I'm glad at least he repented in that way. I'm glad that he went that far.

You know, nobody can come to Christ except selfishly. That's the only way we can come to Jesus. We come because we don't want to go to hell.

We're tired of our pain. I'm glad God will accept us there, but that's not where he wants us to stay. And that condition will accept us if we stay in that condition.

That's where we start breeding this mercenary mentality. That's where it starts bringing where we don't want to grow up, where we want to stay in this infantile place. Feed me, feed me, feed me, feed me, make me happy.

Give to me, satisfy me. Tell me I'm wonderful. Pat my back.

Give me a hug. But I don't want to do anything. Don't ask any commitment from me.

Don't ask me to give my tithe if you do. Well, I'm not going to give it. I'll put a little penny in the offering.

But no, no, no. It's mine. It's all about me.

If we grow, it starts to change. You see, mature repentance is a different thing. And what do I mean by mature repentance? I wish, I really wish the Methodist doctrine of entire sanctification was true.

I wish. I have cried to God and says, God, is it real? I wish that you'd come to a place and you stop sinning. But it's not real.

We have this old sinful nature. We breathe our last. But you know what happens when we truly mature? We start sinning less and less and less and less.

And as we mature, then truly mature, we begin to learn how to repent better and quicker all the time. So we sin. We break the heart of God.

We run to him. We say, God, forgive me. Cleanse me, God.

And we don't just give generic repentance. We says, God, forgive me for that ugly word. I spoke God.

That was an ugly thing. It came from an ugly heart. God, help me to change it.

You see, we begin to deal with the sin. And as we deal with it, we're beginning to confront it and overcome it. And so as we mature, it's not selfish.

It's the idea. I want this, God. I want you.

My sin is separating. I desire nearness. God, help me to conquer this that I might draw closer and closer to you.

And so I want to close with this final thought. You see, the Lord has a work for us to do. He has a work for this church to do.

There's dying souls out there. There's so many out there. There is no want of lost people to fill this church.

It's not a problem of the lost people. It's the problem of the church that we've not been the ones going out, that we've not loved them enough to give ourselves away, that they might come and hear the wonderful gospel of Jesus and be saved. It's that we've not been willing to commit ourselves to the church, that a structure, a foundation can be built in such a way that it can handle the lost.

Do you understand what I'm saying there? That there has to be commitment on the people, that they're able to begin to disciple it. What would happen if something happened like on the day of Pentecost and 3,000 people came into your church in one moment? What would you do? How could you even handle it? God won't bring them in if the foundation is not large enough to begin to handle it. There has to be the foundation people that rise up in the faithful positions because they're no longer mercenary Christians.

They become faithful Christians and willing to give themselves away and commit themselves that God might do a work that the lost could come in and good and sound discipleship would be there and all the things necessary to take these newborn babes and raise them up into the kingdom of God to themselves become faithful followers of Christ. In Hebrews 6, chapter 12, verse 1, Paul is speaking and he says, that you would not be slothful but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. Let me

just read that in the NIV.

It's a little clear for our culture. It says, we do not want you to become lazy, right? I mean, slothful, we can kind of push that one off. Lazy.

I don't know any of your lives. Are you lazy Christians? You understand what I'm saying? Are you lazy Christians and you're not modeling yourself after those who have given themselves away for God? You look at the reality of those leaders' hearts and you see the sincerity, the pursuit of God, and you say, God, help me to be like that instead of some lazy individual that just lives for me. You see, lazy people are selfish people because it's all about them.

It's all about their comfort, all about their ease, all about their TV watching, and all the things that they want to do. Lazy people are self-absorbed people because that's all that life is about. And you know, it is a destructive element in their lives.

Here is a very interesting verse. And I'm going to close with this verse. In 2 Thessalonians 3.10, it says, For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

I think that's a very sound thing and part of the problem of our governmental welfare system, which has ruined family after family after family. It is a destructive thing. It's not a good thing for a culture.

It's a bad thing for a culture. It keeps people enslaved rather than set them free. Let's move it into the spiritual realm, though.

Let's move it in the church realm. If you don't work, you don't eat. Why are so many people in the church unfulfilled? Because they're lazy Christians.

They're on spiritual welfare. They're unwilling to invest themselves. So they do not find the food of God being given to them because they're not willing to walk in that place of holiness and intimacy and of laboring for the kingdom of God.

They are living self-absorbed for themselves and cannot accomplish the work of God, so they live unfulfilled in the presence of God. Isn't that an interesting thought? I was mulling that over in my head today as I was putting this message together and just thinking on that. What an interesting idea there.

Because we can be a people that become so spiritually lazy and then we wonder why our marriages aren't shambles, why we're so empty on the inside, and then we turn around and start blaming, well, pastor, if he preached better, this was better, if that was different, and we point fingers at everybody else and we won't look at ourselves that we have not been working in his kingdom and not been doing what we should, so we are suffering because of our sin. God's wanting to change people. He's wanting to change the way that we think.

He's wanting to transform our lives. Let's look to the Lord in prayer.

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