

Are You a Living Epistle?

by Hans R. Waldvogel

We are the epistle of Christ, written in our hearts and manifest to all men, and we must make God's plan our plan by making Him Lord of our lives.

Duration: 34:46

Scripture: Exodus 34:28, Isaiah 55:11, 2 Corinthians 3:3, 2 Corinthians 4:7, Galatians 5:19-23, Hebrews 4:12, Revelation 7:9-10

Topics: "Living Epistle"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a dilapidated house that was bought by a new owner. The new owner completely transformed the house, fixing the foundation and making it beautiful. The speaker compares this transformation to what happens when Jesus comes into our lives. He emphasizes that when Jesus becomes our boss, people will notice a difference in us. The speaker also highlights the importance of repentance and surrendering to the Holy Spirit's guidance in order to be shaped into vessels for God's purpose.

Transcript

Do we begin again to commend ourselves, or need we, as some others, epistles of commendations to you, or letters of commendations from you? Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men, forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God, where, not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiencies of God, who also hath made us able ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the spirit, for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses, for the glory of his countenance, how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? Now the Lord is that spirit, and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord. I came into the meeting tonight and saw the heaven rolling away and the glory of God descending, and was reminded of the words of Jesus, where he said, where two of you or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst, I thought. Well, the Lord Jesus really has a plan with every meeting, or he wouldn't bother to come around, would he? You think so? But you know, it's been a source of unceasing wonderment to me, how that he always manages to

come.

Praise the Lord. Sometimes people don't pay very much attention to him, but he always manages to come, and he always manages to manifest himself. He must have a real purpose in it.

He must have a real plan. And wouldn't it be interesting to find out just what God's plan is? Why, sure, when I come to meeting, I come to meet my Lord. And if the Lord has a plan, well, what is my plan? What did I come for to this meeting? Did I come because I was compelled to come, or because it was the right thing, or because I wanted to meet somebody, or did I come to meet the Lord and to have him take hold and carry out his own plan? Beloved, the day will come when everything will depend on that.

Everything will depend on whether the Lord is at his way. We are vessels, even vessels unto honor, or vessels unto dishonor. I saw a man make a vessel in the rookery in Cincinnati.

He took the clay, and he kneaded it like my mother used to knead the dough when she baked bread. But he kneaded it very, very well, and then he took it and, wham! I wish I was a potter then. He had a rock there, a flat rock, and he had a muscle, believe me, on that poor clay.

It just flattened out like this. And then he kneaded it again, and kneaded it again, and then again, wham! It just delighted me somehow. But he took it up, and then he kneaded again, and he kept that up for a while, and then he put it on a wheel, had a wheel there, and started spinning that thing around.

And then he put his hand into that clay, and they began to mold it. My, that was beautiful. He just drew it up like this, and he made a nice vase, or a vase.

Culture people say vase. And I thought, my, isn't that a beautiful vase? I thought, now it's all finished. Beautifully shaped.

But he wasn't satisfied. He took a knife, and he slashed it right through the middle. And then he measured the walls of that vase, and he found they weren't equal, they weren't just right.

And so the whole process started all over again. Now he had a plan, you see, and the clay didn't have a plan. If the clay had a plan, it didn't say nothing.

He, he just didn't. He was just clay in the potter's hand. And isn't that what God says, ye are the clay, I am the potter.

And his plan is to make a vessel out of you and out of me, thank God. And that vessel, and you know when this fellow got through with the vase, I thought he was through with it. He said, oh no, now the process begins.

Now that vase is going to be put into the oven, a burning fiery furnace, and there's no door to that furnace. It's going to be masoned into the furnace, so that he can't get out even if he tried. There's no way out.

He's got to stay in that fire for 38 hours, if I'm not mistaken, until it's baked through and through. And then it's a vase that is fit for a king. And indeed, the rookery in Cincinnati, you know, sends out its wonderful crockery into all parts of the world.

It has a world reputation. But my God has an eternal reputation, hallelujah. We're not all going to be in Brooklyn forever.

The bums have moved to the west coast and we're going to move up. Well, it's important for us to get hold of it. Praise God.

He saved us and called us with a holy calling. Oh, that the Holy Ghost might make it real to us, that we're called with a holy calling, that God has a mighty plan, and he likens this plan to the work that Moses did in Old Testament times, when he gave the people the law. And the law made nothing perfect.

He says the gospel was preached to them as well as unto us, but it didn't do them any good because it wasn't mixed with faith. What the law could not do, it cannot do today. God had to find a better way to make a to honor, sanctified, and made for the master's use.

And nothing blesses a minister of the Holy Ghost Church more than to see God moving and molding lives and changing life. But nothing blesses the heart of Jesus Christ more than to look into a meeting like this and to see men responding to the Spirit of God. Our sister said a while ago, we need meetings like these.

We do. More than we know. We need Holy Ghost meetings.

We need meetings where the Spirit of God can speak to us. But more than that, we need meetings where we can hear what the Spirit says unto the churches, where our hearts are circumcised and worked upon by the Holy Ghost. That's what I need.

I need it every day. When I read that scripture text where he says the Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than a two-edged sword. You know how many people are tired of it? They've told me so.

They've told me that to my face. We don't like to hear this message all the time. One man came to me in this meeting.

He says, you ain't got no faith. If you had faith, you wouldn't always talk humility. That's how people talk.

Another one said a woman, a lady or a would-be lady said, I don't want to hear about coming down all the time. I want to be somebody. Beloved, you will be somebody.

A vessel unto dishonor, but oh God Almighty has a wonderful plan and I'm not going to please him until I become clay in his molding hands, in his masterful hands. That's what God provides because the law made nothing perfect. The law demanded perfection, didn't it? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.

Oh, what perfection God demands. In my heart, He wants my whole attention for Himself. He wants my very body for Himself.

He wants my soul and my spirit. The God of peace sanctify you wholly and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Beloved, we need Holy Ghost meetings.

We need meetings where Jesus Christ walks in the midst and where He speaks His word and where He says, I know your works. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire. You're wretched and miserable, poor and blind and naked.

I don't mind someone to come and tell me that. Missionary told us how one day man came to his door. It was in Arabia and the fellow had never had a bath in all his life.

And so the missionary wanted to take him into his house for a few days, but he offered him a bath first of all. This man was so indignant. He was so insulted.

He said, well, who do you think I am? You think I'm so dirty that I need a bath? Beloved, that's the way saints are. When God Almighty offers them a bath in His own blood, when He lets His own veins flow blood, blood, holy blood, when He says without the shedding of blood is no remission. If we hide our sins, we shall not prosper.

But if we confess our sins, how many people hide their sins? They're never cleansed. They're never purified. They're never changed.

God says we're changed into His image, His image, His image. David says I shall be satisfied when I awake with my likeness. Has God Almighty been able to implant into your heart this desire to be like Jesus? Has He implanted in your heart a conviction? Has He been able to show you that all flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof? Why am I so proud? Why am I so proud and become insulted when somebody offers me a bath or when the Holy Ghost shows me my true condition? Why is it that I'm ashamed to confess my sin or to have somebody tell me my faults? Why? It's because I don't want to get rid of them.

Or maybe I haven't seen the beauty of the Son of God. Oh beloved, what the law could not do, God was bound to do somehow. God is bound to have a people that are clean.

He's going to have a people that are holy like Jesus is holy. Beloved, that's a wonderful call and God made that call before He made the world. And when He said to Noah, that's a strange thing, after He had destroyed the humanity and destroyed the sons of God and the giant and the cultured people, the whole generation, He says, the end of all flesh has come before me.

Why? Because it has destroyed and wrecked and defiled its way before me. And because the heart and the imagination of a human heart is only evil continually and people will not be instructed by my Spirit anymore, the end of all flesh has come before me. And when He had saved Noah and his family, He said, now be fruitful and replenish the earth.

I read that in one of the old-time Lutheran translations. He says, Fileti erdi, das euer filet erden. God knew that out of the great multitude of people that would be born after the flood, only a trickle would care for God.

Only a small company would listen to what the Spirit said to the churches, but He knew that some would. And He foresaw them before the foundation of the world. He knew your name.

He wrote it in the book. And before the foundation of the world, He chose those whom He foreknew. He says, Then He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might have be the firstborn among many brethren.

O beloved, we're not called to waste our time in the works of the flesh and to waste our time after a while in remorse, in eternal remorse. God has called us with an holy calling, and He that has called us and appointed us is God, who also hath filled us with the Holy Ghost. You remember that story the Greeks tell of Pegasus, of a horse that could fly, wonderful animal, eyes that spat fire, a mouth out of which came smoke, and he had wings, and he was destined to fly over the clouds.

And he belonged to a young student, and this student had a wonderful time riding on back of Pegasus. But one day this poor student got so poor, he had to pawn his clothes, he had to pawn everything, and finally had to pawn his horse. And he pawned him off to a farmer.

The farmer didn't want him, but he gave him just a few dollars for this horse. He said, What good is a horse with wings? So he took a pair of shears and he clipped the wings. And then he hitched the horse to a plow with a cow.

What are you hitched together with? Poor Pegasus. He was pulling the plow, and the farmer hit him. And poor Pegasus wasn't accustomed to work like that, and the cow kept pushing him with his horn.

And it was an awful team. Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. Listen, you'll get no place if you are.

Our fellowship was with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Beloved, this is serious business. And one day this student made some money, made a few dollars, and first thing he did was to look up this farmer.

And this horse's wings had grown again. And he saw the poor horse sweating there, and the cow mooing, and it was a horrible sight. And so he went to the farmer and he said, How much do you want for that horse? Oh, he says, You can have him for nothing.

He says, I'm disgusted with him. Well, you know, the world knows us not, because it knew him not. We're made for heaven, not for this earth, thank God.

He has saved us, that made us a peculiar people, praise the Lord. And so he unhitched the horse. And as soon as the horse felt the Master's touch, a quiver went through his body.

His eyes began to spit fire. His mouth opened, and the farmer stepped back. And this young student swung himself on the back of Pegasus, and the farmer stood there with open mouth.

Beloved, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all eat. Glory, glory to God. Well, you pardon me.

I see so many hitched together, not with a cow, but with a mule, or with a donkey, or any old thing. And you don't belong there. Glory to God.

Now let's see, where was I? Whom he did foreknow them, he also did predestinate to be conformed. And while the law was not able to do it, God had to find a way, and that way is Jesus Christ. Jesus alone, and he who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, he is not interested in the backsliders.

He's not interested in those that are half-hearted. He says, I'll move that candlestick out of your place, except you repent. He wants perfection.

The apostle Paul said, the Spirit of God works in me mightily. For what? To present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. And God, who is tremendously patient with us, there comes a time when he says, Ephraim is turned to his idols, leaving alone.

But where are we tonight? Are we being changed? He talks here about the Spirit of God being Lord. Oh, that's it, beloved. Only where the Spirit is Lord, the devil is not Lord anymore.

That's why he says there's liberty. Where the Spirit is Lord, the lordship of the flesh has sinned. If we live in the flesh, we shall die.

Oh, how many are dead today. They live in the flesh, and the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, and then he names them all, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, evil concupiscence, covetousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, sedition, heresy, murder, drunkenness, revelings, and such like, of which I have told you often that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace. How holy is the fruit of the Spirit, where the Spirit is Lord.

That's the difference. What does it say? We don't need letters of commendation from you or to you. Ye are our epistle, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

That's number one. What do you do with the word of God? When Moses got the tables of the law from God, he talks about the ministration of death, which was engraven upon stones. Moses had to stay there forty days and forty nights while God wrote those words upon the tables of stone.

What a job! Forty days, forty nights. And when he came out of that cloud, his face shone. Something had happened to him.

I was so happy this morning coming to church with our children. They were singing all along the way. When they got tired singing English, they started singing German hymns.

They put some of us older ones to shame. They claim we can't talk German anymore. Your German is sauerkraut.

And these twins, they want to sing German. They do. They sing like the Germans themselves.

But they sang a song that I didn't know. They said, When Jesus came into my heart, something happened to me. Do you know that song? Do you have that testimony? Something happens to you when Jesus comes in.

Something happens. What does, what happens? Why he takes over. Where sin abounded.

And we all know that sin abounded. Oh, how it binds our souls. How flesh bound us.

How pride binds us. Do you know our greatest enemy is the pride of our heart that will not let us bow and submit to the Spirit of God and let him be Lord and master of our lives. And God in his great mercy comes and calls us to repentance and offers us a newborn, offers us Jesus.

When, when Brother Lardong traveled through Switzerland with me, I took him to my hometown. And he said, Where's that little house of the chimney sweeper? I showed it to him. Everybody knows about that house because it was a dilapidated affair from top to bottom.

All the windows were broken. Everything was dirty and filthy. This chimney sweep was drinking all the time, drinking away all his money.

So I had no money left. But one day he died. He was found choked to death in the ditch and somebody else bought his house.

And then we children were surprised to see workmen come and they started to clean up that place. They fixed the foundation. They fixed that whole house from top to bottom and they made it so pretty.

It looked like a doll house. Fresh paint, everything freshly made. It was just like a new house because a new boss had moved in.

When Jesus comes in, something happens. Ye are all repastled. Everybody will know.

You don't have to do a lot of talking. Everybody around about you, people who work with you in the shop, boys and girls in school, your neighbors. How quickly they'll know the difference.

They know that a new boss has moved in. Who is that boss? Why, it's the spirit of the living God and where the spirit is Lord. And where his law is received.

And beloved, when he is Lord, why, he says, why call you me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say. How we treasure the Bible. This New Testament, he says, ye are the epistle of Christ written by the spirit of the living God, known and read of all men.

That's the new covenant God made with his people. He says, not as I did in Egypt or when I brought them out of Egypt and wrote my law upon tables of stone. But he says, I'm going to give them a new heart and put my spirit within them and write my law into their hearts.

Beloved, how is it tonight? Has God Almighty taken over in my life? If he has, it must have been because I've made him Lord. If I make him Lord, I'm not going to be a hypocrite and say, Lord, Lord, and then do what my flesh wants me to do. Or my evil nature, my pride, my conceit, the works of the flesh are eliminated.

Christ has come in. Jesus is on the throne. Hallelujah.

Oh, how glad we ought to be for this ministration of the spirit. Praise the Lord. Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the spirit of Christ dwell in you.

That's it. And here's number one. The spirit is Lord.

His word is law. In his word does he meditate day and night. Beloved, there's a tremendous lack of that kind of Bible study.

Do you know that? A fearful lack. I spoke recently of a minister I met that traveled halfway around the world, and he's an eloquent man. He's a man that could really preach, but he can't live.

Can't get along with his wife. His children are a disgrace. He does things that you wouldn't expect from a man of the world.

Why does he do that? The spirit is not Lord. He has not bowed to Jesus Christ. He has said, called him Lord, Lord, but when it comes to his own will, he says, I'm going to have my own way.

There's a power within him that rules his mind, his thoughts, his feelings. Isn't that what brought on the flood upon the world of the ungodly? Exactly. If we live in the flesh, we shall die.

Listen, ye are the epistle of Christ written by the spirit of the living God. I must give him time over this Bible. And as I do, as I eat this bread that comes down from heaven, Jesus Christ gives me his life.

He says, the spirit will receive from me and show it unto you. Here's the New Testament, written not with ink, but with the Holy Ghost upon fleshly tables of the heart, and ye are the epistle of Christ. Beloved Jesus is coming soon.

We all feel it somehow. We all realize it. But how will I appear before him? Am I a commendation for my Lord? Is he able to lead me in triumph everywhere? Who always leadeth us in triumph.

Can Jesus Christ put you any place and depend upon you to live for him, to shine for him? Can he put you into a difficult place where it's awfully hard to get along with people and depend upon you to still live a life of love and joy and peace? It will not be, beloved, unless the Spirit is Lord. Oh, how many times God puts us into very difficult places in order to show us that we're not rich in God, that we have not become vessels unto honor, that Jesus Christ is not Lord. There's somebody else, Lord, and you can see it on your face.

There's the mark of the beast. The Bible says his name shall be in their foreheads. Oh, when the name of Jehovah has been placed upon your foreheads, he doesn't.

It's because he has written his law upon your heart. Oh, think of how precious, how wonderfully precious our hearts are. God, taking these hearts and making them his kingdom, they're more precious to him than the hearts of angels.

He make us his angel spirits and his ministers a flame of fire. But you and I are called to live with Jesus Christ, to be united to the Father and to the Son. These things are hard to talk about.

It's almost too sacred, almost sacrilegious to speak about. It shouldn't be. It ought to be our bread and our water tonight.

It ought to be our life, our sustenance tonight. It ought to stir our hearts to diligence to make our calling and election sure. But we don't do that unless we give God a chance to write this word upon our hearts.

It's a New Testament. He that was rich became poor, that by his poverty we might be rich. How is it in my life tonight? I ought to ask myself.

Love, joy, peace. Do you find it difficult? He gives us two methods here, or two wonderful holy things. First of all, to meditate in the word until they become a living epistle, and then beholding the glory of God as in a glass, the glory of the Lord.

We've been beholding his glory tonight, haven't you? We sit here in his presence, the sunlight of his face, while with adoring wonder, adoring wonder. How many times I've seen faces transformed in a meeting like this? Again and again. And I can see that people are looking into the face of Jesus.

Beloved, if we'd spend more time doing that, we'd be more conscious of being transformed. Transformed. What kind of changes does God make? Why he changes us in his image.

It's unbelievable, unspeakable, but it's true nevertheless. Oh, that's the thing I must experience. And beloved, nothing will make my Christian life interesting but following Jesus.

That's why to so many people the Christian life is not interesting. They're not being changed. They live for nothing.

They don't know what they're living for. Beloved, only the Spirit of God can make these things real to us. And only as we follow in his way, waiting upon the Lord.

The righteous who delight is in the law of the Lord. That's the beginning of the Christian life, when the Holy Ghost gives you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, and you begin to eat this Word. How different it today.

How very different. Now, it's my daily food. I eat upon it.

I feast upon it. The righteous delighteth greatly in the law of the Lord. And he meditates therein day and night.

And he's like a tree. He draws life, life out of this Word. Oh, it's not just intellectual understanding, but it feeds my soul.

It communicates to me the very divine nature of the Son of God. I'm changed. I'm transformed into the same image.

What will it be when we see him? Beloved, it won't be so very, very long until the pearly gates will unfold. Glory to God. You know, when you just think of it, just think of that vast throng, that vast throng that no man can number.

All the faces shining like the sun in the kingdom of their Father, shouting hallelujah unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins. And you know, death and sorrow and suffering and sin and flesh and world and Brooklyn is all behind you. And here's the new Jerusalem.

Here's the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Beloved, we're on the way. We're in his hand.

He is shaping us tonight, changing us, seeking to get into our hearts and into our mentality, seeking to gain our attention, to open our ear for the thing the Spirit says unto the churches. And when he has gained our attention, oh, that word will enter into our heart like the seed of the kingdom, and it will sprout, and it'll bring forth that whereunto God sent it.

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