

# The Great Refusal

by James A. Stewart

---

*The rich young ruler's story highlights the importance of love and devotion to Jesus Christ, and the danger of loving wealth and possessions more than God.*

**Duration:** 43:18

**Topics:** "Jesus Christ"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by expressing his appreciation for music and singing in the church. He then reads from Mark's Gospel Chapter 10, where a man comes running to Jesus and asks how to inherit eternal life. Jesus responds by reminding him that only God is truly good and instructs him to follow the commandments. The preacher emphasizes the importance of having a sincere desire to be saved and warns that rejecting Christ leads to damnation. He concludes by sharing a story about a surgeon who couldn't save a dying child because they lacked life, illustrating the significance of having that one essential thing for salvation.

---

## Transcript

The Great Refusal and I'm reading in Mark's Gospel about the rich young ruler. Mark's Gospel about the rich young ruler. And it's Mark's Gospel chapter 10.

Mark's Gospel chapter 10. And we're reading from verse 17. Mark's Gospel chapter 10 verse 17.

And while you're coming to Mark's Gospel chapter 10 verse 17 may I say it's always a joy for us to have the good music and the good singing at Central. Now I was just thinking my good friend dear Dusty Rhodes, he must have been in heaven when he was here with you. It's simply wonderful to have such a gift in one church alone for singing and praising the Lord.

That's wonderful. And the music, the piano, the organ. Now I can't sing a note but I can make a joyful noise unto the Lord as I said this morning.

But it's such a blessing to me. Singing inspires me. Music inspires me.

Though I can't play a note or sing a note. But I always feel a blessing coming here and we thank God for the sacred sound of gospel singing and music. Now Mark's Gospel chapter 10.

I'm reading from verse 17. And when he was gone forth into the way there came one running and kneeled to him and asked him good master what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him why callest thou me good? There is none good but one. That is God.

Thou knowest the commandments. Do not commit adultery. Do not kill.

Do not steal. Do not be a false witness. Defraud not.

Honor thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him master all these things have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him and said unto him one thing thou lackest.

One thing thou lackest. Go thy way. Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.

And come and take up the cross and follow me. And he shouted glory hallelujah. No.

Lord I'm coming fast. No. And he was sad.

And he was sad at that saying. And went away grieved for he had great possessions. And Jesus broken hearted looked round about and saith unto his disciples how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God.

And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answered again and saith unto them children how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God. It is easier for a candle to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.

And they were astonished out of measure saying among themselves who then can be saved. And Jesus looking upon them saith with men it is impossible but not with God. For with God all things are possible.

God will bless to us a reading of his own inspired in any infallible word. Now this young man was one of the most delightful personality ever to come into the presence of the Lord Jesus seeking his faith. He was wealthy successful honest moral living and highly intelligent.

And no wonder it says that Mark says and the Lord Jesus loved him. He would be such a man that any of us would be glad to call him our son. Or if he came into our gathering this evening we would give him a sign and say would you sit beside us tonight.

Would you kind of sit beside me tonight. And you would say now if there you would say if you were in the business world this young man would make a good prospect. You know you say well I think I'm going to sell that man some insurance.

He's a good prospect. I think I'm going to sell that woman an automobile. She's a good prospect.

And if you were a fisher of men and you were seeking to win lost souls for the Lord Jesus Christ. You on looking on this young man would cry hallelujah. Oh he's a good prospect.

He is one man that I'm going to win for the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet this young man has gone down into the history books as a young man who came hurriedly to Jesus. And then reluctantly left his presence and said no Lord Jesus I will not take up my cross.

I will not take up my cross. And I will not follow thee. And so we're highly disappointed at the great refusal of this young man.

Now it does not matter friend how you leave the presence of the Lord Jesus. What does matter is that you left the presence of the Lord Jesus. I have known in mighty times a revival when I was a boy in Scotland in very high respectable Presbyterian churches for women with a beautiful beautiful coat stand up and put their fingers to the nose like that at his preaching.

Oh yes they were highly educated people wealthy people. They were angry. And they went out and never come back and said to the minister if you ever have such an event again in the pulpit we will get rid of you.

I'll make sure my husband get rid of you. And we have known communists and Catholics and other types of people go away from the presence of Christ angry, insulting, swearing, cursing. But yet we have known decent respectable Protestants quietly leave the meeting and turn their back upon the Lord Jesus.

They didn't spit in his face. They didn't smite him on the cheek. They did not curse him.

But they reluctantly left his presence. But the point is they left his presence. And my dear friend this young man left.

He came running to Christ but he went away reluctantly from the presence of Christ. But the sad thing is this. Although he honored the Lord Jesus with his presence he went away sorrowfully.

But he went away without Jesus Christ. And that is the tragedy of the story. And it does not matter how a person rejects Christ.

The fact is this he rejects Christ. And rejecting the Son of God he damns his own soul. And so the Lord Jesus would say tonight in the book in Mark 8, verse 36, What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Now will you notice just in the beginning three things about this young man.

You will notice first of all he came running. Then he came kneeling. And then he came asking.

Now first of all he came running. Now he was usually a dignified kind of person. After all he was a lawyer.

And the lawyers don't run down the streets of Memphis. Lawyers don't run down the streets of Jerusalem. Lawyers don't run down the highways of America or the Holy Land.

They are usually quite dignified men walking circumspectly. But this man was in a hurry. Why? Because he thought he was sure he would miss interviewing Christ.

Christ was out in the highway and the man said I will miss meeting the Lord Jesus. And he was in such a hurry he ran. Now he was a sincere enthusiastic seeker after the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank God for that. Now you know that there are many many unsaved people who are just hypocrites. And if I was Irish I would say they were just humbugs.

You know why? Because they criticize anybody who sincerely get excited about the Lord Jesus or the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know you take people, businessmen in Memphis. They get excited about making money.

In fact they put money before their wives. Many times they put money before their children. And many a man will damn his soul because he puts his business before the Lord Jesus.

And in the business clubs nobody is angry to criticize a man because he gets enthusiastic about making money. And then people get excited about politics. You know in Great Britain we never know what political party our fellow Christian belongs to.

We don't know what he is. He is never mentioned. But when we come to America we find everybody is talking politics.

Everybody is excited about politics. Whether I am wrong I don't know. But everybody is excited about politics.

And all the newspapers talking about politics. News commentators, television men. And we are talking about politics.

And nobody criticizes people who get excited about politics. And as you know I was a soccer player. And I see people getting excited about sports.

You know just about three years ago or two years ago we had the World Soccer Competition in London. And they came by the hundreds of thousands from all over the earth. And it was the World Soccer Championship which we have every fourth year.

And of course England won it. Not Scotland I am sorry. England won it out of about sixty six nationalities.

But here is the thing. The whole of Europe went crazy. The whole of South America went crazy.

And these international games were watched by tens of millions of people all over the earth by television. And do you know that several men in Italy, grown up matured men in Italy and Western Germany committed suicide. You know why? Their television went in the blink.

Can you imagine? Matured men. That's no joke. They committed suicide.

And recently they had a riot in a small city in the south of Italy which we know just below Naples. The men rioted. And they tore up the city of fifty thousand people.

Italians. Do you know why? Because their local team lost the game by one goal. And yet people will criticize me because I get excited about the Lord Jesus.

Oh I am so glad that this man was excited. He ran. He ran and he wanted to interview Christ.

He wanted to come face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ. So he came running. I do trust that you will come running tonight to the Lord Jesus.

Nothing will delay you. Not even your companions, your mocking companions. They will laugh and mock at you if you get excited about the Lord Jesus.

I sat up under conviction of sin in a gallery in a great public hall in Glasgow. Beside me was another young man. We were the two of the greatest football players of Scotland at that time for our age.

And he saw that I was under conviction of sin. And as the tears were rolling down my cheeks, he nudged me and said, don't you get saved or I'll curse you. And he laughed and mocked at me and he said, get out of here.

And he pulled me a wee out of sight of that building. And I do trust that you won't let your companions keep you from running to Christ. I like this young man.

He came running, but he also came kneeling. Now, you know, it's a good thing to kneel. It's a manly thing to kneel.

It's a courageous thing to kneel. It's a wonderful thing when you find a man on his knees praying. Now, when was the last time you prayed? Maybe the only time you pray is when you ask God to curse somebody.

Now, you know, many men and women think that it's a very weak thing to pray, to be found on the knees praying. But I want to tell you it's a manly thing. This rich, young ruler, he not only came running, but he came kneeling.

Now, I was thinking this afternoon of the two of the possibly the most manliest men I've ever known in my life. One was a Scottish fisherman and the other was a Czechoslovak diplomat. The Scottish fisherman, he was a true man.

And he never wore a shirt. That didn't make him a true man, of course. But he never wore a shirt until he was about 26 years of age.

He always wore a fisherman's jersey. And he had a hand grip that would just knock you, just bring you to your knees when he just shook you by the hand. And you looked into his eyes like you're looking on the face of an iceberg.

Cool, cold, penetrating eyes. And he was a man, 100 percent. And yet I have seen, my friend, Jock Troop, our fisherman Scottish evangelist, on his knees, tears rolling down his cheeks, weeping for the souls of lost men and women.

Senator Vojta Benic was an elderly gentleman when I traveled with him during the war. And maybe he was the greatest man I ever knew, so far as being a man. And yet when he would say to me, Reverend Stewart, I can't stand any longer, please lock the door and pray with me.

And I would say, Senator, you get sad news from home. Yes, he said, I've got my brother from London, the President, Edward Benic, my brother, he has sent me the underground news. And oh, he said, Reverend Stewart, this last month, here is a report, 23,000 have been put to death by the Gestapo.

And then that dear man will go down on his knees, that strong man, a courtly man, Mrs. Stewart will tell you, he was such a gentleman, old-fashioned European gentleman, bowing courtly to everybody. And this big strong man, go down on his knees and cry to God, tears rolling down his cheeks, oh God, my Father, oh God, help my people in distress and sorrow in Czechoslovakia. Oh yes, friend, don't let the devil laugh you into hell, because don't let the devil laugh at you, because you'll say, it's a sissy thing to be found in your knees praying.

No, it's a manly thing. He came running, he came kneeling, but he came asking. Now, he was sincere.

He came with an open countenance. He was genuine in his seeking. It's not like many people come to us in our open air meetings in Europe, and they ask us all sorts of questions, and when they come, we know that they're not sincere.

But as the Lord Jesus Christ looked into the face of this young man, he knew he was absolutely sincere. He came sincerely with an open countenance. But not only was he sincere, but he was respectful.

He said, good master, good rabbi. You see, it was the usage or the occasion, usually a man would just say to a rabbi, a student, or somebody else, rabbi, just as a matter of courtesy. But he would never say, good rabbi.

And the rabbi stood by itself the title. But this man, he was respectful, and he bowed in the presence of the Lord Jesus, and he called him good rabbi. But not only was he sincere and respectful, but he was intelligent.

You see, he was a member of the great court of the Sanhedrin, and these were the 70 most intellectual men in the whole of the land. And this man could have easily have asked this question of his fellow jurists. What must I do to inherit eternal life? But no, he said, I know just as much as they know, or maybe more.

I'll go and ask the Lord Jesus. He was highly intelligent. And to be a member of the Sanhedrin, he had to be intelligent.

You see, because it was like our American Supreme Court. And the religious laws affected all the lives of the people of Israel. It came into every department of everyday life.

And so, with the other 69, he had to sit in judgment, and pass out decisions that affected the life of the whole nation. So he not only was sincere, and not only was he respectful, but he was intelligent. And so he asked an intelligent question.

Oh, good master, good rabbi, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? What shall I do to be saved? What shall I do to merit God's favor? What shall I do to be in heaven? And then, you remember, the Lord Jesus Christ said to him, thou knowest the commandments. Oh yes, of course I know the commandments. Don't you know I'm a lawyer? And have you kept them? Yes, I've kept them all for my youth.

And then the Lord Jesus abruptly said to him, and possibly one of the most soul-searching sentences in the entire New Testament. One thing thou lackest. One thing thou lackest.

One thing thou lackest. Go sell all you have, and give your money to the poor, and take up your cross, and follow me. Yes, you like love.

You like love. You love your possessions, and your wealth, more than you love me. You love your possessions, your wealth, more than you love anything else on earth.

One thing thou lackest. Take up your cross, and follow me. Now dear friend, this is not the stock answer to the great all-important question.

What must I do to inherit the eternal life? What must I do to be saved? What must I do to merit God's favor? What must I do to get to heaven? This is not the stock answer. But in the case, in this case, it was the answer. You see, because it was money and possessions that was damning this young man's soul.

And so we could really say, the Lord Jesus could really say to this young man, what will it profit you, if you gain the whole world, and you lose your own soul? Now, we know friend, that that is not the answer to all, every person's question. You know, many people come and say, what must I do to be saved? What must I do to get right with God? And the Holy Ghost gives me a different answer. I see you lack one thing, but it's not love.

It may be something else. You remember in John's Gospel chapter 4, the Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well, go call thy husband. You see, he mentioned, didn't mention anything about money.

Why? Because she was just a poor woman. But what was damning her soul? Her immorality. And he said, you've got, she said, you've got five husbands.

And you see, this is not just a stock answer to everybody, but in this case, it was that one thing this young man lacked, and that was love and devotion to Jesus Christ. Now, you know, there are many things that condemn your soul. Many things.

It may be immorality. It may be fear of man. It may be many things.

I remember when I was a boy evangelizing in Scotland, a young lady was coming to the tent services, and under deep conviction of sin. And you know, she came to the meetings and was always going to be saved. But she didn't come to Christ that night.

But she said, some other night when I come back, I'll get saved. But you know, friend, she went to three dances that week. And on the third night of the dancing, she caught a heavy cold coming back in the rain.

And she caught pneumonia and was dying. And when she was dying, she called for her mother and her father and said, mother, father, get me, get me a hammer, get a nail. And the distracted father and mother said, a hammer, a nail, what's all about? And they thought she must be mentally deranged.

She said, no, get me a hammer and get me a nail. And the mother and father distracted, got the hammer and got the nail. And they said, what do you want us to do with it? Put it in the wall there beside, right there in that wall, right beside my bed.

And they hammered the nail in the wall. Then she said, mother, go into, go into there in the cupboard and get my dancing frock. And the distracted mother said, no, no, no, no.

What do you want the dancing frock for? She said, I don't want it, but I want you to get it. Get the dancing frock, mother. And the mother got the dancing frock.

And then she said, mother, put it on the nail. And the mother hung that, hung that dancing frock on the nail. And the young lady shrieked out, mother, mother, mother, mother, father, father, father, mother, father, the price of my soul, the price of my soul.

And she dropped back dead into a lost eternity. Oh, yes. Many things condemn a person's soul.

In this case, it was the price of the world that kept this young lady back from Christ. Now, you know, riches in themselves do not, do not damn people's souls. Every one of us know many wonderful Christians who are wealthy.

And they use this wealth for the blessing of humanity and the spread of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank God for these men and women. We have known, for example, in Great Britain, some men getting saved and giving away two million, three million dollars.

And we also know the same thing in America. So, it's not money in itself that damages souls, but it is the love of money that is the root of all evil. And many men and women are bound by money, and they're bound by their possessions, and they are slaves to their wealth.

And so, this man, you may say also to me, well, don't you say that, don't you think it's rather cruel that one thing should, one, just one thing lacking should keep a man back from Christ? Don't you think, Mr. Stewart, it's rather cruel that one thing lacking will keep a man out of heaven or a woman out of heaven? Well, let me illustrate with a story. There was a famous surgeon, suddenly called, a Christian surgeon, suddenly called in the middle of the night to a highly respectable home in a city here in the south, in fact, Atlanta. And it was an emergency case, a child with a fever, a child dying.

And the distracted father had called the doctor by the telephone, and when he arrived in the magnificent mansion, the distracted father cried out, 50,000 dollars, 50,000 dollars to you, if you can save my child. And the physician looked at the child, and he said, I am sorry, your child lacks just one thing, and that one thing, I cannot give it, it lacks life. Your dear child is dead.

You see, in that one occasion, the one thing that was lacking was the vital thing. And so often it is in the Christian experience, the one thing that is lacking is the vital thing. One thing no lack, and that is love to Christ.

One thing no lack is, and that is a desire to be saved, to take up your cross and follow Him. One thing no lack is, and that is a desire to press on into the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus said that the gate is wide that leads to destruction, but the gate is narrow that leads to heaven.

And the Lord Jesus Christ says, agonize to enter into the straight gate, agonize to enter into the straight gate. Through which of these gates have you entered? Through which of these ways have you walked? You can easily tell by your comrades, you can easily tell by your talk. The wide gate is easy of access, behold how the multitude swell.

They appear to be joyful and happy, just appear. They appear to be joyful and happy, but their end is blackness of hell. And the Savior says, agonize to enter into the straight gate.

One thing no lack is, is the determination, the desire to be saved. I do not know exactly the one thing that you lack, but that one thing you lack can damage your soul this evening. Now, will you notice that as we see Him disappearing, you'll notice that He did not go away running.

He walked away. He came running, but He went away walking. And He went away, shall I say, reluctantly.

Now let me just read this scripture in Matthew's Gospel concerning the way. It's a remarkable scripture, you need not turn to it because you know it. In Matthew's Gospel chapter 16, in verse 1 to 3. The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came and tempting desired Him that He should show them a sign from heaven.

He answered and said unto them, when it is evening, ye say, it will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning it will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and lowering. L-O-W-R-I-N-G, lowering.

O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but ye cannot discern the sign of the time. Now, He did not go away running. That's what breaks my heart about this young man.

Every time I read about him, my heart goes out and my heart weeps. No wonder the Saviour went, no wonder the Saviour said, the disciple said, oh how He loved him. He went away reluctantly.

He went away with heavy, a heavy trade. He didn't run away from the Saviour and said, I'm glad to get rid of them. Oh no.

He left reluctantly. You see, he was angry with the Lord. And he was angry with himself.

And he wasn't willing to pay the price. Now you know friend, it will cost you something to become a Christian. Oh yes, it will cost you something.

It costs you something. It will cost you something. Now salvation is free.

It's free as the air you breathe. But it will cost you something to become a Christian. In Russia for example, if you were a Russian and you came to the Lord Jesus and you were saved, you know what it would cost you? It would cost you maybe your life.

At least it would cost you your health. It would torture you maybe for 25 years in the salt mines of Siberia. If you were, you came to Christ the night you got saved, and you were living maybe in Spain, if you were a postmaster you would lose your job tomorrow.

Or if you were just working in a factory, maybe you'd lose your job. And you would discover in many countries that it costs something to become a Christian. And it will cost you something tonight to become a Christian.

Oh yes, your friends may laugh and mock and scoff at you if you become a Christian. Oh how many people stay away from Christ and fail to enter into the door of salvation because they're afraid of what people say about them. And that is why the Lord Jesus Christ gives us a parable in Luke 14 to say count the cost, count the cost.

And do you remember he says in the 9th chapter of Luke that the foxes of holes and the birds of the air of nests, but the Son of Man hath nowhere to lay his head. The foxes of holes, they've a place of safety and refuge when they're being hounded by the dogs and the hunters. The foxes of holes, the birds of the air of nests, they have a place of safety, they have nests to shelter in when the storm comes.

But the Son of Man, I the Son of Man, I have nowhere to lay my head, I have no place of safety. Why? Because on the cross of Calvary he became sin for me. And he bore the lightning of God's wrath for me.

And he cried out in sole darkness, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? And so the Lord Jesus said to the would be followers, now you want to follow me, now I want to tell you it's going to cost you something to follow me, because I'm the despised Christ. And if you follow me and take up your cross and follow me, you also will be despised. Oh yes, you know there's always something wrong and always something strange and dangerous when the gospel of Jesus Christ becomes popular in America.

Oh yes, the gospel of Jesus Christ was never intended to be popular. And the Lord Jesus Christ is not popular. We believe if Christ came back to this earth again, they would crucify him again.

And cry out, away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him. Oh no friend, if you really follow the Lord Jesus 100%, you will not be popular. You may be respected, but you will not be popular.

And so the Lord Jesus, he never rushes people into an empty decision. Oh no, he always says, weigh the balance, count the cost. It will cost you something to follow me.

It will cost you something to love me. It will cost you something to serve me. It will cost you something to witness for me.

Now, go cockanny, as we say in Scotland, go cockanny. Calculate, count the cost, think the thing through. Yes, it will cost you something to become a Christian.

It may cost you your money. It may cost you your companionship. It may cost you, maybe your job.

It may cost you many, many things. But let me tell you, it will cost you more not to become a Christian. Oh yes, it will cost you something to become a Christian.

But it will cost you more not to become a Christian. Because it will cost you your soul. That's what will cost you by not coming to Christ.

The loss of wealth is much. And the loss of wealth is more. But to lose your soul is such a loss that no man can restore.

Let me say that again. The loss of wealth is much. And the loss of health is more.

But to lose your soul is such a loss that no man can restore. And oh friend, I'm so glad in one sense that this young man didn't run away from Christ. He went away eruptingly angry with the Lord and angry with himself.

But in the last analysis, let's be fair, this young man was not prepared to pay the price. He was not prepared to take up his cross and follow the Lord Jesus. He said, Lord Jesus, your price is too high.

And he allowed his possessions, his wealth and his popularity to come between him and the Lord Jesus Christ. One thing they lack is devotion to me, love to me. You love yourself more than you love anybody else.

And so he went away walking. But as I said, he came with an open countenance, sincere and open countenance. Bright and cheerful, a delightful young man.

And you say, what a charming young man and what a beautiful countenance that young man has. I would like to photograph him. But friend, he goes away a different way.

He goes away frowning. Now this word we found there in Matthew's Gospel chapter 16 verse 3, the word lowering. I can't pronounce that any other way, lowering.

L-O-W-R-I-N-G. We've got, I could tell you what's in my Scots Bible better, pronounce it better. But it would mean he went away frowning.

You see, that was a, that sky is a, we would see in Switzerland when we see the clouds coming and the day coming up on the mountain. We say, well, that's a downcast day. It's a cloudy day.

That's what the Matthew 16 verse 3 means. And this young, this word sad, he went away sad. It means he went away with a downcast face.

That's what it means. He went away with a sad face. In other words, he was lowering.

His face was angry and red. His face was angry and red. No longer did he come with a sincere open countenance.

No longer did he have a sincere open countenance. He went away with an angry, red, frowning countenance. Downcast.

He wasn't holding up his head high in the air. He was angry. And in a way, downcast, frowning, and saying, fighting a battle in his soul.

And the battle raged and raged and raged. And it may have raged for days. But, oh dear friend, the tragedy is, Scripture does not record that that young man ever come back to seek the Lord.

Never record he ever come back to seek the Lord. And you know, I could tell you, as Mrs. Stewart knows, incidents again and again in our evangelistic labors because we've evangelized in every country of Europe. From Gibraltar, right straight across to Russia.

Right from Istanbul, Turkey. Right away up to the very heights of Lapland in the midnight sun. And we know almost every village and town and city of all Europe.

The only country we haven't evangelized is Albania. I was coming to Albania, but Mussolini went in before me. And afterwards, the Communists wouldn't let us in after the war.

We've been just a mile off from Albania, but we couldn't get in. The only country we haven't evangelized. But in our evangelistic efforts for 45 years, I have wept and wept and wept and wept and wept.

I went away. Meeting after meeting, I couldn't sleep. Couldn't sleep.

Why? Because so many delightful, charming people were almost touching the hem of Christ's garment, but they turned back. They were almost at the place of salvation, but they turned back. And reluctantly, they wept and said no to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I can think of one young man that almost killed me. He was a delightful young man, a Czechoslovakian. Very wealthy.

And this young man was a champion motorist. Driving for high stakes at high speeds through the country in the racing tracks. And every time he was off on the racing track, he was in my meeting.

Among the thousands who gathered in Czechoslovakia. And every time I would pray, O God, save him, save him, save him. And I would only preach to one person in that place.

And it was this delightful young man, so charming, so wonderful. He would drive me anywhere in Czechoslovakia at these high speeds to any meeting. And, O friend, I saw him turn his back upon Christ again and again.

Almost persuaded. And, friend, I knew one night this is now and ever. And, friend, I knew that week it was now and ever.

The Holy Ghost told me. I couldn't sleep but weep and weep. I couldn't eat that week.

I preached every night to him. And the last of the meetings in his city, I said, are you coming? Are you coming? Are you coming? The tears rolling down that delightful young man's face. Such a charming face.

Such a beautiful smile. He had a charming smile. He kind of smiled and then tears began to roll.

No, no James, no James, no James. It's not easy to be a pastor. You know that? It's not easy to be evangelist.

Not easy. Because many nights I don't sleep. I leave the meeting and I toss about in my bed.

I can't sleep. Why? My heart is broken. Why? Because so many people they turned their back upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, friend, don't turn your back upon Christ tonight. A perfect friend is one that knows the worst about you. Yet he loves you just the same.

And there's only one who loves like this in Jesus and his name. Now you notice when he reluctantly turned away with a downcast frowning face. Where did he go to? Well, he went back to his friends.

Yes. Could they help him? No. Why did he leave them already? Why did he go to Christ? They could help him.

No, no, but he went back to them. And he knew when he went back to them that there would be nothing for him there. No heart satisfaction in fellowship and companionship with his friends.

They had already failed him. You say, but Mr. Stewart, didn't he go back to his possessions? Yes, he went back to his possessions. But would they satisfy him? No.

Oh, no. You know, wealth cannot buy peace. Wealth cannot buy joy.

Your possessions cannot buy a place for you in heaven. He went back to his possessions. I would just say, didn't he have his pleasures? He went back to his pleasures.

Yes, he went back to his pleasures. And you know, there's two kinds of pleasures. There's what we call innocent pleasures and the sinful pleasures.

And I don't care, my dear friend, what your pleasures are tonight. They can be innocent pleasures or sinful pleasures. But outside of Christ, they will never satisfy you.

Now, what do I mean? There's some delightful pleasures, innocent pleasures. It can be symphony music. It can be sports.

It can be men. It could be artistic drawings and paintings. It can be many, many delightful, innocent things on earth.

And that's all the pleasure you have. Well, I want to tell you, I feel so sorry for you. They won't satisfy you.

And the sinful pleasures won't satisfy you. You can go on living in sin and committing more sin and more sin and more sin. But I want to tell you, friend, the sinful pleasures of the world will never satisfy you.

Like Robert Burns, the Scotch poet, says about the pleasures of the world. And he knew it from his own experience. Like the snowflakes on the river, a moment seen, then gone forever.

We have followed in our evangelistic campaigns throughout Europe, Lord Byron. Of course, we didn't follow him, but we followed these footsteps. And we've been to where Byron has been and where Byron is a legend.

And you know, Lord Byron was possibly the wealthiest young man of Britain and the most idolized young man of all Europe. He had the wealth, he had the brains, and he had all Europe at his feet. And yet, he was not a happy young man.

And one night we see him in a nightclub in a house of sin and shame in the heart of London City. He's all alone. And his head is buried in his hands.

And he says to his friends, go away, leave me, leave me, leave me alone. And as the midnight hour strikes, his closest friend in debauchery comes to him and touches him and says, Byron, Byron, why do you want to be alone? And he said, go away, go away, I want to think, I'm thinking of thinking. And his closest companion said, and what are you thinking about? He said, listen, I'm thinking seriously.

And what are you thinking about? I'm trying to count up the really happy days I've spent in my life. And his friend said, yes, and how many do you make it? Nine. And he said, I wonder, can I make it ten before I die? I wonder, can I make it ten before I die? And some of the most tragic verses in literature come from the poems of Byron, if you know some of them.

And so friend, what are you going to do with the Lord Jesus tonight? Jesus is standing in Pilate's hall, friendless, forsaken, betrayed by all. Hearken what meaneth the anxious call of what will you do with Jesus? If you reject Him, your soul will be doomed and damned in hell forever. If you accept Him tonight, you'll be saved and sealed and blessed forever in the glory land.

What shall it profit you if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? That's bound for you. This message was preserved and made available by Revival Literature, Nashville, North Carolina. For more information, you can visit them online at [revivallit.org](http://revivallit.org).

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/22/SID22196.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/james-a-stewart/the-great-refusal/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**