

Genealogy of Christ and A-Z

by Leith Anderson

Jesus is the inexhaustible and indispensable source of sufficiency and adequacy for every need of human life and experience.

Duration: 1:26:04

Scripture: Isaiah 53:2, Matthew 1:1, Matthew 6:33, Romans 5:8, Philippians 4:19, Revelation 1:7-8, Revelation 22:13

Topics: "Genealogy"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker uses a story about seamen and their challenges at sea to illustrate the importance of understanding the Scriptures. He emphasizes the significance of a particular passage, stating that it is one of the most important in the entire Bible. The speaker then suggests that the Bible can be summarized as the story of man's ruin in sin and God's remedy in Christ. He also shares a personal experience in Guatemala, where he witnessed the process of translating the Bible into a local language, highlighting the effort and dedication required to bring the message of the Scriptures to people who have never had access to it before.

Transcript

You will find a very strange vocabulary in the word of God. Some years ago, I discovered a phenomenon that became a source of great blessing, not only in my own personal life and studies, but in the privilege of preaching on some of these subjects to our people. I suppose we know that all language studies comprises the learning of certain rules and grammatical laws that are peculiar to that particular language, though I'm often certain that students are quite convinced that language is merely the studying of the rules, and after you've got them down pat, then you learn that they're no good at all because they're all exceptions to the rules in a language.

But if one is going to delve into the mysteries and intricacies of a language, he has to learn the grammatical rules and instructions, he has to learn something about verb forms and conjugations and all those rather tedious and tiring things. But I suppose that the most delightful part of any language study is the study of vocabulary. These are those mainstays of a language, the words that tell us what objects mean.

And as one begins to build one's vocabulary in a language, he begins to feel a little more at home in that particular language. And there is, in God's word, a very strange phenomenon. I've called this the strange vocabulary of God.

Now, we recognize the fact that the Bible, of course, was written in language other than our mother tongue, English, translated from Hebrew and Greek the most into our tongue. Therefore, the translation of every word in the Bible was a problem for the translator, more or less difficult, sometimes fairly easy problem, not too difficult to find an expression in our tongue for that which was written in the original tongues of the scriptures. But now and again, there was a more difficult problem, and they had to wrestle with this particular problem until they'd find an adequate expression.

But has it ever occurred to you, this rather strange thing, that the translators of our English Bible felt somehow impelled to allow to remain, shall I say, in the raw, untranslated certain expressions of the Bible? For instance, the next time there is congregational reading in your church and the psalms are read, will you please notice what happens when you come to a little word that's inserted in the text, sometimes two or three times in a psalm, the word that's spelled S-P-L-A-H, Selah. You will notice the very brave and the very instructive, and those who know will say it just as forcefully as any other word in the psalms. Those who aren't quite so sure begin, and then they drop it halfway through.

And those who are dead certain that it ought not to be read at all will sit rather smugly while the others make their mistakes in the reading of the text. And so the whole congregation is divided over a little word called Selah in the psalms, never quite sure that it ought to be read. But there it stands.

Then you come to other expressions in the word of God, such as the word Urim and Summum. Oh, say somebody, I know what that means. Good for you.

There are some others who aren't so sure they know what it means. But if those who translated the scriptures knew what it meant, why didn't they say it? They said it about every other word when they were translating Hebrew. Why did they strangely, or did they feel so strangely impelled to leave the words exactly as they found them? This isn't all.

You'll find some others. Now and again the translators will say something like, well, for instance, our Lord's great cry from the cross, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani, which being interpreted is, it says, and then they give us an interpretation. But there are some other expressions like the one anathema maranatha.

Do you know what that means? Of course, you heard a sermon on it one time, so now you know. Well, if it means that, why didn't they say it that way? I've often asked myself the question, why were some of these expressions left exactly as they occurred in the original tongues of the scriptures? I'm not so sure that I have the answer, but I have one that seems to satisfy me, and I'm the person that has to be satisfied most of the time in these matters. And so I sail along rather comfortably with my own answers to these kinds of problems.

And I rather suspect that the Holy Spirit led these translators of the Bible to allow these expressions to stand just as they were written, if only to cause us to come up to them paused and pondered. Stop and take a second thought. What is this about? And if you will do this every time you run across one of these expressions in the scriptures, I feel quite certain that you will discover a fresh and a new proof you may never have noticed before, and thus may be accomplished the very thing God wanted accomplished.

Now wait, stop for a bit, give this a second thought. Let me speak to you on this particular subject, on this particular point. Now all of this was in my mind when once upon a time a while back, I discovered myself reading the last book of the Bible, the Revelations.

And there I discovered that there is a phrase or rather a title which our Lord uses of himself, applies to himself in this text or in this book, which is not found anywhere else in the scriptures. I'm going to read this particular passage in order to refresh our thinking about it. Revelation chapter 1 and verses 7 and 8 read as follows.

Behold he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierce him. And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him, even so, amen. Now he speaks, I am Alpha and Omega.

The beginning and the ending saith the Lord which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty. Now doesn't it seem to you a little strange that this expression is allowed to remain thus on the page of an Bible? Now the words Alpha and Omega are not English expressions. They come from another language.

Oh, I can hear somebody saying, but everybody knows that that means A and Z. Well, it doesn't quite mean A and Z, but it does mean the first and the last letters of an alphabet. In fact, you're correct. But if that's what it means, once again one asks the question, why didn't the Spirit of God lead the translators of the Bible? Although they were not inspired as were the writers of the scriptures, the original writers of the scriptures, they most most certainly were under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit of God.

Why didn't he lead them to write I am A and Z? Now if he said that and said it that way, all the folks from Canada and England would have objected. They would have said, no, it should read I am Alpha, I am A and Z, you know, which means of course the same thing. But I wonder if God does not want to suspend just a little bit longer here and ponder this title of our blessed Lord.

What is the real purpose of the book of the revelations? Oh, I know that this is an unveiling of God's future plan and program, and it's quite difficult for me to understand how anybody can understand where we're going and how things will be confirmed who does not have some grasp upon the sequence of events in the book of the revelations. But you know, really, technically this is not the basic purpose of this book. It is a purpose.

But the purpose of this book is this. This is the unveiling, the revelations of Jesus Christ. This, God is saying that no matter what comes in the future, and this will be the future, no matter how things shall be brought to a confirmation, no matter what cataclysmic events are necessary in my settling up with all the sons of men, all the judgment theories and so on, it doesn't make any difference what comes in the future.

I want you to understand that my son stands supremely adequate for every need of human life and experience. Here he stands unveiled in all his sufficiency and all his glory. My friends, I think this is a truth that has nearly escaped us in these tragic days of which we are part, that our Lord Jesus Christ is supremely adequate.

Our world is asking the question, is he? Is he relevant? Is he adequate for human needs? Some years ago, right after the war, I was on the campus of the University of Hiroshima in the city that was blasted and obliterated from the face of the earth in Japan by our atom bomb. As I say, it was very shortly after the war and the city was still a shambles. The university was trying to crawl back into some semblance of existence.

We were meeting with a group of some 40 or 50 Japanese students in a plunger hut. It was the dead of winter. It was bitterly cold.

The only heat in this place was a tiny little hibachi, a little bowl filled with a few charcoal embers that burned, and I was warming my hands beside it. The students were huddled about, and after speaking to them about their behavior, then came the inevitable question and answer period. They fired away, obviously, of course, to the lips of an interpreter, and I was grateful for that because it gave me a chance to think while they were asking.

I was absorbing what the question was. I could sort of orient myself and get ready to fire back. There was one very keen, bright-eyed young fellow who sat on the edge of the crowd, who allowed a few questions to go by before he raised his hand and asked for permission to speak.

First he identified himself. He was a former kamikaze pilot. He was about to be assigned to a mission which he knew, of course, would mean his death.

When the war was over, this was to him the bitterest of disappointments. Already his life and his ambition was shattered. He hadn't been able to fulfill what he believed he'd come into the world for, to die for the Emperor.

So he was an embittered young man. So it happened that his home was the city of Yerushalayim. He told how he came back to that city only to discover it was almost obliterated, to discover that his home was gone, that his family were all blotted out, and life was to him an empty thing.

And with burning eyes and searching questions, he sat in that crowd and said, Sir, I am not a Christian, but I've lost all faith in the religion of my fathers, too, and I can't very well live without a religion. I want to ask you just one question. Do you really believe that this Jesus Christ whom you preach is sufficient for every question and every problem of a man's heart and a man's life? You know, of course, what the obvious answer was.

Of course, he is. And he is today. He is enough.

He is sufficient. And I wonder if this title of our Lord, as he uses it here, is not suggestive extremely so, suggestive of how completely sufficient our Savior is. You know that when Moses stood before the bush that refused to be consumed yonder there in the desert of Midian, and as a curiosity aroused, he set to watch this phenomenon.

And a voice spoke to him and knew it was God speaking. And with unshod feet and bared head, he stood and listened while God talked to him. And the heart of that conversation was a query concerning who God was.

They'll not know, God, when I take your name back to them. They've forgotten who you are. Whom shall I say sent me? And we all know what our Lord, or what God said to him in that moment, the revelation of the wonderful name of Jehovah.

Now, you probably know that the name Jehovah is really a combination of three parts of the Hebrew verb to be. I don't know quite how we could get an equivalent of this in English, except to say, and I know this will sound very clumsy, God was probably saying something like this to Moses, you go back and tell them that Am-Was-Will-Be sent you unto them. Say that again.

That Am-Was-Will-Be, the God who is, the God who was, and the God who will be. Combine them and you'll get a clumsy name such as Am-Was-Will-Be sent me unto you. So Jehovah has in it these three

parts of the Hebrew verb to be.

But the better Hebrew scholars will tell you this, that while we have placed accents upon the syllable of the name that is translated in our Bibles, I am, this is not totally proper. That really the accent of it to be placed anywhere should be upon that syllable of the name which betokens or speaks of a future revelation. The God who will be is the God who is commissioning you to go to his people.

The God who is going to, in the future, unveil himself, further reveal himself. You know very little about him now, but as he further reveals himself to you, you will know much more about him. The God who will be, he is the God.

And I stand with God on the Isle of Patmos, bareheaded, before this burning bush, and I hear the Lord Jesus Christ say, I am Alpha and Omega, beginning and ending the Lord which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty. And I feel that the prophecy spoken to Moses yonder in the deserts of Midian finds its full and completed fulfillment in this one who stands now, unveiled in all his glory before us. Here is the totality of divine revelation in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

How I love to hear our Lord say, I am. Every time he speaks those words, I stand on tiptoe expectancy, waiting for a revelation of something very wonderful. When he says, I am the bread of life, my soul reaches out to him because then I know every hunger of my heart will be fully satisfied in the one who says, I am the bread of life.

When he says, I am the light of the world, my poor darkened intellect reaches me and searches for the light, and I know I'll find all I'll need in following him, for he says, he that followeth me shall never walk in darkness, but shall walk in the light. Every time he opens his mouth to say, I am, raise your soul, my friend, for God is about to give you some precious revelation that'll need, that'll meet the need of some facets of your needy soul. Never is it so precious or wonderful as when he stands on the edge of the grave and he says, I am the resurrection and the light.

Ah, then all those burning questions that race through our hearts and demand an answer find complete satisfaction in him. I am Alpha and Omega, says the Lord Jesus. I am the first and the last letters of the alphabet.

Now for these few moments, then let's think for a moment about what this suggests concerning our Lord. Think for a moment about the inexhaustibility of Jesus. For years, as a young man, I worked in a bank in Philadelphia and that bank was located right next door to the Betsy Roth house.

And I think I passed that place where they say the first flag of our union was woven by her hands. And I suppose I passed that house three times a day for four or five years. And I had to move out of the city years later and go back with some friends who came from California to get inside the Betsy Roth house.

I'm going to make a confession now, which I hope will never get back to New York city. I've lived for nearly 26 years in the shadow of the empire state building and don't publish it in gas. Tell it not in Ascalon.

I have never been to the statue of liberty. Isn't that awful? And every one of you who live outside of the city have no doubt. You know all about the dimensions of the statue of liberty.

You've been all over the city of New York. Well, I lived for a good many years right near one of the great libraries of America, the New York library. And I never got into it until I took a class of mine from our

Institute to examine some old manuscripts of the Bible.

Then I had to pretend like I was an authority, you know, and there's a terrible hypocrisy to that, but I pretend like I knew all about the library. And while they were examining the manuscripts, I hiked off the information booth and got a few facts and then pretended like I knew all about it. But that's a tremendous library is the New York library.

We occupy an entire block in the city of New York. And it has, I've forgotten how many floors, but I know that one of those floors has on it the entire floor, nothing but the cards that tell you what's in the library. And that's quite a, that's quite a library, you know.

But what really now, what are those vast tiers of books, those hundreds of thousands of volumes? What really are those tons of poems that you find in that library? And incidentally, it's not anywhere near as large as the congressional library in Washington. Any one of these libraries, what are those books but this? If they are written in our mother tongue, in English, they are simply the incalculable numbers of the arrangement of 26 letters of our alphabet. And that's all.

Really now, that's all they are. Shakespeare wrote to Romeo and Juliet and Hamlet and Macbeth and a lot of other things. And Dickens wrote David Copperfield and Oliver Twist and the Pickwick Papers and so on.

But you know, as a matter of fact, as a matter of fact, Shakespeare and Dickens and all the others really wrote nothing but a masterful combination of the 26 letters of our alphabet. Every poet and every historian and every novelist who has ever taken up his pen to write in our language has simply juggled the same 26 letters of our alphabet to produce their work. And are you thinking of writing a book? Think not.

It has its own problems. But are you thinking about it? Have you been deliberating, dipping into the reservoir? And perhaps you say, I'm discouraged because so many have dipped from this vast reservoir. There probably isn't anything left.

Oh, my friend, that isn't true. You can come to that same alphabet this afternoon, and it is as undiminished as if not a teaspoon of thought has ever been taken from its vast, vast resources. It's fresh, brand new.

It invites you to come and dip into it and by all your skill, manipulate and juggle and put together and patch and piece together and do what you can. Perhaps you can produce a masterpiece too. The alphabet is inexhaustible and Jesus stands and says, I am the alphabet.

Isn't it wonderful today to know that all of those who have come to him with a burning need and drawn deeply from him have not diminished his great one iota? All around this world today, tens of thousands, perhaps millions, have knelt, brought their need to him, drawn from him strength, grace, power, victory. And perhaps you're a little worried lest the next hour shall bring to you some special need and you come to him to find him exhausted, have no fears at all. He is as fresh in his supply of redeeming grace, of sustaining power, of sin-conquering victory, as if he had never been touched by a sinner yet in two thousand years, as if he hadn't expended one ounce of energy in the answering of a single prayer.

He stands today inviting you to come with all of your heart's need, all of your life's desperation and draw from him, for he says, I am Alpha and Omega. Let's bow for a moment before him and acknowledge his all-sufficiency. How wonderful.

Now let me speak further of the indispensability of Jesus. The vast continents of literature that have been written and are encompassed in the millions and millions of volumes that are captivated in our libraries today, all of these things awaiting our exploration are as inaccessible as diamonds on the moon until we have mastered the alphabets. You just can't know them, you can't understand them, all the riches of knowledge are locked behind inaccessible doors unless you know the alphabet.

I do not know exactly how this operates here at Moody Bible Institute because I have one son who is almost through and I'm praying right down to the end, you know, until June. I hope he'll make it. But in the school where I am president, once in a while I have to, well I'm the sort of supreme court, once they've gotten past this committee and that committee, you know, we're in trouble, academic trouble, then at last comes that final moment when they stand before me.

And this poor fellow came in, I had all the notes and all the recommendations and they said you just have to let him go, he can't make it, he just can't make it. Well I had his record before me and I opened it and he stood there for a moment shifting from one foot to the other. He'll call him Jim, I said Jim sit down, relax.

And he knew his bag was packed, he was about to leave and I said well this is the moment for goodbye. But I'm perplexed a little, I've got some questions in my mind and I just would like to have you answer them. Don't forget anything you say now can't be held against you, it's too late.

I can't reverse the decision, I don't intend to. You'll have to go, you just apparently can't make it and I'm sorry but I don't understand it Jim. Look you got through high school and you seem to graduate with a fair decent average and then you went into the army and you got through a couple of years in the army and there's nothing against your record there.

But why didn't you make it here? What's wrong? And then he gave me an answer that just about floored me. He's a big fellow you know, nice looking boy too. I just hated to see him go.

I felt we hadn't yet found the reason and I wanted to at least satisfy myself in that moment. He stood just as stiff as he could for a moment and then I felt, I could just feel him sort of relax and then kind of collapse and he said a strange thing. He said, sir I just wish my mother was here, if she was nearby I could get by.

And I said now this, I have bad hearing in this ear, say it again so I'll get it in this ear. Did you say your mother? Yes he said, my mother. Well you better say some more because I'm lost, I don't know what you mean.

And then he began to pour out his problems. He said, you know sir, I don't know how to read. Come, come Jim, of course you do.

No I don't, I don't even know the alphabet. Now you can analyze this boy any way you want. You're a psychologist, you've got him pegged already.

But this is what he was saying. And he went on to tell me that he'd done all of his assignments in high school. He should have gotten his diploma.

Of course we as parents feel that way about all of our boys when they graduate. By the time we pay for it and do all the assignments and all the research and all the sweat, we feel like there's really just a minute Mr. President, I'll take that if you don't mind, when they get ready to give it to them, you know. But this was a little different.

And then he began to unfold his story of his need, his problem, and somewhere way, way back there this lad hadn't yet learned how to master such a simple thing as the alphabet. And so all his life he'd struggled through on crutches. Now you can say all you want, but why didn't he sit down and master it? Well why don't we do a lot of things we should do? Or surrounded by knowledge.

What good was it to him? He didn't have the keys, couldn't unlock the doors. I sat one day down in the jungles of Guatemala. I sat at the elbow of a translator.

He said, we're about ready to see a breakthrough. How would you like to witness it? I want you to see a pagan man who probably today will learn for the first time how to read. And I watched as these translators laboriously, the back of it was these months and sometimes years of sweating it out, listening to every sound, trying to get it down so that the sound at least would be correctly recorded.

And then after all the sounds had been worked through and the grammar, or the sounds at least, were built together, then work out of that a grammar. And then out of that a primer. And then teach it back to the very people from whence you got it.

Oh, I tell you, this is hard work. And years were behind this. Here's a pagan savvy.

He had a nice face. He was a believer. He'd been saved.

His face was different from the faces of other Indians round about. You could just feel it. When you talked about the Lord, his face lightened up.

It was wonderful to have fellowship with him. But you know, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge were locked to him as securely as if they were behind a book. He hadn't yet gotten the secret.

And worst of all, all that God wanted to say to him was locked up in this book. And I watched for an hour or so as this missionary worked. And then let me tell you something.

A light dawned on that man's face after a while, the like of which I've never seen anywhere in this whole world. As all of a sudden that book, this strange thing, this white man always talked about that book was talking to him. Why, it was saying it in his language.

And I saw a man standing on the edge of a vast sea for the first time in his life being given a vehicle to explore it back. And it was a thrilling discovery. Then I say the same thing about our Lord Jesus Christ.

What the alphabet is to literature, Jesus Christ is to life. Unless you have him, unless not only you have mastered him, but he has mastered you, all of life, all of its enigmas, all of its puzzles, all of its perplexing, its problems, its tensions, its process, difficulties, they are all standing before you unconquered and uncomfortable until you have the Lord Jesus Christ. It's quite significant, may I say, to note the three occasions, the only three times this name occurs in the book of the revelations.

The first time it occurred right here at the beginning of the book in Revelation 1.8. The second time it occurs is in Revelation 21.6. And the third and final time is in Revelation 22.13. And I think that each of these occasions are significant junctures. First, the first time the name occurs is when the Lord is just about to unfold some further mysteries of divine revelation. The one who is going to speak says, I am Alpha and Omega.

Now what you see right in a book and send it to the churches, I'm going to make a revelation of myself to my own. And I am the alphabet. Without me, they'll never understand what I'm driving at.

That leads me to say that unless you know Christ as God's alphabet, then all the truths of this book will forever remain an inscrutable mystery to you. You may indeed be able to find some secrets of how to unlock the treasures of human wisdom, but you can never, never, never discover the secrets of divine revelation without Jesus, the Alpha and the Omega. Move on.

When you come to the second time that this name occurs in the book, you're almost at the edge. Yes, you are at the edge of all time. Revelation 21.

What's left to be said? Oh, just the remainder. The windup of all things behind the one who speaks is all the ages of the past. And I wonder if he doesn't say I'm Alpha and Omega at that particular point, if only to say this, you'll never understand the mysteries of the drama of human history unless you apply me to it.

I'm the answer. You know, you never can quite unravel all the new groups of history. They're somewhat like you're adding up a column and never being able to come to a total without Jesus Christ.

And he says you can understand all of history if you know me, the alphabet, Alpha and Omega. Then you turn your back upon time and you're on eternity's shore. I don't know what God has in the future, but it must be even more glorious than the past.

And no matter what the future of eternity unfolds, a glorious, overpowering mystery, there he stands, still sufficient, still the answer, Alpha and Omega. The first and the last and all that's in between. Now, I have just a moment or two left.

Oh, I wanted you just to catch a glimpse of our wonderful Lord today. Not that we haven't been seeing him hour in and hour out in this wonderful conference. Yes, we have.

But I would just like you to, I thought perhaps I could just reach out and pull the veil aside and say, look at him, behold him. I don't know what your need is and I don't, I can't possibly understand the vastness of the needs represented in this audience, but I know he's enough. He is adequate for all of our needs.

Yes, our Lord Jesus Christ is God's alphabet and how adaptable he is. You want to write a love letter, tell somebody you love them, what are you going to use? Oh, of course, pen and paper. No, no, no.

I mean, what's the stuff you're going to use to tell the story of your affection? Well, friend, if you're going to write it in our tongue, you're going to have to use some combination of the 26 letters of our alphabet. So you're going to write a hot letter to the fellow who's owed you money for so long as getting tiresome and you're going to tell him off in no uncertain terms, let me tell you. What are you going to use? Letters of the alphabet.

You're going to write a poem? Good for you. How great it must be to be able to write poetry. I can't make two words rhyme.

Try as hard as I will. What are you going to use? You'll have to use the 26 letters of our alphabet. It's such a wonderfully adaptable instrument, isn't it? Well, God is saying to us, step foot today, no matter what your needs, my son is sufficient for your needs.

He is Alpha and Omega. We don't all need the Lord Jesus alike, but we all alike need him. For he is able for every one of our needs.

Yes, he is. What's yours today? Stand before the same blazing burning bush that John stood before on Patmos Island so long ago and hear him say, I'm Alpha and Omega. Good many years ago, as a young fellow, I read a book.

I don't even think this thing's in print anymore, but it was called *The Cruise of the Cashalot*. Now, some of you may have read that book. You remember, it was written by a man named Frank Bullen.

And it's the story of the old whaling days in earlier American history, when those great foremasters pushed out from the rugged New England coast and hunted for the schools of whales in the North Atlantic, chased them, and then caught them. And there were some exciting episodes in that book. And Frank Bullen tells of, perhaps one of the most exciting of all chapters.

He says, I think he writes as I recollected himself, though he had experienced this. He says that when he first saw the *Cashalot*, which was the name of a whaling ship that was to take him out with others in search of whales, and I quote him, he says, me thinks she's the ugliest tub I have ever seen. Not a nice description of a boat.

The ugliest tub I have ever seen. And so he spent several weeks on this boat until finally came that electrifying cry, whales ahoy, you know, and off they prepared the boats and the harpoons and all the rest of it. And Bullen tells how he got aboard one of these smaller boats.

She was dropped down onto the surface of the sea, and they set out for the whales. They sighted one, and they aimed their harpoon, and it was a bullseye right in the snout of a big whale, and it stuck. Wanted two more, and they had it.

Or her, I don't know how you tell the sex of a whale, but at any rate, they had it. And then this denizen of the deep did what they expected it would do. It took off like an express train.

Now all the skill of these seamen was being challenged. How to stay afloat, how to keep your prey in sight and get it in. That's a job.

And these denizens, I understood from this story, often would go in a straight line and then suddenly reverse themselves, and then your task was to stay out of range of that thrashing big tail that could spinner your boat like a matchbox. Well, sometimes they'd go in circles and churn the sea into a fury. And this one chose the latter method.

And this tiny little boat was spinning around in that churning sea, and suddenly it flipped over, and Bullen found himself going straight down to Davy Jones' locker. But when he fought his way back up, he thought, to the surface and shook the brine from his eyes and caught his breath, he felt something rather solid and yet somewhat slippery under his feet. And he awoke to the terrible realization that he was riding a whale piggyback.

And this thing was still taking off in all directions, and he was riding it. He slipped and slid all over, but it was a pretty big surface, and he didn't hit the edge of the thing, and he didn't slide off into the sea. And then he explains in his book, he says, oh, the prospects of what kind of a death shall I die.

He thought of Jonah and how terrible it would be to be swallowed by this thing should it suddenly desire to eat what was riding on its back. He thought of how it would be to be smashed into unconsciousness and then go down into the sea, or just should he jump off and drown. And while he said, I'm contemplating all of these various methods of ending this sad and sordid chapter, he said, I saw coming up over the horizon the mast of a ship.

And as the ship bore down upon it, he said, and he thinks I never saw a lovelier boat in all my life. It was the cashalot. Aye, same old boat, same old ship.

What made the difference? His desperate need. I know once I saw no beauty in him that I should desire him, Jesus my Lord. There was no attraction there when first I saw and heard of him.

But then when the pains of hell got hold upon me, when the Holy Spirit showed me my desperate need of a savior, suddenly he became the altogether lovely one. And as the days have come and gone ever since, he has increased in desirableness. How wonderful to know Jesus Christ as your savior, and then to grow day by day into the wonders of his inexhaustibility.

Whatever your need is, he is able for it today for he's Alpha and Omega. Amen. I think I read to you tonight what I consider to be one of the most important passages in the Bible.

I don't know whether you will agree with me or not. This is one of my favorites too, by the way, but I consider it to be one of the most important passages, perhaps in the entire Bible. It'll be easy for you to find the scriptures because it's the very first chapter of the first gospel, the gospel according to Matthew.

And if you will, please open your Bibles to this portion, follow as I read this section of scriptures. And I would like to take a vote at the end of the session tonight and see if you'll not agree that this is one of the most fascinating as well as one of the most important passages in the scriptures. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren, and Judas begat Pharaoh, and Zarah of Tamar, and Pharaoh begat Ezra, and Ezra begat Aram, and Aram begat Amminadab, and Amminadab begat Nihistam, and Nihistam begat Salmon, and Salmon begat Boaz of Rahab, and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth, and Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David the king, and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah, and Solomon begat Raubon, Raubon begat Abia, Abia begat Asa, Asa begat Josaphat, Josaphat begat Joram, Joram begat Josiah, and Josiah begat Joachim, Joachim begat Achaz, and Achaz begat Ezekias, and Ezekias begat Manasseh, and Manasseh begat Ammon, and Ammon begat Josiah, and Josiah begat Jeconiah and his brethren about the time they were carried away to Babylon. We'll stop right there. Aren't you fascinated? Usually the thing that fascinates everybody is, how did he make it? Well, I practice a lot before I come on the platform, and each time I reach this portion, I say, one more time, I've got a little mark here, I check it off, I got through it again.

Now, maybe you feel as I have felt many times in reading some of these portions of the scriptures, here is a long list of names exceedingly difficult to pronounce, and some of you experts, if I miss the syllable here and there, forgive me, I'm still trying. All right, one of these days I'll make it perfectly, I hope. But perhaps you've had this thought, why now really does the Holy Spirit occupy so much space with one of these long lists of begats? This is what frightens a lot of people out of reading their Bibles sometimes.

They start with Genesis 1, and when they hit the Book of Chronicles, they give up in despair. So they figure they'll start a new testament when they hit this. And they say, well, if it's like this all the way through, this is about as interesting as reading the telephone book.

I don't understand it, I can't quite get it, what's it about? And then when you consider the fact that the Spirit of God only gives us a few simple statements concerning the creation of the entire universe, and then we reassert again so firmly our conviction that we believe that the Bible is the plenarily, verbally inspired Word of God, if you don't back up a quarter of an inch on that, we say that every word is here by divine design and not by human coincidence or accident of any kind. Why does the Spirit of God apparently, or seem, to devote so much space in the holy volumes to what appears to be, at first glance, relatively unimportant? And then he doesn't seem to give us as much as we'd like to know about some more important things. Now just a moment, let's not relegate some of these lists of genealogies, and particularly this one, to anything like unimportant.

I stand by my opening statement that this is probably one of the most important passages in the entire Bible. It would be quite difficult, would it not, if I were to ask you to summarize the whole of the scriptures in a single sentence, how would you do it? Is this a possibility? Is it possible, really, to say in one single sentence all that there is in the Bible? I think that it is possible. And I think that unless one gets this statement clearly fixed in his mind, he misses what is the whole purport of the scriptures.

Someone infinitely wiser than I, and I wish I could have thought of this sentence, has said that the Bible, really, is the story of man's complete ruin in sin and God's perfect remedy in Christ, period. And that's about it. And the whole of the story of this book, no matter what its subject, no matter what is being discussed by what writer, the whole contributes to this one theme.

This book is the story of man's total depravity. This is the story of man's complete ruin by that terrible tragedy of sin. This is the dark side of the book, but its bright colors are that this book is also the story of God's perfect remedy in Jesus Christ.

It's the unraveling of the marvelous grace of God as he faces the problem of human sin. Someone else has said, therefore, the whole of the scriptures really revolves about just two cores. One of them is the story of the genealogy of Adam, as found in the first book of the Bible, the book of Genesis.

And the other core, the other pole about which this story revolves, the story of the scriptures, is the story of the genealogy of the second man, of Jesus Christ, the head of the new race, here in the very first chapter of the gospel of Matthew. Now, there are a great many things that could be said about this genealogy of our Lord Jesus Christ. We're reading here the record of the line through which our Savior came into our world.

This can't be unimportant. Not a single detail here is unimportant. We could say a great many things about the importance of the genealogy of Jesus.

For instance, that this record is the proof of the correctness of his Messianic claim, that Messiah was to be the son of David every Jew admitted. The temple records would prove whether or not Jesus was descended from David and therefore had a legal right to the throne of David. His enemies never used this against him.

They never said that he had no right to lay claim to David's throne because he could not prove that he was descended from David. And furthermore, let me say that if Jesus Christ were not the true Messiah, no Jew can ever again prove that he is the Messiah. For the simple record, that all the records concerning Messiah's genealogy were destroyed when the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70.

Hence, from that moment until now, no one can prove conclusively that he is the Messiah from the historical or documentary record. But Jesus Christ's genealogy is listed here. Now, this among many other features attracted me some years ago, and then I began to read with another different approach to this story.

I noted something and asked myself, why is this here? Surely the Spirit of God had some special purpose in the inclusion of some of these names. For instance, you will notice that up until the inclusion of the name of our Lord's human mother, Mary, there are four women whose names are mentioned in this genealogy. Please note them.

You will find them in the New Testament. There is the first woman who is mentioned, and then you will come down to verse 5. And Solomon begat Boaz of Rahab. That is the New Testament form of the Old Testament name Rahab.

And Boaz begat Obed of Ruth, the third woman that is mentioned. And Obed begat Jesse. Jesse begat David the king, and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah.

Reference, of course, to Bathsheba, though she is not here named. Now, the very fact that you can omit these names without any injury whatsoever to this list, and I want to prove that to you in just a moment, seems to me to be significant. The fact that they are deliberately included in the genealogical record of our Lord Jesus is extremely significant.

Let me read it again, this time omitting the names. And Judas begat Pharaohs and Zarah. And Pharaohs begat Ezra, and Ezra begat Adam.

So on down to verse 5. And Solomon begat Boaz, and Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse. And Jesse begat David the king, and David the king begat Solomon, and Solomon begat Rahab. Has any injury been done to the historical record? Nothing at all.

You may safely omit every one of these names. No harm is done whatsoever. Furthermore, let me remind you that according to oriental custom, the women didn't count for very much.

How well do I remember the first visit to the delightful land of Japan many years ago? Such a visit spoils a man forever coming back to America. I shall never forget when that tiny little 4 foot 6 or 7 thing, that little Japanese gal, picked up my heavy suitcase and put it on her head. And I stood there arguing with this lady in the middle of the street.

Oh no, please don't, you'll break your back. And she in turn pulling back, and I didn't realize I was committing a horrible faux pas right out there in the middle of the street. But you know, I did feel a little silly walking behind this dainty little thing as she carried my huge suitcase on the top of her head.

And I thought the whole world was looking at me. Well they weren't really, but they would have been had I been carrying it. And she walking blithely beside me.

Oh, it's a delightful world, fellows, out there. Just marvelous. Women don't count for too much, particularly in these pagan cultures.

There are some areas of the oriental world where a man thinks a great deal more of his fighting cock than he does his wife. After all, he'd always get another wife, or two, or three, or wherever. But if you got a good fighting cock that brings you in a lot of money, take care of him.

He's worth something. This is a cultural thing. Doesn't matter who a man's mother was, who was his father.

That's the thing that matters. Place the line down for his father. Now the Spirit of God seems to violate this cultural custom when he deliberately includes the names of the women involved in our Lord's lineage.

Furthermore, with the exception of one of these women, Ruth, the other women are not of very high repute. I should think we'd like to leave their names out because they're not really quite nice ladies to have included because of the circumstances involved in each case. This leads me to ask the question, then why? We have a right to back off from the page of God's Word once in a while and ask the question, why? Why does God's Holy Spirit deliberately deign to do this? Could it be that right at this point, right here, God wants to write the whole story of the gospel into the very genealogy of our Lord Jesus? This I firmly believe and hope I can prove before we prove.

You do not need to go beyond the very first page of the first book of the New Testament to have unfolded to you the marvelous, wondrous story of God's redeeming grace in Christ Jesus. So let's go back to these ladies for a moment and look at them. Take the first woman, Tamar.

Now, this story is not a very pleasant story, I must admit. And I'm going to ask you to bear with me while we try to retell it, reset it from the 38th chapter of the book of Genesis. I recognize the fact at the moment I would say that this story is a bit of a colored story and if I just mentioned the chapter and said no more, I dare say you'd put it down in the corner of something and say, I got to read that chapter.

This is human nature, you know. It's got to review it, it's got to see it. This, by the way, may I say some critics once in a while will say, well, now that's the very reason why I object to the Bible.

I think there's some stories in that book I just don't want my children to read. Isn't that nice? Doesn't that sound pious now? This same fellow has his house cluttered up with magazines on the covers of which are pictures that shocked him and the daily newspaper with his lurid, magnifying, glorifying stories of human wickedness, wretchedness, and rottenness cluttered the whole house. The great difference, let me remind you, between the stories of human sordidness as found in this holy book and as they're found in the newspapers is just this.

Never once does the word of God glorify sin. If it reveals it and it does faithfully spells it out in its ugly details, it is always to show how rotten it is, how terrible it is, how devastating, how awful to human life and experience. There is no glorification of these seamy sides of the human life.

Well, let's pick up the tale for just a moment. It came to pass at that time that Judah went down from his brethren and turned into a certain Adelmite whose name was Hira. And Judah saw there a daughter of a certain Canaanite whose name was He took her and went on to her.

She conceived and bare a son. He called his name Ur. She conceived again, bare a son.

She called his name Onan. She yet again conceived and bare a son and called his name Shelah. And he was at Chezeb when she bare him.

And Judah took a wife for Ur, his firstborn, whose name was Tamar. And then follows the story of how these sons were touched by the finger of God. They did some things that brought about the displeasure of God, and they were stricken.

The Lord killed them. God laid his hand upon them. For instance, verse 10, the thing which he did displease Jehovah, wherefore he slew him also.

So Judah now turns to Tamar, his daughter-in-law, and he says, I'll tell you what you do. You stay in your widowhood, in your father's house, until this my last son, Shelah, be grown. He's just a young lad.

He's not ready for marriage. And lest peradventure he die also as his brethren did. So there's a promise made by Judah that this lad will become the husband of Tamar.

So Tamar went to dwell in her father's house. In the process of time, the daughter of Jehovah, Judah's wife, died, and Judah was comforted and went up unto his sheep shearers, to Timnath, he and his friend Hireth Abelamite. And now follows a very dark, sad story.

But let's follow it with our finger. It was told Tamar saying, look, your father-in-law goes up to Timnath to shear his sheep. Now this story portrays the sad side to this girl's life.

She's not a very nice character, by any means, as you shall see. She put her widow's garments from her, covered herself with a veil, wrapped herself, sat in an open place, which is, by the way, to Timnath, for she saw that Shelah was grown and he was not given to her to be her husband. And when Judah saw her, he thought her to be a harlot, because she had covered her face.

He turned unto her, by the way, and he said, go to, I pray thee, let me come unto thee. And he propositioned her. And then when he inquired about the price for this night of sin and illegitimacy, he said, I'll send you a kid from the flock.

And she said, well, now, wait a minute. I guess she knew, well, she knew her father-in-law pretty well. She said, all right, payment, cash on the line, please.

She knew he didn't have anything to pay. And so she said, what will you give me as a pledge, that you're really going to fulfill your word and send it? And he said, what do you want? He said, well, I'll take your ring, and I'll take your bracelets, and I'll take the staff that's in your hand. And so he figured, well, that's a high price, but I'll pay it.

So he did. Follows their sin. She rose, went away, laid by her veil from her, put on the garments of her widowhood, and went on home.

And Judah sent the kid by the hand of his friend the Adonamite the next morning to receive his pledge from the woman's hand, but they couldn't find her. So he inquired of the men who were in that place and said, by the way, where's that harlot who was here last night? He sat here openly on the wayside. They said, harlot? No harlot about here.

So Judah said, oh, well, let her keep the stuff, lest we be shamed. I sent the payment, but I couldn't find it. Now, here's the sad sequel.

And it came to pass, about three months afterward, it was told Judah saying, Tamar, thy daughter-in-law hath played the harlot. She is with child by whoredom. Now, look at this righteous rascal rise up, will you? Judah, this is.

Bring her forth and let her be burned. So they dragged her out and clobbered her father-in-law and the rest of the witnesses, and they were about to burn her when she said, just a minute, would you like to know who the father of my unborn child is? You know anybody in that crowd who wouldn't like to know? This is the juiciest bit of scandal that's been in this town for a long time. Who doesn't want to know? She could stand there and argue for the next three days as long as she kept her secret.

She got a lease on life by this. There was a soul in the crowd that would suggest that they'd kill her until they got from her her wretched secret. So they said, by all means, tell us.

And so she said, I'll tell you. The man who owns this ring and this bracelet and this staff, by that man am I with child. Now, whose are they? Come on, some of you witnesses, come close and inspect them.

And when they inspected them, they obviously identified Judah, her own father-in-law, as the culprit. And Judah acknowledged them. And he said, she's been more righteous than I because I gave her not the Sheila, my son.

Now it came to pass in the time of her travel that behold, twins were in her womb. And the names of the twins? Last, verse 29. The one who came first, who was born first, was Fares.

Afterward came his brother. His name is Zarah. Will you please go back now to Matthew chapter 1. And here it is, right down in the record.

And Judas, Matthew 1, 2, begat Fares and Zarah of Tamar. There they were, these twins. About whose family tree are you speaking here, sir? The family tree of Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Odd that this woman's name should appear here. One more time, I step back and ask the question, why? Why? And the answer is that part seek. It's an obvious answer.

This woman is deliberately selected by the Spirit of God and brought out of the obscurity of history and placed under the white spotlight of divine revelation. Her name inscribed in devilty right here. She might otherwise have been forgotten, buried in the mass of Old Testament information.

No, the Spirit of God beckons to her, lifts her out of that position, puts her name right down here, right up against the Lord Jesus, our blessed Savior. Why? I'll tell you why I think. It was Tamar's sin that brought her in touch with Jesus, the Savior of sinners.

Wait a minute. I take great hope in that. I take wondrous hope in that.

Do you know what it is that brought me in touch with Jesus Christ? It was not my righteousness, not my merit, not my goodness. It was my sin, my weakness, my actions, that brought me in touch with Jesus. If he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, I qualify, Lord.

When you call the world of sinners, hear my voice. It's my easing. In my own way, I am just as wretched and depraved and vile as was Tamar in her way.

The precious sweet note of the glorious evangelist is that the one about whom this whole thing is written came to redeem and transform people just like this. That's why he came. You think you're a wretched soul.

You think you're a desperate sinner. You think you'll be on tonight? Redemption, no you're not. Your very need is what brings you in touch with the Lord Jesus.

Here he says, Christ died for the ungodly. Was there ever a sweeter note than that? Christ died for the ungodly. Say it again, sing it again, preach it again, tell it again, and do it again until every ungodly sinner hears it.

Call this one who came, call him Jesus, for he shall save from their sin. Somehow when I read Tamar's name here and I think of her black eyes, it gives me hope. Is this why you say, yes it is? Well, let's move on just a bit further.

We drop down a line or two and now we come to the name of another. I'm summoning the Yad Vohaz of Rahab. Now you'll have to admit that this lady too had a rather unsavory reputation, eh? Every single time she's mentioned in the Bible, almost every single time, five times in fact in both Old and New Testaments, the author of this book adds this adjective to her name.

Rahab, you almost are saying, and I can hear you saying it, you're whispering it, Baharach. Not a very nice word. Indeed not.

She wasn't a very nice person. She counted in sin. And she had her house up on the wall in a prominent place, in Jericho's old city.

And then one night you know what happened. Those spies who were sent to look out for the situation, they alighted in the house of Rahab, Baharach. And when they told the story of what God was doing and what God planned to do, a miracle took place.

You know, it's always a miracle when a man or a woman is confronted with what God intends to do and believes in. And so Rahab, in all her wretchedness, hears the story of Jehovah the Living God. She listens to the recital of these spies as they tell what God did as he demonstrated his mighty power in delivering his people.

And what God planned to do by way of destruction of this city. And convicted. Woo! Rahab believed.

And faith, such a simple faith and such a significant faith that you know, that later on when the heroes and the heroines whose names are singled out and recorded on the eternal page of God's Word in Hebrews chapter 11, she's noted. She demonstrated by faith Baharach Rahab perished not with them that believed not when she had received the spies with peace. And she believed and hung the sign of her faith out there in the open, the scarlet horn.

And this woman now becomes a true believer and a witness. Why is her name included here? I wonder if God isn't trying to say something like this. It is faith, simple faith that brings a man or woman in touch with Jesus Christ.

And works a miracle. This is going to be a solid book in the evangelism. The message of the evangelism.

By grace are you saved through faith. Now it always amuses me in these days when I meet these ultra-scientific people who discount faith. They do not believe in faith.

Nothing works by faith they say. Until these same super ultra-scientists catch a cold or get a virus of some kind. Now watch them in operation.

First they go to see a doctor. Now I don't know why doctors do this. But doctors notoriously write so that nobody can understand what they write on the prescription pad.

If you ever try to decipher, I'd even use a mirror thinking that sometimes it may have been written upside down. But I watch this great scientific mind that doesn't believe in the simple thing called faith. The doctor says take this prescription to the drug store and get it filled.

Now I don't want to disturb him any, but I would just like to ask him this question. Are you going to do it? Of course he says he'll do it. Why? Well the doctor, how do you know he's a good doctor? What was his mark in medical school? Now there's a question for you.

How do you know he didn't just get 71? There's quite a difference I should imagine between a doctor who's got a passing mark of 71 and one who got 99. Particularly if he's going to have to open you up and hunt for things. I'd like him to know precisely where he's going to begin, don't you? But he has a little doubt.

30% is a pretty wide margin when he's looking for things. But how do you know if this fellow is, well, he won't use the word faith, but he folds up that piece of paper like he's folding a thousand pounds. Carries his pocket sealing all the time lest he lose it.

Takes it to the corner pharmacy. Now he's got a new experience. Watch him as he takes it to the pharmacy.

He hands it like a little boy who's been sent to the store for two pounds of sugar with a string tied tight. And he hands it to the pharmacist. Now will you please tell me, you pharmacist, why do you always mix this stuff in the back rooms? Why don't you do it where we can see what you're putting in the bottle? No, there's always an aura.

There's a mysterious something about a pharmacist. He takes it into the back room and then all you hear is clink, clink, gurgle, gurgle, splash, splash, drop, drop. And you say to yourself, I wonder what he's mixing back there.

And it does seem to take such a long time for such a little bottle of medicine costing such a high amount of money. And then watch this great man who doesn't believe in faith, you know, as he walks out with this bottle holding it like it's a bottle of liquid uranium, lest he should drop it and blow the world apart. He'd rather lose his head than lose the bottle.

He's carrying it just so. I stop him at the door and say, how do you know this is a bona fide pharmacist? You know, sometimes they make mistakes and they put strychnine in and that kills people. I don't want to bother him at all when he gets ready to take the medicine, you know what I mean, but just a little doubt in the mind of this skeptic.

And he scoffs at the thought and he takes it home. Unwraps this bottle carefully. Now watch our skeptical friend who does not believe in faith at all.

He looks at the thing and it says, shake well before using. Now watch this great brilliant mind standing there like a little boy shaking. Then he screws the top on very tightly, turns it upside down to be sure it's shaking properly, and opens it.

And the man who doesn't believe in faith at all. It's just not a principle that operates effectively or reasonably or logically in this 20th century. This man unscrews the top and very carefully pours it out.

And just as he's about to put it in his mouth, you ask him, are you sure this is not poison? But he'll take the medicine dutifully. You know, there are a great many things about the operation of faith I don't understand. But there's one thing I do know and do understand.

That when a man or a woman, a Rahab if you please, a scarlet sinner, one whose life is darkened and blasted by sin and shame and regret and things you'd like to bury in the sea of forgetfulness, when you exercise simple faith in this blessed, glorious, wonderful Savior, God works a transforming miracle in your life. And Rahab is changed from the harlot to the believer, the hell in a place who merits a mention in the book of Hebrews. Oh, I'm so glad the Spirit of God swept her into Jesus' geniality.

It encourages me to just trust him as a sinner saved by grace. Now we drop down just a bit farther and we come to quite a different character when you come to Ruth. And Simon begat Boaz of Rahab rape and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth.

Oh, everyone knows the story of Ruth. Of course they do. But it's quite a story.

It's a wonderful love story is the story of Ruth. Did you know that? Yes. I would just like to give you a little resume of the story.

May I? For just a moment. You know how it begins with the story of that sweet character, Naomi. Pleasant, sweet little lady.

Her name meant that, you know, pleasant person. Just as nice and pleasant as any neighbor could be. Married to a splendid man, a man by the name of Elimelech.

That's a nice name. That's a good biblical name. We don't name our kids anymore, you know, Judah and Joseph and Samuel.

Now we get that. Oh, I'm going to be really angry at me now. I don't really mean it this way.

But, you know, we get Sharon Lee, Fairy June. You know what I mean? Where do you get those names? We reach off the Hollywood list and pull a few out and hang them on our kids. Now I'm not asking you to call your boy Elimelech.

He'll never love you for that. He'll carry a wicked memory of his father and mother for the rest of his day. But this is a pretty good name.

Elimelech. That's a nice Hebrew name. It means God is my king.

That's a nice name. And everybody asks, what's your name? God is my king. Good testimony.

Now they had two boys. Now they used to name in those days, and they still do in some oriental countries, they name children. Their names are significant.

I remember in Africa I used to hear some of the strangest names. And over there in Taiwan, they used to introduce us to fellas. And this fella's name is Happy Amai Sam.

Happy Amai Sam. You really mean that seriously? Oh, yes, that's his baptized name. This is John 316 Joe.

And here's a Saved by Grace Willie. And then I found out what happens is they have some Chinese names, and then they get saved. And when they get baptized, they get the privilege of taking a new name.

So they take a good old solid biblical content, tie it up with their new name. That's great. In Africa, they'll get a name.

Here comes Humpback Jimmy. Here comes Wharton O'Salley. And so on.

They just pick out something that's a little characteristic, and it marks you and goes right on for the rest of your life. Well, these two boys that belong to Naomi and Elimelech, they didn't have such nice names. They were called Mail-On and Chili-On.

One of them meant sickly. And the other meant tiny. Neither of these fellas would ever make a football team, you can be sure of that.

And the neighbors, I suppose, would come in and say, you'll never raise those two. You know, you got those Job's Comforters that's laid out for you. Looks like he needs a dose of vitamins, or you'll never make it.

Well, they didn't look like they would. One was sickly, and the other was kind of skinny and puny and pasty-faced, and they called him Piney. And I don't imagine they liked their names too much, but they were tagged to them, and they carried them.

Then came a little depression over there in Bethlehem, and somebody reported there was plenty of work down in Moab. Had to go up over the mountains, and so they made a fatal move one day, and they packed up the whole family, and they started over in Moab. That was even country.

And they got over there, and God bless them, and they were doing fine. One day, one of the fellas came home, and you could tell by the way he did it. We had been in the process of raising, I always say in the process because it's never done yet, of raising four boys.

I often say I don't know what in the world makes girls sick, but I got a few ideas what makes boys run. And, you know, there's a time when you can't make them comb their hair. You can bribe them any way you want.

And they go 14 different directions. You put grease on it, it doesn't make any difference. They aren't all combing your hair and, you know, pulling up your pants so that you look like a human being.

Remember the human guy? That's crazy. Then all of a sudden, what do you find? Oh, boy, he's sticking it down every other way, standing in front of a mirror and all that. Come out with a clean shirt.

Well, this is enough to kill a mother. What's happened? Well, pretty soon you get to know what's happened. It's a little blue-eyed blonde down the street that's got him going.

And one of these boys came home one night and said to Naomi, kind of like, I want to tell you, what's her name? And, uh, so he came out and he said, oh, she's a beauty. Oh, she's a wonderful, her name is, um, well, can I bring her home for dinner? Bring her home. So he brought this girl home and she was really a lovely girl.

Only one little shadow on it. She was a Moabitess. That means she was an unbeliever.

She wasn't a believer. She was a pagan girl. Didn't seem to bother these boys too much.

And so there was a wedding. That sparked his brother, who was coming along, and one day he came home with the same approach to things, except that he was grinning like a Cheshire cat. He had what he thought was the prize and he did.

He brought her home. And she was a beautiful maiden. So there were two marriages, and I can imagine Naomi saying, is any woman happier than I? Look how full my cup is, how good God is.

And the thunderclaps of God came, the lightning blows of God began to come, and God took away her husband. That was the first thing. And the whole world went off its axis for Naomi.

Her husband was gone. And while she's still bleeding from this vicious wound, in quick succession, the providence of God strikes again. And God takes away her two sons, one after the other.

And she finds herself in a strange land, a foreign land, among enemies of Jehovah. The rest of her husband, stricken and robbed of her sons, and two pagan daughters-in-law, all she has left. And this woman, so bright, so sweet, so happy, now finds herself an embittered woman, and she starts to go home.

No sense of living in this land any longer. I might as well go back to Bethlehem and die among my friends. And so she started to go home.

When she got to the borderland, both the girls accompanied her there, and you know that biblical scene, how beautiful it was. She turned back and said, don't put any bother with me. What do you want to follow me for? Would you come into my homeland and stay with me until I should marry again, which I never shall, but if I should, and then I have two sons, would you wait for them? This is an impossibility.

Go on back to your home. God will give you husbands. And Orpah went back, and remember what Ruth said? Treat me not to leave me.

Don't beg me to do this. One of the lovely scenes in the Bible. Don't.

She said, where you go, I'm going. Where you die, I'm going to die, because I'll tell you something, Naomi, something wonderful has happened to me. Your God is now my God.

She was converted. She was saved. She'd met Jehovah God.

And so this lovely, beautiful young widow, with old, grain, broken-hearted Naomi, followed the winding roads and the twisting trails, and they came up over the hill to Bethlehem's border. And the news runs ahead, and Naomi's coming back, and they all run out, those old neighbors, to meet her on the road, and they say as they look at the woman, no, you're Naomi. And she said to them bitterly, don't call me Naomi anymore.

I've got a new name. It's not Naomi the present one. My name's Mary.

Mary, I'm a bitter one. The Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. That's the beginning of the book.

Well, that's the first chapter. Did you know that? Go on. Oh, boy, the rest of it's so nice.

You know what happened, don't you? Well, if you don't, I'll tell you quick. And it better be quick. I've got to do it quickly, eh? Yes, sir.

Well, how are two widows going to live? Well, in those days, the Jews, they had some laws about what they did when they harvested their fields. You know, we've got an expression that's called cutting the corners. Where do you think they got that from? Well, I'll tell you where they got it from.

When they gathered in the harvest in their wheat fields, the law of God said, don't you gather all the stalks of grain, leave some for the poor, the widows, the sickly. And when you come to the edges of your fields, don't go right up to the very edges, turn a little bit, leave some generous portions of grain growing at the corners so that the gleaners who come along, the poor people, will find something. And so, you see, a Jew's generosity in those days was measured by how close he cut the corner.

You know, whether he said to the reapers, come right up close, you know, a little closer, just a little, he'd stay right within the law if he could. So a man became known as a generous man if he allowed quite a bit of grain to be left behind for the gleaners. And so, Ruth went out one day and she said to her mother-in-law, I'm going out to gather in the fields for something for us to bake some bread, and I'll be back.

And so it says in the Bible, her hat was the light upon the field of one named Boaz. Now, it wasn't really a hat and stance at all. It was the providence of God.

And so she followed the young men as they reaped the harvest, and a little while later along came the boss. Now, the nice thing about this boss is he was rich and handsome and a bachelor. He wasn't married.

You feel the pot thickening a little bit? See, just a little? Well, it gets much thicker than this as we go along. He looked over the situation and suddenly he said to one of the young fellows, who is that? Now, that's a little, I'm a little free with the translation here, but that's the sense of it. Who is that damsel is what it says.

Oh, somebody, haven't you heard about Naomi? Didn't you hear about the death of her? Oh, you don't know that story yet. Well, this is Ruth, widow of one of the boys. Oh, it is.

Well, I don't think that's right there in the Bible, but that's sort of in between the lines a little here, you see. But, you know, he was very gentle and very kind with this girl. He said some very nice things to her, and among them he encouraged her because he said, I know what's happened to you.

I think one of the sweetest verses in the Old Testament, this one, The Lord recompensed thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust. He knew all about her trusting God. Now, I think I ought to move on to the next point of my sermon.

I can hear somebody screaming, no, what happened? Come on, you've got to finish the story. Why don't you finish it yourself before you go to bed tonight? I wouldn't be surprised if you'll read the book of Ruth all over. There's only four chapters in case you didn't know it.

See if I've left out any of the sweet details that are here in this book. This whole thing developed, you know, quite nicely. Except that I want to tell you something.

You know what the word of God said about a Moabite? Any Moabite was shut off from the congregation of Israel, that is, from participation in all the covenants of God with ancient people, from worship of God, all the rest of it. A Moabite, or a Moabite, was shut off by the law of God unto the tenth generation. This girl, while her personal faith and trust in God is welcome and all right, she becomes a true believer in the living God, yet the law of God raised such a barrier, such a wall, that she was shut off by the law of God from fellowship, participation in the commonwealth of Israel.

But here's the lovely thing about this. Won't you forget now her name is included by the Holy Spirit in the genealogy of Jesus, you know. How did she get in? Now that's the story.

Boaz really fell in love with this girl, but he found himself sort of on the spot. There was another law that was called the law of the kinsman redeemer. That is to say, if you were related by blood as relative to another relative who had difficulties, you could, by law, redeem his heritage by a tax, and all of his possessions became yours.

That's the law of God. And I can imagine Boaz going down to the city hall, looking up the situation, seeing what it says in the register, and then he found to his utter dismay that he had a cousin. You always find a cousin when it comes to inheritances.

You ever notice that? And they're always closer than you to the source of things. And he found that by succession and by law, this other cousin, this other kinsman, was a little closer than he. Now I wouldn't like to fill in the details here.

My imagination runs away with me, but I better keep it in check. I can hear him as he goes down. He's trying his best to be sort of noncommittal.

Hello, cousin. By the way, heard anything from Naomi these days? Now you know the whole story. Yeah, she's come back to Bethlehem.

Yeah, that's right. Poor soul. You know, she had a rough time out there in Moab.

And you know, she's got a little inheritance that belongs to her. He lost everything. I just wondered, says Boaz, I just wondered if you'd be interested in buying, you know, buying it up and giving it back to Naomi.

Be a nice gesture. You'd take care of that. Yeah, says the relative.

I guess I could do that. Can't you feel Boaz's heart sinking right down into his sandals? Oh, he thought maybe he'd say no. But he said yes.

So they start out to the notary public's office to get things straightened out. And on the way, he said, oh, by the way, I forgot to say that according to the contract, you know, if you buy that parcel of land, you also have to pick up her daughter-in-law, who's a widow now, you know, and you have to take care of her. And that relative says, you know, I just happened to think of it.

I got a note to do at the bank on the 15th. And there's interest on it. I just don't see how I can swing it.

I wonder if, wonder if what? I wonder if you'd like to kind of step in there, Boaz, and pick this thing up. Now, here must have been a severe test of his self-control, this man Boaz. As he says as cruelly as he can possibly say, oh, well, I'll, yes, I guess I could do that.

And off he goes. Oh, you know what happened after that, don't you? You don't read it yourself. But anyway, it comes down to a happy conclusion.

I love the details in between. But, you know, it says this, in the last part of the book of Ruth, so Boaz took Ruth, and she was his wife. And he went in unto her, and the Lord gave her conception, and she bare a son.

And the women said to Naomi, Blessed be the Lord. He hasn't left you this day without a kinsman, that his name may be famous in Israel. He shall be unto thee a restorer of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old age.

For thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, she's born his. And Naomi took the child, laid it in her bosom, became nurse to it. And the women, her neighbors, gave it a name.

They said, There's a son born to Naomi. And they called his name Obed. He's the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Well, isn't that wonderful? Then take that little piece, verses 18 to 22, and you can take that little piece and paste it right into the first chapter of Matthew's gospel. For this is the genealogical line right here. I wonder if the insertion of the book of Ruth in the divine canon was for one purpose only, to show the wonderful glories of our kinsman-redeemer.

Yes, there's a law that shut us out. The law of God that revealed our sinfulness, that built a barrier, that said, Thus far shall thou come, and no farther. But thank God there was a higher law than this, the law of the kinsman-redeemer.

There was one who came and took on him our flesh and our blood. He became our kinsman in order that he might also become our redeemer. And woven into this story thus far is a simple strand.

The woman who was such a wretched sinner, it was her sin that brought her into touch or contact with the Savior. The woman who was equally sinful found that she was brought in touch with the Savior by her faith. The other woman, no matter how virtuous she was and how righteous and fine and splendid she was, was nonetheless shut out by the law of God.

But it is the redeemer who comes to be our Savior, our kinsman-redeemer, who can bring us in despite this law. Now, hasten quickly. The other woman, Bathsheba.

Now, you know, I look in vain for any reason in the world why Bathsheba was included in this genealogical record. And I found a great deal of difficulty finding any reason at all. One day I was reading one of Spurgeon's great sermons and he said this, and it gave me a hint.

He said, whenever I'm in difficulty or trouble, I can find no explanation in the word of God. Search as hard as I may for a solution to the problem. I make a beeline for Calvary and I find the answer in grace.

Well, I did that with Bathsheba. I ran straight to the cross and I said, Lord, it seems to me the only reason why you brought this woman's name in at all was by grace. It's grace that brought her in.

She had nothing that would merit God's favor. It's grace that brought her in. It's just pure, sovereign, inexplicable grace.

Do you know any other reason why God brought you in, or me, than the grace of God? So when I put these pieces together, they tell me this. The woman who was so sinful, her sin brought her in touch with the Savior. The woman equally sinful, her faith brought her in contact with the Redeemer, the Savior.

The woman who, though righteous and fine and good and splendid, shut out by the law, is brought in by the higher law of the kinsman Redeemer. And the woman who has no other reason, nor to claim upon God at all, in this case, but the grace of God, this brought her into contact with the Savior. And then one last thought.

There's one more woman who's mentioned here. Mary. Mary, the mother of our Lord.

What is he trying to say in the unraveling of the divine story? Well, can you explain, my friend, the miracle of how a sinful woman could encompass in her body the Holy Son of God? Even Luke, when he's trying to explain this miracle, he says the angel said to Mary, that holy thing which is conceived in thee is of the Holy Ghost. I don't understand how the Holy Son of God, the one who inhabits eternity, could be shrunken to a human embryo and be deposited in the womb of a sinful woman, and how she could carry in her body this holy thing until that wondrous moment when he entered into our race, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law. I don't understand that.

But the Bible says it so. And I don't understand how that same holy, sinless, eternal Son of God can live in this poor body. But I know he does.

I know that one day, one marvelous, wonderful day, the greatest day in my life, the Son of the living God entered into my experience and came to dwell in my heart and makes this temple so weak, this body, this sentiment of plague, so weak, his own temple. And I carry about every moment of every day deity in my body. The Son of God lives in my heart.

The writer of the old Christmas carol that we sing so many times at Christmastime said it just right, didn't he? How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given. So, God imparts to human hearts the wonders of his heaven. No ear may hear his coming, yet in this dark world of sin where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

And that's the miracle of salvation. So, on the first, very first page of the New Testament, the Spirit of God begins to weave into the genealogical record of our Lord this rather uninteresting, otherwise perhaps boring record. He weaves in these strands that spell out the wonderful story that the one about whom it's taught he came to bring sinners in who by faith were trusted.

Shut out by the laws of God, he came that they might be brought in despite that law and by sovereign grace work a miracle, the miracle of regeneration of life. All through the stars that we pray. Lord Jesus, we stand once more amazed at thy rich and wondrous grace toward us as sinners.

We take great and fresh courage tonight as we read the story of how thou camest and why thou didst come. It thrills us to remember that thou art saying to us this was for thee, for thee, I came for thee. We've seen chapters of our own biography written out here tonight and yet the wonderful fact, the glorious truth that thou didst come to redeem us.

For this, we give thee our humble, profound thanks and worship thee, O Lamb of Calvary. Amen. He sends the sunshine and the rain.

He encircles this earth with a haze, with a mist that cuts out the rays of the sun, the harmful rays without which it'd burn us up. Now he can do all of these things and keep everything running perfectly. But isn't it too bad that he turned us loose to just get by the best way we can? Or did he? A fella said to me one time, well, God's not going to do for you what you can do for yourself.

And I just wonder sometimes if we don't go along.

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