

# Evil Communications Corrupt Good Manners

by Ian Murray

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of doctrine in shaping our character and conduct, and warns against the dangers of separating morality from revealed truth.*

**Duration:** 54:42

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:12-18

**Topics:** "Resurrection Power", "Moral Decline"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the importance of the resurrection of Christ in the Christian faith. He explains that if Christ did not rise from the dead, then faith, testimony, and preaching would all be in vain. The preacher also highlights the current crisis in society, where despite advancements in science and education, there is a moral decline. He attributes this decline to the abandonment of doctrinal truths, specifically the truth of the resurrection. The preacher concludes by emphasizing that the salvation of every believer is dependent on the truth of the resurrection, as it is through Christ's work as the federal head and representative of his people that they are saved.

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## Transcript

The Word of God in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, 15th chapter, and reading from the 12th verse. 1 Corinthians, chapter 15, and reading from verse 12. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen? And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

Yea, and we have found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised? And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins, then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

But every man in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ at his coming. Then come at the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. When he shall

have put down all rule and all authority and power.

For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he that put all things under his feet, that when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is accepted which be put all things under him.

And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead? And why stand we in jeopardy every hour? I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. I die daily.

If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it me if the dead rise not? Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die. Be not deceived, evil communication corrupt good manners. Awake to righteousness and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God.

I speak this to your shame. I want to speak this evening on knowledge and piety. Or the relationship between Christian truth and Christian living.

And this subject is suggested by the statement of the Apostle Paul here in the thirty-third verse. Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners. Now let us remind ourselves in a few words of the drift of the Apostle's argument in this chapter.

You will remember that he is here dealing with the great doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. And in the opening verses of the chapter he has shown that the resurrection of Christ is a fundamental part of the Christian gospel. He goes on to show that the implications of Christ's resurrection are so momentous that every part of the Christian's faith and hope is dependent upon that truth.

If Christ be not risen, he says, then faith is vain and testimony is vain and preaching is vain. And those that have fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If we are to take, or if we are to permit the resurrection to be taken from the gospel, we are of all men the most miserable.

We have something left which would be vain and futile. And then Paul goes on to show why the salvation of every believer is bound up with the truth of the resurrection. We have a beginning there in verse 21 and following to 28.

We have Paul stating to us the reasons why this truth lies at the foundation of our spiritual hope. It is because, he says, that as in the beginning Adam was united to a race as the federal head of that race, and therefore that when Adam fell, that race fell. As in Adam, all die.

Even so, he goes on to say that this gospel which we preach is a gospel which says that men are to be saved not by the works that they have done, but by the works of him whom God has appointed to be the federal head and the representative of his people. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ. And therefore, because of the representative nature of our Lord's work, because he died for our sins and rose again for our justification, because when he rose and when he conquered death, he did it not in his own name, but on the behalf of his people, therefore the representative work of Christ, and in particular at this juncture his resurrection, is the guarantee that death will be conquered for all who are Christ.

Thus Paul works out in those momentous verses the glorious parallel between Adam and Christ, that as a race fell and died in Adam, so a people are to live and to rise in Jesus Christ. At the end of that section in

verse 28, Paul turns and he appeals to a subsidiary argument in connection with the resurrection, and it is the argument of Christian experience. First of all, in that 29th verse, he reminds the Corinthians of those who by God's grace had come forward in the acknowledgement of their faith and in the confession of Christ in baptism.

He seems as it were to draw a picture of the church as a throne, and there are some who have already died in Christ, but even as they pass from this earth, there are others who are being baptized unto the dead, or rather in the place of the dead, if that is the true sense of the word. It is of course a difficult verse, the 29th verse, but the main point is quite clear. It is the evidence of those who against the opposition of the world, and in spite of the suffering which they bring upon themselves, they press forward to confess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, else otherwise what shall they do? What meaning, what significance, Paul says, can there be in the baptism of believers if the dead rise not at all? And then in those tremendous words, he speaks for a moment of his own experience, and why he says, in jeopardy every hour.

Why did Paul endure what he did for the propagation of the gospel? Why, he says to us, why should he fight as it were with beef at Ephesus? A reference to the intensity of his suffering on the behalf of the work of God's kingdom. Why, he says, what advantage is it me if the dead rise not? So that there in verses 29 to 32 we have an appeal to Christian experience, and it is following that appeal that the apostle comes in with this dramatic warning. Do not deceive, he says, evil communications corrupt good manners.

Evil communications corrupt good manners. Now as we come to look at those words, let us just note in the first place, that Paul in this chapter is not dealing with the resurrection, because there were some in Corinth who denied the resurrection of Christ. That was not the situation.

There is no indication that there were any in Corinth who denied the resurrection of Christ. Nor was there any denial of the immortality of the soul, and of life after death. The error which Paul is dealing with is an error which is more subtle than that.

What Paul is dealing with in this first Corinthians chapter 15 is the error of those who were saying that there could be no continuity between the bodily condition in which we now live and the condition in which we must live in eternity. Or, put more simply, he is here denouncing the error of those who did not believe in the survival of the body in eternity. That is the point which is under consideration.

And in contrast to that point, it is the apostle's purpose in this chapter to demonstrate that there is indeed a continuity in the most concrete form between life in the conditions in which we now live, and the life which will be ours in the world to come. That the body which we now possess, that same body changed, and yet the same in identity, will be with us to all the ages of eternity. It is the resurrection, then, of the human body which Paul is dealing with.

And in dealing with that truth, he shows that a belief in a particular resurrection, namely the resurrection of Christ, that a belief in the particular resurrection of Christ is inevitably linked to a belief in a general, universal resurrection. And that is the purpose of his saying that if we deny the resurrection of the human body in a general sense, that the whole tendency of that error will be to abandon faith ultimately in the resurrection of Christ himself. It's a very interesting thing, is it not? How the truths of Scripture are so interdependent and so interrelated that though we may not immediately see it, if we weaken or if we deny one truth, we may well be opening a door to rendering the gospel itself as something which is no longer the gospel of Christ.

The principle, then, that is in these words, in the thirty-third verse, we may state in this way. Evil communications corrupt good manners. I don't know what version you have on your lap.

The word translated communications is in a number of versions translated company. Evil company corrupts good manners. But I believe that the authorised version here is more correct and more helpful in the word communications.

At any rate, the word can be translated, you see, in either sense, but what Paul is dealing with here is the danger of false ideas. It is the propagation, it is the circulation of ideas, of speeches, of communications which are false. But Paul has in mind it is not merely a matter of company, it is more directly the ideas which are communicated by words, and therefore the translation communications is a better translation than the word company.

What he is saying to us here is that erroneous opinions corrupt good manners. Now, the word manners is the word, the word translated manners is the same word from which we get our word ethics, and the sense is surely quite clear. Erroneous opinions, he says, corrupt character, they corrupt morals.

Erroneous opinions, the dissemination of error inevitably, when it is imbibed, results in a deterioration of moral and righteous living. Evil communications corrupt good manners. And therefore the principle in the verse is quite clear.

It is that our character and our conduct is moulded by the doctrine and the truth which we believe. Be not deceived, evil communications corrupt good manners. Now, when Paul uses these words you may remember that he is using a statement, a proverb that was familiar to the Greeks.

A statement which was used amongst the heathen poets. And yet, Paul is not using this statement just in a way in which the world would understand it. For example, if we were to use this proverb in a general kind of moral sense, if I was to say, for example, that if we can, in our speculative reasoning, if we can see any rightness in, say, suicide or in adultery, you will at once perceive that in the circulation of those ideas there is a legitimacy which is being given to crime and to sin.

Evil communications are going to legitimize that which is sinful. Now, we see that all around us today. That's quite clear.

False ideas will corrupt the light. And yet, you know, Paul is saying something here that is higher than that. He wouldn't need to say, be not deceived, to Christians on that kind of point.

What Paul is dealing with here is the denial of a doctrine of revelation, of a particular part of biblical truth. And he is using this proverb to underline the fact that if we lose that part of biblical truth, then we will see a deterioration in godliness and in character. Let me give you the words of John Brown, the last century commentator on this point.

He says, Clear apprehensions, strong persuasions, in reference to Christian truth, are, as it were, the root, and a holy life is the fruit of the tree of Christian experience. Clear apprehensions are the root, and a holy life is the fruit of the tree of Christian experience. Or, in C. H. Spurgeon's words, Spurgeon says, Those who do away with Christian doctrine are, whether they are aware of it or not, the worst enemies of Christian living.

The godliness of Puritanism will not long survive the fond doctrine of Puritanism. The codes of orthodoxy are necessary to the fires of piety. Now, taking this subject up, then, I just have two main points.

Let us think for a little while of the general importance of this subject. As I was sitting in my room in my home thousands of miles away, I frankly found it difficult to know what subject could possibly be the most useful to speak on here in Carlisle this evening. A place I've never been to, a continent I've never visited, and this was the subject which seemed to me to be so immensely important in our own day.

We are living, as we know, in a great crisis in human history, and the real nature of that crisis and the seriousness of it is indicated by the lapsed character of our people. That in an age of progress in science and materialism and education, we are at the same time witnessing a return on the moral level to standards which are paid, a return, as it were, to the dark age. And the reason for that return, for that fall in our nation, in both our nations, without any doubt, is that we have abandoned the doctrinal foundation upon which the pattern of life in our land used to be lived.

In other words, we have turned our backs upon the truth, which is stated by the apostle here in this thirty-third verse. When we think of what the Reformation did for Britain, then what it did for America, we are immediately conscious that here was a doctrinal movement which had the momentum to lift up nations to standards of purity and righteousness which were high above the standards of those nations which remained under Catholicism. We see in the Reformation movement the rising up of integrity, of purity.

We have the testimony of secular historians like Proud and others that Calvinism purged nations, how Calvinism threw down from their thrones godless and evil men. You know these testimonies. But these testimonies are telling us that the moral power and the godliness which once lived in our land like salt, that that power and that momentum sprang from the truth which God gave to his people once more in the sixteenth century.

And in contrast to that, we see today in our nation that deterioration in righteousness and that fall in the character of our people. And as we see it, we have to ask the question, how this change ever took place and at what point did the Protestantism of the English-speaking world begin to lose its moral power? Now that's the question. We haven't time to go into that question, but perhaps in a few words I could try to summarize the way I see it.

After the Puritan movement, after the suppression of Orthodox Protestant belief and doctrine in the year 1662, after that period you had that elegant school of divinity, those men that were known as the Caroline Divines. The Divines, the theology of the Restoration period, a period which was led by people like Archbishop Tillotson and others, and this affected America almost as much as it did England. There was a very interesting action which illustrates the power of books.

There was a wealthy Englishman who donated to Yale College early in the eighteenth century. He donated a library of books which were largely made up of the theology of the Caroline Divines, and the result of the distribution of those books in Yale was the disruption of Yale in the year 1722 when men like Charles Chauncey and others openly began to follow the new divinity. Now that divinity, in a nutshell, it was really no divinity at all.

It was a belief which said that Christian good works and Christian piety could be preserved without the harsh, creedal statements of Calvinism and of the old Protestantism. And that was preached for eighty years. And yet you know the strange thing, and yet it's not strange, is the fact that in the period when

these men were preaching week by week the need of Christian ethics and good living, it was a period of increasing sensuality.

It was a period when morals were declining and going down. If you want to know what the divinity of that period was in one word, or rather in one couplet, let me remind you of the words of Alexander Pope, the poet of the 18th century. His oft-quoted words, For modes of faith let graceless bigots fight.

He can't be wrong whose life is in the right. That is the typical divinity of the period, that we do not contend for modes of faith, but if our life is right, that is the Christian position. But I say that that was the position which was bankrupt of moral power.

And it was then, in the late 1730s, when God, by the outpouring of his Spirit, raised up George Whitefield and the Wesleys and others, it was with the revival of apostolic doctrine that there was a revival of apostolic Christianity. The other day I came across a very interesting quotation of George Whitefield. You probably have read in Whitefield's life or journals the statements which caused such a sensation, but at the beginning of that revival, George Whitefield actually charged Archbishop Tillotson with being guilty of spreading evil communication.

In truth, Whitefield said, as to the method of our acceptance with God, and our justification by faith alone, Tillotson was as ignorant thereof as Mohamed himself. And when the clergy and the bishops replied to Whitefield with great gusto, the line of their attack on Whitefield was more than once to say that Whitefield was simply reviving controversial, dogmatic, theoretical issues that were, as it were, quite apart from Christian living. And this is how Whitefield answers that charge, writing to one of his critics.

He says, You are pleased, reverend sir, to say that I have revived the old Calvinistic disputes concerning predestination, etc., which you say had happily slept for so many years. But if this be my shame, I glory in it, for what is this but reviving the essential articles of the Church of England, which undoubtedly are Calvinistic, and which, by your own confession, have happily slept for so many years? This is too true. But however you may count this a happiness, yet, in my opinion, it is one of the greatest judgments which has before us.

The eighteenth-century revival was a reassertion of the truth in 1 Corinthians 15.43, the truth that it is the doctrine which moulds the life. Now, in the nineteenth century, there was a repetition of the same type of thought that happened with the Caroline Divine, and yet it was more subtle, and it is still powerfully with us today. There was, outside the Church in the nineteenth century, a movement of philosophers who argued like this.

They said that morality should be followed for its own sake. They said it was more praiseworthy to be virtuous, not out of any regard to reward or retribution in the world to come, but for its own sake. And they went as far as charging the Apostle Paul with selfishness, because Paul said, if in this life only we have hope and trust.

In other words, they were teaching that morality and righteousness can be separated from doctrine and from revealed truth. Now, in the Church there was... In other words, they were teaching that morality and righteousness can be separated from doctrine and from revealed truth. Now, in the Church those same beliefs, or rather those same attitudes, were introduced from a different direction.

The theology of Germany was a theology which gave emphasis to the possibility of true Christian experience without any commitment, finally, to Christian or biblical doctrine. There was that movement to drive a wedge between experience and what we may actually believe, so that people began to say that the trustworthiness of Christ is not the same thing as the trustworthiness of statements about Christ, that it is Christ that we believe, and not doctrinal statements about him. There's a famous poem by John Oxenham, which you may have heard, which again puts this perfectly.

Oxenham wrote, Not what, but whom I do believe, Not what, but whom I do believe, That in my darkest hour of need Gives comfort which no mortal creed to mortal man may give. Not what, but whom, For Christ is more than all the creeds, And Christ with all his gentle deeds Shall all the creeds outlive. Now, this sound is very beautiful and almost quiet, but this was the very move which has led to the situation prevailing in Protestantism at the present time.

It led to people saying that issues like creation or evolution, scriptural inerrancy or scriptural fallibility, on eternal punishment or annihilation, that these are theoretical and speculative matters which do not vitally affect our Christian faith and our Christian faith, that is, in terms of our experience. So that men like Henry Ward Beecher, the famous preacher of the late last century, was spoken of as the prince of preachers, and he was spoken of by evangelicals in that way, although Beecher denied so many biblical truths. And you know how Henry Drummond, who abandoned so much of historic Christian belief, that he was described by D.L. Moody as the most Christ-like man I ever met.

Now, this is the outworking of the moon, that although these men have given up so much truth, nevertheless they were held up as examples of Christian conduct and morality and experience. Now, of course, this did not happen without solemn protest being raised by the old rearguard of the old Orthodox, a rearguard that was small in number, and yet a rearguard of men whose names we would seek to honor today in thankfulness to God. Now, if you read through the testimonies of such men like Spurgeon in England and John Kennedy in Scotland and others, you will find that this warning is continually coming through.

But I want to give you now two quotations from two American divines who made up part of that old rearguard, which puts this exactly in the way that I would like to try and put it myself. The first quotation is from William G.T. Shedd in his book that was printed, I think, first in 1893, *Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy*. Now, Shedd says in his preface to that book, *Heterodoxy* is perhaps more violent and resolute at the close of this century than ever before, and it is favored by the comparative apathy of *Orthodoxy*.

In the previous conflict, the church has stood alone by itself, holding its creed determinedly and fighting its foe unflinchingly. There has been no admixture of truth and error. Now the danger is that the Orthodox shall weaken and tolerate and yield.

And then he follows this up with a great chapter which is called *The Connection Between Infidelity and Sensuality*, and Shedd starts that chapter with this quotation from Richard Baxter, *The Purity*. Richard Baxter makes the following remark, respecting himself. I observed, said Baxter, easily in myself, that if at any time Satan did more than at other times weaken my belief of Scripture and the life to come, my zeal in religious duty abated with it, and I grew more indifferent in religion than before.

And Shedd comments on that. This connection between infidel opinions and sinful practice, noticed by the devout Baxter, should be kept in view. If men would remember that if they do anything to weaken their belief in the word of God and the reality of another life, they thereby remove a positive restraint upon their

appetites and passions and promote sensuality, either refined or gross, they would be more likely to think twice before doing, that is, before weakening their belief.

They would be more careful to regard the books that they read and the teachers that they listened to. Instead of toiling and studying to weaken their Orthodoxy, they would toil and study to strengthen. So far Shedd.

My second quotation is from Robert Louis Dabney. Dabney spent the last ten years of his life in total blindness, and yet in those last years he, by dictation, recorded one or two of his finest articles. I want to quote you now from something that he wrote just before his death in 1891.

He says, American Protestantism is characterized by a peculiar evil which I may describe by the term furious revivalism. It has been often called the new measure system. The common mischief resulting from all its forms is the over-hasty reception into the communion of churches of multitudes of persons whom time proves to have experienced no spiritual change.

This lamentable art has grown in America to great dimensions. The victims of its deception are to be counted by myriads. Its effects for good are so short-lived that a religious profession has become contemptible in the eyes of critical worldly men.

Many churches are loaded down with dead members. Church discipline becomes impracticable. This nominal membership includes tens of thousands of silent infidels who have inferred from the manifold deceitfulness of their own hot religious experience the deceptiveness of the gospel itself.

The average standard of Christian morals is degraded throughout the country. The experience of a long life compels me sorrowfully to testify against this method of accession as the grand peril and curse of American Protestantism. It has shorn the gospel among us of the larger part of its purifying power and Christ of His Honour, until our average Protestantism can scarcely boast of higher moral results than American potpourri.

The mortifying result is, says Dabney, that after ninety years of boasted activity and asserted success in this species of evangelism in these United States, breeding and good manners, domestic purity, temperance, business morals and political morals are at a lower ebb than in any nation in Protestant Christendom. The evil has become gigantic and demands solemn protest and resistance. I know it is an unpopular thing, he concludes.

I know it is an unpopular thing for a minister of the gospel to bear this account, but it is true and my regard for that account which I must render at a more awful bar than that of arrogant public opinion demands its utterance. That is in an article which Dabney wrote on the standard of ordination. As I said earlier, in the year 1891.

Now I don't know how you're feeling and whether you're feeling as hot as I am, but the second part I'll try to cut down and just to give it to you more in outline. What I wanted to do now was to go on to show how those doctrines which we speak of as the reformed faith or the doctrines of grace, that these doctrines, every bit as much as the particular doctrine which Paul is dealing with here in 1 Corinthians, that they vitally affect the character and the piety of the people of God. And that just as Paul warns the Corinthian Christians to be not deceived, that if they let slip this truth then they would see a corruption in good man, in Christian living.

So I think we have abundant reason to say that the surrender of those doctrines which were once the glory of our Protestant inheritance, that the surrender of those doctrines contributes directly, as Dabney has just said, to the decline of the moral standards of our church. Now, let's take the doctrine of God. Paul says here in verse 34, Awake to righteousness and sin not, for some have not the knowledge of God.

I speak this to your shame. The knowledge of God, the root of their error with regard to the denial of physical resurrection was due to ignorance of God. As Jesus said once to the Pharisees, you do err not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God.

And all error ultimately comes back to error or ignorance concerning God. Take for a moment the doctrine the scripture gives us concerning the righteousness and the holiness of God. That doctrine is so presented to us in the scripture that we are led, if we rightly follow the scripture, to understand that there is an obligation in the Godhead.

There is an obligation to love righteousness and to hate iniquity. There is a divine obligation arising out of the very character of God to punish the sinner and to bring judgment upon those that do break God's law. I say that arises, according to scripture, out of the very nature of God.

As the fifth psalm tells us, thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee. God abhors the bloody and the deceitful man. Thou shalt destroy all them that speak lewdly.

The eleventh psalm tells us that upon the wicked God will pour fire and brimstone on a horrible tempest. This shall be the portion of their cup, for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. Here then we have a statement about God in his righteousness, which undergirds the whole gospel which is to be preached.

But when we realize that God is such a God, we begin to understand there can be no expediency in the Godhead. And we are able, in the light of these truths, to come to the atonement and to come to the cross of Calvary and to behold there the truth that God is bound by his very being and by his holiness to punish transgression. And so in the smiting of Christ and in the bruising of his own son, we are being shown that God does and God will punish sin.

Now we live in a generation of evangelicals who do not see that necessity. It is quite possible for the gospel, in a certain sense, to be preached, and people also to accept it, and yet never to have seen the necessity of that gospel in terms of the vindication of God's glory in his holiness and in his righteousness. And our churches are filled with people, they are in England, who though they profess to be Christians, they have no fear, they have no trembling, they have no true respect for the law of God, because they have never seen that law as an expression of the divine character, and they have never heard of the cross of Christ in terms of a vindication of God's law.

And therefore you have antinomianism, you have carelessness, you have worldliness in the church. Here then is one example arising out of an erroneous belief concerning an attribute of God, you are led immediately into carelessness and laxity of life. Or take the truth of God's incomprehensibility, or as the shorter Catechism says, God is a spirit infinite, eternal, unchangeable.

God is an infinite God. Now as the scripture presents that truth to us, it reminds us that with God is terrible magic. Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsel? But as we come to the works and the ways of God, we are coming to that one who is infinitely exalted, who has known the mind of the Lord.

Now I say, if we do not have that knowledge of God, when we come to particular doctrines of scripture, we shall soon stumble up. The doctrine of God's sovereignty, by a sovereign disposition of God, the guilt of Adam was imputed to his race. That is an act of divine sovereignty.

That is not an act of which God gives account to sinful men. So also was the imputation of the sins of believers to Christ. We read there in Romans 9, that the children being not yet born, neither having done good nor evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Now take the second part of that sentence. Esau have I hated. But my friends, if we don't take that statement in the light of what we are told about the incomprehensibility of God, that is to say, if we think that we can bring God to our bar of judgment, and if we think that we can press God to say why He in holy and sovereign wisdom has chosen to pass by some and to judge them for their sins, I say if we approach that verse in that light, we will immediately stumble.

But take the earlier part of the verse. You know it's been said, by some in answer to those that object to the second part of the statement, or have greater difficulty with the first part, Jacob have I loved. Here is the incomprehensible God also.

Jacob, before our works, in spite of all sin, God in sovereign majesty has predestinated to make this man a vessel to his glory. I say this is the infinite God. And what does that truth concerning God's infinite and incomprehensible majesty, what practical effect does it have? By surely, humility of mind.

Humility of mind. The way we come to His word is changed. The way we come to pray is changed.

Here again is the most direct practical influence from the belief of the truth. I think for a moment of the immutability of God. The unchanging nature of God's great purposes and plans.

If we were to ask the question, whether sinners, whether believers are saved because of their belief, does God predestinate those who believe? Or does God predestinate those who shall be believed? Does God's predestination lead to our belief? Or does God predestinate those who He sees will believe? There are many who will say that that is purely a theoretical question. It has no great practical consequence. But you know, the very opposite is the truth.

According to the way that we answer that question, so will be affected and influenced our whole view of salvation. If we answer the question that men are predestinated because they believe, then the type of gospel that we will believe is a gospel which has for its tendency. Now, we know that the tendency of a thing does not always fully appear, and that God is gracious in restraining the errors of His people, and this we must fully acknowledge.

But in its tendency, that gospel will put man at the center. And in conversion, we will be self-conscious. And in sanctification, we will be self-conscious.

Man will be there in the middle. But if we say that God has predestinated those that believe, we've got something very different. We've got God in the center.

We've got man at base. We've got humiliation. We've got the practical effect of that truth, which Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, that Christ of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

The practical effect of whether or not we believe that God predestinates all things according to the counsel of His own will, the practical effect is enormous. And so I think we should take with considerable caution the statement, for example, that an Arminian and a Calvinist are the same when they're on their knees. I don't think that is really true.

The way that we pray, the way that we think of God, will be influenced by our theology at this point. The doctrine, my friends, of God. I think I should leave it there.

Perhaps with just one further word. This truth concerning the doctrine of God, what an influence it has on our view of sanctification. Sanctification is obedience to Scripture.

That's it. We live in a day when sanctification is thought of far too often as a kind of self-appointed works, self-appointed piety. Sanctification is the concrete obedience to divine requirements, so that in terms of a Christian mother, her godliness is seen in her kitchen, in what she does with her children, in terms of a worker, in terms of a master, an employer, and so on.

Godliness is in our submission to the requirements of God's work. Now we live in a day which is drifted far from this. Take it in terms of worship.

The old Protestant view was that godliness is expressed above all else in our worship. We worship God in our family. We worship God in the church.

But as we do this, we are not doing this to express our piety, but we are doing it out of obedience to God's requirements. That true sanctification and true godliness is an unconscious thing. That self-conscious piety is an abomination in Scripture.

That is the piety of the Pharisees. But the piety which springs, you see, from these great doctrines is the piety which leads to unconsciousness of self. And that shows itself in worship.

Well, you've been very patient in listening so well. I'm sure you're tired. I'm amazed that you've listened as you have.

Thank you very much. And I can't put into words how much we're looking forward to this conference and to the enjoyment of it and to the privilege of being with you. Shall we pray? O Lord, our God and heavenly Father, we would seek to come into Thy presence with thanksgiving and with praise.

We ask Thee to help us to understand Thy Word and that Thou wilt in this time of fellowship together through these days, that Thou wilt draw especially near to us that we may be able to glorify Thee with heart and with mind and with voice. Do Thou keep us from sin, cleanse us in all that we shall seek to do and say, and receive our thanks and praise for all Thine mercies which have surrounded us and kept us until this present hour. We ask it with the forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/3/SID3375.mp3>

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