

A New Creature

by Leonard Ravenhill

The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of God's revelation and the ultimate purpose of God for his beloved son, Jesus Christ.

Duration: 1:09:06

Scripture: Ezekiel 36:25, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 1:18

Topics: "Born Again", "New Creation", "Transformation in Christ"

Description

Leonard Ravenhill emphasizes the transformative power of being in Christ, asserting that anyone who is in Him becomes a new creation, leaving behind their old life. He reflects on the Apostle Paul's journey from a zealous persecutor of Christians to a passionate advocate for the Gospel, illustrating the depth of God's mercy and the radical change that occurs through faith. Ravenhill challenges the congregation to recognize their own transformation and the call to live out their new identity in Christ, highlighting that true salvation is not just about forgiveness but also about receiving a new heart and spirit. He encourages believers to embrace their new life, filled with purpose and the power of God, and to share this message of hope with others. The sermon concludes with a call to action, urging listeners to live boldly as new creations in Christ.

Transcript

Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, or he is a new creation. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

I think that in our reading we should drench ourselves in this chapter. It seems to me that it is the most complete list of theological things, if you want to put it that way, that Paul ever gave us. Theology is a kind of frightening word to pew dwellers, I'm sure, but there's a very simple definition of theology, I think, that theology is a systematized knowledge concerning God as he has revealed himself to man.

I've said more than once that God gave us the Bible and men gave us theology to confuse it, and it sometimes seems a bit like that. But here Paul gives us, I feel I can get the pulse of the Apostle, I can get the heartbeat of the Apostle Paul, as I read this tremendous chapter. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.

I can prove that to you three, because it's written here in the word of God. Number two, how do you explain this congregation? How do you explain us if God doesn't take anybody in, what are you doing

here? He can take anybody, he can take nobody, he can take somebody, he can take everybody. This man was on a massive murder mission when he went down that Damascus road, again breathing out threatenings.

You talk about zeal, you talk about vision, you may talk about enthusiasm, Paul had it all. And he would have gone down in the history of the church as the, shall we say, as the Hitler of his day. After all, the infant Christ had only just been born when Herod decided to liquidate him.

The infant church had only just been born when Paul decided to liquidate it. He couldn't for a minute understand the arrogance of a bunch of people that were worshipping a man who said they said he'd died and been crucified, which everybody knew, but that he'd risen from the dead, which nobody knew, because he never showed himself to anybody. You ever wonder why God doesn't show himself to sinners? He never did it, he never did it after he rose from the dead, he didn't bother with them.

He'd spend all his life trying to persuade them, at least the years of his ministry, which is a combination of supernatural power, from raising the dead to everything else, and they wouldn't believe on him. So he didn't bother with them after he rose again. He just came to his own.

In the first time he came to his own, they received him not. The second time he came to his own, and they were terrified when they saw him anyhow. But you see, this man has a massive intellect.

He has a rich tradition. Again, look at his pedigrees of the tribe of Benjamin, of the seed of Abraham, a Pharisee of the Pharisees. One of the upper cross, they sat in a house like this with different stages, and he was on the top bench.

He was one of the leading men. He was pure-blooded. He could trace his ancestry way back there.

And he knew the law like no other man that ever lived. I don't think Gamaliel knew it better than the Apostle Paul. He was a lawyer, that will interest a certain lady here.

He was a very brilliant lawyer. And you know, I don't think ever seeing that lovely hymn, When I surveyed the wondrous cross without thinking of the Apostle Paul. My richest gain I count but loss.

What did we bring to Christ? Most of us, a lot of lousy sins. Some of us, maybe a bit of money, a bit of intellect, but he had everything. He seems to me to be the almost perfect personality.

And he'd invested it all. He loved Abraham. He had Abraham to his father.

He loved the law. He loved the prophets. This bunch don't have any law and prophets.

Who are they? A bunch of fishermen. Don't have an intellectual amongst them. Don't have a man with a degree amongst them.

And they're setting up a rival system against a system that's been there for millenniums. And not only that, but they say that's false and this is true. They say they're right and we're wrong.

Well he decided to put an end to it. And you talk about the mercy of God. Do you wonder that later, of course he did believe John 3.16 that God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son.

And later he says Christ loved the church. But you know the supreme miracle was not that he loved the world or loved the church. He says he loved me and gave himself for me.

And the great old Saint Rutherford in Scotland said if there's ever a miracle which is greater to you than your own salvation you'd better check up on it. Because you don't know where that other man was. You don't know his inmost being, his thoughts, his aspirations.

You know the cesspool of your own heart. You know the pit from which he lifted you. You can only guess about the pit from which he lifted somebody else.

So Samuel Rutherford from whom we got that wonderful hymn The sands of time are sinking, the dawn of heaven breaks. The man may shut up in a prison. When somebody came one day and said the walls are green with slime and the sea washes in and the wind blows.

You've no window, just a grill there. And you're even shivering now and you're ill fed and everything's bad, isn't it? Ah well he kind of says I hadn't noticed it. You mean you didn't know this wall, look at the green slime on it.

You never noticed there's a hole that a rat goes down? You've never noticed that fill? Well he says as a matter of fact just before you came in that stone was shining like a ruby and this was shining like an emerald and that was as brilliant as a diamond and the king was here in his majesty. That's pretty sad when somebody tries to rub your nose out like that and you say brother you spoiled it all, it was great till you came, isn't that nice? I was banqueting with the king. So he says the bride eyes not her garments.

I've never seen this happen but he says the bride eyes not her garments but her dear bridegroom's face. I will not gaze on glory but on the king of grace. Not on the crown he giveth but on his pierced hand when thrown where glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land.

And later he says it were a well spent journey all seven deaths lay between and Paul would have said amen, amen, amen, amen you know because he says I die daily. Now there was a time when he went to the cross and he got on to the cross and he died to self but then you can die every day. How can that which is dead die? Well you see here's the thing that he died to himself.

But you see we're still alive we still have emotions and choices and all these other things and every day there are things to which I can die. For instance somebody says do you want to go play golf? Now nothing wrong in playing golf. I mentioned fishing one day and the preacher jumped on me.

He said anything wrong with fishing? I said no. Peter did it when he was backslidden. But there's nothing wrong with fishing or golfing for a little season but if the Lord says listen you didn't spend enough time with me this morning I want you for the three hours you're going to spend on the golf course then golf becomes sin.

And so could shopping or any other thing. If I give something the preeminence above him and so Paul says I die daily. And not only that he didn't say it with his tongue in his cheek and a bit of aren't I a hero or self pity.

He says I glory in this fact. Isn't it wonderful that when he went down that Damascus road breathing out threatenings. Isn't it? I say this is why he's my third argument that this scripture is true.

Number one because the Bible says so. Number two because you're here and you encourage me. I mean he got hold of you Ben so he can do it with anybody.

And number three the apostle Paul. You see he is the man who's breathing out threatenings. There is no hatred like religious hatred.

And yet that very man is the man who wrote the greatest hymn of love that's ever been written. 1 Corinthians 13. And he says love dareth all things.

But he says if a man doesn't follow God let him be a curse. Now there's love that's balanced. It's not some sloppy sentimental thing that gives you a hug and a kiss and says well that's nice and so forth.

That's all right. But you see he's so balanced that he says I not only love you but I love him. And if you offend him then then you'll be a curse.

If you won't follow the Lamb the curse of God. It's only blessing or cursing there is no other way. What a shock it must have been on that Damascus road.

He said I'm going down to Damascus. I've got a law in my pocket here. I've got the authority from the chief priests and elders to liquidate that church.

And you know what nobody's going to stop me. And the last thing he ever dreamed of was that Jesus would slip on his throne and block his way. And Jesus intercepted the mass murderer.

Stopped him on the road with a fire and hatred in his heart. And then you remember he says on that Damascus road it pleased God to reveal himself to me. But then he went to God's Bible school.

Not God's Bible school in Cincinnati. There is one there by that title. But God's Bible school in the wilderness.

Where he takes all his great men. A lady asked me in one meeting what university did he go to? I said Bush University. She said Bush University.

Bush University. Do I know anybody that went there? I said well Moses. He said Moses who? Very learned lady.

So I said it's that university in the silence where you can go for nothing. Though the fees are pretty stiff and it's a desperately lonely place. But it's where God takes all his men that he's going to use.

There are a lot of things we don't say about the heroism of Jesus. And I think one of them is that he was prepared to make yokes for donkeys necks. And caskets to bury people in.

And a piece of wood and shape it for a spoon and a fork. For thirty years he did that. When did he know he was the son of God? I don't know.

But I'll tell you from that moment. I don't believe there's any irritation and restlessness in him. Even when it dawned upon him that I'm equal with the Father.

Ah now I remember the glory I had with him before the world was. And I think of the eternity I'm going to be with him. But you know what? That makes it all the easier for me to knock a nail in somebody's casket.

For me to repair a wheelbarrow for a little boy. That's alright. Thirty years of probation, what's that? I'm going to have three years of ministry.

I'd like to send all preachers to work for thirty years and let them work three. Most of them would quit anyhow. That would be a blessing.

Because if the fire didn't burn by the time they'd finished their probation in a workshop, they ought to quit. I'm glad I did five years in a factory. It was a rough factory.

Eight thousand people worked in it. Five thousand were Jews. Many communists.

They ridiculed me. They scorned me. I told them the night after I was baptized.

I was only fifteen. And I went in the factory and I said, I got baptized last night. Oh ho! John the Baptist back again.

And if they wanted a pattern, they didn't say Leonard Ravenhill has it. My number was 102. They always said, oh John Baptist just took it.

John Baptist just took it. Crack a joke. Play fun.

John the Baptist. I rejoiced in it. I thought it's great.

At least they know who I am. I didn't have to tell anybody. I used to rejoice when I heard men testifying to other men who Leonard Ravenhill was.

He's a Christian. He's not that Jehovah Witness we had one over there. And he isn't just a Baptist or a Methodist.

He's a Christian. I thought, well hallelujah. They know you know.

Once you put your flag up, you've settled a lot of problems. And the Apostle Paul is taken away into the university of silence. Here on the road God revealed himself to me.

There he revealed himself in me. Herb, the Lord be with you. I love Herb very much.

Love you all. Some a bit more than others. All right.

But I see more of him anyhow. Because there's more of him. But I see more of him.

But you know what he prayed this afternoon is surely the desire of all our hearts. I want to know him. That was Paul.

Paul could raise the dead. Drive devils out of people. But it never satisfied him.

He never said, you want to see my track record? There is an apostle. All apostles together never did as much as I've done. Never raised as many churches.

Never wrote as many books. Look at my track over Europe. See where I established a church there and there and there and there.

And I've been in more jails than any of you. All of you put together. Do you know what he said? After about 40 years, 35 years of ministry.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection. And the fellowship of his suffering. Being made conformable unto his death.

Now the apostle here I say, shut away with God. Any of us want to go for three and a half years with the Lord? Wouldn't that be Sunday? Boy, I'd like to see us do that. Honest to goodness I would.

I'd like to see us all sell out and go in Arizona. You know, somewhere where it's warm. The Lord would never take us in the snow for sure.

And just eat the commonest food we could have. And have four or five, six hours every day together in fellowship. Not just because we want to become super saints.

But we want to listen and listen and listen. And get all the rotten world washed away. And all its ambitions and all the things it tries to get hold of us again with.

That must be something. And you see when Paul came out from this experience. He was a transformed man.

It's safe to say this, he knew more about the redemptive purposes of God. Than any man or maybe all other men that ever lived put together. And I can give you a summary of what his thinking was after he'd been there for three years.

After he'd rethought about the law, the prophets and everything else. After God had revealed, what did he reveal to him? Oh my. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him.

And somehow God was able to share a thousand if not a million secrets with Paul for three years. And you know what? He never shared one with anybody. I've often said the Lord would never put a strain like that on a woman.

But anyhow. You know the apostle Paul, he shut him up in heaven for years. Or shut him in heavenly places.

And he says, you can say what you like but. This revelation in the third heaven, not for anybody else. I've reminded you before that while there were twelve disciples.

They were not all the same. They did not all go to the Mount of Transfiguration. They did not all go into the Garden of Gethsemane.

They didn't all go to every miracle. God is selective. He always has been.

You get a common crowd of believers, fine. But in the ministry he made some apostles and some evangelists and some teachers and some prophets. They're very very different ministries.

All healings are not the same. I have a friend if he prayed for this thing nearly it would heal. He has a marvelous touch of faith for people who are deaf.

Another man has a, I know has a remarkable gift of faith for people who have arthritis. There are gifts, not a gift, gifts of healing. God distributes as he wills.

Let a man find his gift, let him use it, let him operate it. So long as he gives the glory to God. But here is, here is a summation of all his thinking for three years.

It's from the Philips translation of the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians chapter 4. And, well that's not the verse, it isn't that at all. I'm sorry, it's the first letter, his letter to the Ephesians, the first chapter. Listen to this, please.

For God has allowed us, he's talking to you, he's talking to me. Ephesians 1 and verse 9. For God has allowed us to know the secret of his plan and it is this. He purposes in his sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated in Christ.

I think that's superb. I'm going to get my friend that makes some steel plates with nice pictures of, I'm going to get him to put that on a plate. I think that's the whole answer.

That is the ultimate of God for his beloved son. That God has purpose in his sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated in Christ. In other words, whatever there is in the world right now, God has said that it's there for this supreme purpose that Jesus Christ ultimately may have full possession.

Or as Isaac Watts puts it in that lovely hymn, Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth its successive journeys run, and his kingdom stretch from shore to shore till moon shall wax and wane no more. God has designed that everything in creation is going to be to the ultimate glory of his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, having seen that, I suggest to you this explains what's given to us in this chapter.

It's a wonderful theological list, if you like. But to me it explains the outrageous sacrifice of the Apostle Paul. He had an outrageous sacrifice.

He had an unquenchable zeal. He had a deathless compassion. You see, once he saw that wondrous cross, once he realized the biggest headache, and I use that word wisely, the biggest problem God ever had, wasn't the Israelites, it was the Apostle Paul.

Because he said, I'm the chief of sinners. Well, if he can take care of the chiefs, he can take care of the rest of the gang. I was the chief sinner that God had to deal with.

And once he settled that, he said everything else is easy for God. And so I say it explains his outrageous sacrifice. It explains his unquenchable zeal.

It explains his own statement when he said, I'm a debtor. Now, really, has that gripped you as it gripped me? You're a debtor to every living soul this afternoon. There are more heathen in the world at this given point of history than any period in history.

Our Emmanuel Zerber's words again, I don't know how they reacted on David, he was there, but when George Zerber said, Afghanistan, way up in the mountains there, above northern India, Afghanistan has 14 million people, only 14 known followers of Christ. Tunisia, I guess an Arab state, has almost 50 million people and only 50 or less than 50 known Christians. Wow, that's a serious situation, isn't it? Hmm? But Paul, as it were, puts on his seven league boots and he strides there over Asia Minor and he says, I'm a debtor.

Debtor to all men, whether he's a barbarian or a Sidon or a bond or a freak, it makes no difference. I'm a debtor, I have the thing that he needs. He's dead, I have life.

He's in darkness, I have light. He's full of sin, I have a message of redemption. He's crippled, I'm able to liberate him in the power of the gospel.

I'm a debtor to all men. You know, one of the classic sermons, they say, of the Apostle Paul was preached on, as I mentioned last week, in the 17th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, when he preached to all the intellectuals. The poets, the Stoics, the Epicureans, and so forth.

And it's classified, they've classified it, Paul preaching on Mars Hill, M-A-R-S, Mars Hill, in Athens. A spot which is still revered and visited by, of course, Christian tourists. Paul preaching on Mars Hill.

It seems to me here, in 1 Corinthians 13, he's not preaching from Mars Hill, he's preaching from a dunghill. It's the corrupt capital of the world. Everything that's vile and vicarious and vulgar and vain is extolled.

And yet, there's no fear in his heart when he goes. I mean, look, you just think of this word, you kind of stretch it over the whole human race. This is what he says with a trumpet voice.

I wonder if the angels kind of shuddered when he said it. Do you think angels have any reaction when we talk? They must wonder sometimes, the junk we talk. But do you think sometimes when we're praising or when we give us a, do you think that angels kind of shudder? Can you see this little man standing in the middle of the cesspool of the world, and he says with a trumpet voice, If any man, do you know what the inference is? Any man anywhere at any time be in Christ, he is a new creation.

Well, I think that's fabulous. I, I, I was moved to tears time and again as I meditated. Here's a little fellow, he's taking on the world, the flesh, the devil, the sewer houses round about, the flesh pots, the iniquity, the apostasy, the unbelief.

And he says if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. Because all things pass away. And all things become new.

I can imagine somebody there listening, saying, you know, yeah, it's alright him saying that, but I wonder where he gets his authority. Well, so would I if I didn't have my Bible. But do you remember that Jesus says the same thing on the last day, the great day of the feast.

Another heroic situation when Jesus goes in the middle of the temple, which had about 6,000 people in, and the Jews said they had a monopoly of God. And the Jews were celebrating historic events. And Jesus smashed the walls of petition down, and instead of saying if any Jew is thirsty, let him come unto me and drink.

That would have put the woman at the well right out of it, brother. But Jesus stood there in the middle of that, that bunch of arrogant people who said we have Abraham to our father, we have the law, we have the prophets, we have the commandments, and the lesser breeds, God has no interest in them. Do you remember what Jesus said, I kind of think, if you'd seen the corner of his mouth, he had a smile there.

He said, if any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. The Jews must have been blazing mad. Do you remember he stood at the door of the church of Laodicea and knocked, and he says what? I stand at the door and knock, and if any good Jew would like to come this way, if you'd like to transfer your membership out of the ecclesiastical group of Abraham and come to a bunch of nonentities like us, we'd certainly welcome you.

But Jesus knocks on the door and he says, hey, if any man, what? We'll open the door. My, my, what a scope the gospel has. If any man, anywhere, at any time, will come, well, I'll open the door and welcome him in.

I'll give him to drink of water of the well that never shall run dry. You see, here again, all the barriers are pulled down. He is made of one blood, all nations.

Sin is the same wherever you go. Doesn't matter whether you wear jewels to do it in the Waldorf Astoria, or do it some lousy back street, or you go to the flesh pots in Las Vegas, or you go up into some cannibal area, sin is the same. Contrast is great.

I like reading poetry. And I think the greatest modern poet, not because he was English by a long way, but the greatest modern poet surely must have been John Maysfield, a poet laureate. And his poem is, I think, about 130, 140 pages long, not just stanzas, but pages long.

And it's called The Everlasting Mercy. And he begins it like this, from 41 to 51, I was my folk's contrary son. I bit my father's hand right through, I broke my mother's heart in two.

Sometimes I'd go without my dinner, now when I think of times I'd ginner. From 51 to 61, I cut my teeth and took to fun. I learned what not to be afraid of, and what stuff women's lips are made of.

And then with what a rosy feeling, good ale makes the floor seem like the ceiling. And how the moon gives shining light to those who go home singing by it. My blood did leap, my flesh did revel.

My soul was token to the devil. From 61 to 67, I lived in disbelief of heaven. I fought, I lied, I porched, I whored, I did despite unto the Lord.

I cursed till a man goes pale, and 19 times I went to jail. But friends observe and look upon me, see how the Lord took pity on me. That's quite a record, isn't it? He cursed until men went pale, and 19 times he went to jail.

I fought, I lied, I porched, I whored, I did despite unto the Lord. And then he says, one day in loving kindness, Jesus came and lifted me out of a horrible pit. That's why this man isn't ashamed to go to Corinth.

Sure they love licentiousness, sure they worship the body, sure they were full of iniquity, sure they were just the greatest manifestation of devil possessed men maybe the world ever saw. And yet he stands there and he says, listen if any man hear my voice, I have authority to tell you in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, you can be a new creation. Oh yes, you look at Saul Cain in The Everlasting Mercy, and at the other end of the spectrum you see a man who is a gentleman, cultured, refined, impeccable morality, a scholar, belongs to the most influential family in England, outside of the royal family.

And as I've said often, I've got problems with John Wesley. Do you know why? Because he fasted more when he wasn't saved than I do when I am saved. He got up at four o'clock in the morning to pray before he was redeemed.

Bit of a rebuke isn't it? And he stopped powdering his wig because he said that powder, I could use the money for poor people who have no money and have no bread. And he became a missionary when he wasn't saved, he came to Georgia. And he slept in a forest one night when the frost came, and he said in

the morning, I struggled but I got one arm out of the murder, and then I reached over and I pulled the other out, and then he said I got my hair and I pulled on that till I got it out, he wore long hair to his shoulders you know, and then he said I released one leg and then I got the other up, and I struggled out, I was all white with frost.

And I got up and I shed the frost off my suit, and then he said I stood up and sang, Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise him all creatures here below. I think a guy had got victory and he wasn't even saved. I mean if you can sleep until you're just one beat from being frozen to death, and then start magnifying the Lord, I think he got a good head start on most people.

How different he is from this man who's at the bottom of the ladder, that you see one day when they got in a storm, and the ship wobbled like this and then like that, and he was sure they wouldn't make it, there's a man there just praising the Lord, magnify the Lord with me, oh yes he's there, high and lifted up, he's on the throne, and Wesley says say friend, how come you've got this piece and I don't have it? Aren't you scared you're going to be swallowed up? He said no. Aren't you scared you'll go down? He said no I wouldn't go down anyhow, I'll go up. But he said you're not afraid? No, no, no, my time's in his hands.

Wesley said when I saw a man with peace like that, I asked Peter Bowler, the old German preacher there, well what's the secret? And that's where grace began to work on his heart, but you see the difference, here is a man crawling through the gutter, licentious, lustful, devilish, fighting men, fighting anybody, going to jail, breaking the law, and he slips in and God doesn't rebuke him, he says come you're welcome. Wasn't it that old reprobate in New York? I remember, what was the bridge we went over out of New York that came to Fulton's? It didn't come to Fulton's Street did it? Where'd it come into? Canal Street, was it? Brooklyn Bridge, right. And when we came over the bridge there was a sign, oh they're doing such silly things, they've spoiled a nice old building, put a new face on it, but it says Water Street on the front, Hadley, rescued the perishing there.

You know the man that walked down the aisle 19 times? They baptised him 19 times, that's a record for anybody except a Mormon. And 19 times he got saved, and 19 times he backslid, and 19 times he was baptised. One night he staggered to the front, you know, half drunk, and somebody says pray with him.

Pray with that bum I prayed with him 5 times. You pray with him. I prayed with him 4 times.

Would you like to pray with him? Prayed with him a couple of times. His brain's gone, he's blown his mind. That man has lived in more sin than any man in New York.

Somebody went one day, and if I remember right, an old bum himself that had been rescued knelt at the side of him. They say it takes a thief to catch a thief, sometimes it takes a bum to catch a bum I think, or an intellectual to catch an intellectual. And the old fella knelt at the side of the grubby, smelly old drunk there, and he says well, are you saved? He says yeah, I've been saved 19 times.

No, are you really saved? I can't understand it. They talk about the blood, and they've told me about the Passover. You may as well tell him three blind mice, he didn't know a thing about Passover or anything else.

And the old drunk says to him, hey I'll tell you what, you know what Jesus says? He says if any man comes to me, if he'll come and say he's sorry for his sins, he says it doesn't matter who you are, as lousy as you are, you can come, but let me tell you what he said. He says him that cometh unto me, he will in no

wise cast out. Now he says if he doesn't cast you out, what does he do? Oh man alive, he says he takes me in, he takes me in, and he jumped up, he says he took me in, he took me in, he took me in.

All the theology in the world couldn't get him in. But it's as simple as that, to that man somebody may need an explanation of theology alright. But this old drunken bum needed somebody who says if he doesn't cast you out, he'll take you in.

And as simple as that, he entered into eternal life. Oh I can imagine these men in Corinth saying well hold it a minute, you know I've got to admit that man's got something. I've been watching his life and you know he could be a scholar.

Did you hear what he did last week? No. Well he didn't do like they do in the church there you know, the preacher's always saying hold on the last pinnacle of the temple or we need something for this. They tell me he had nothing to eat for about five days.

And he went down to old Isaac Smith's there and he said would you have room for a guy that can repair tents for three or four days? And he said just the man. How much you know? Oh he said forget it, you get there sorry. And so Paul the apostle, the brilliant man that wrote he didn't send another circular letter out you know and say I'll have to revise my mailing list.

He just got down and says well Lord you give me some good fingers and hey let's do a bit of sowing we'll do the reaping later. But anyhow he said let's do some sowing and he was content to sow as much as to pray. Isn't it great when you're in that state? Bobby blinked her eye she didn't say anything but anyhow it is isn't it? Paul says I've learned whatever state I'm in to be content.

Isn't that nice? Sue must have learned that. One day she's on the floor next day she's on the tractor some day she's on the roof she's chasing silly sheep which is a pastor's job really but anyhow you know what the scripture says? Paul the apostle says I have learned whatever state listen you can't do that unless your heart's being cleansed. Now listen just for a minute if any man be in Christ he goes to heaven doesn't say that.

If any man be in Christ his name's well reserved in a mansion doesn't say that. If any man is in Christ he'll never be tempted. If any man be in Christ he'll never know what hardship is.

If any man be in Christ he'll never even have a headache. You know there's a lot of silly interpretations of the Christian life like that these days oh if you have a headache if you have stomach ache well somewhere there's sin in your life. Well the Bible doesn't say that so forget what anybody else says anyhow.

He doesn't mention any of those things. He says if any man be in Christ he is a new creation. Because I'm in Christ I've no exemption from temptation I've no exemption from trial I've no exemption from sickness I've no exemption from hardship.

I put on this nice new suit and as I put it on today I said Lord I don't know why I've got two or three suits because a lot of the most gorgeous men in the world are in a lousy prison camp in Russia today and the only toilet facilities are a bucket in the common it stinks like hell itself and food they hardly get and I would bet I'll bet God's getting more praise out of some of those people than he's getting out of us. We have said so many things luxuries are the normal way of life now. Now Paul didn't have it that way.

This is a day when we're preaching a salvation which is all sunshine without shadow all pleasure without pain. All delights and no difficulties. Listen to Paul in weariness, in painfulness, in fasting, in tribulation, in distress, in famine, in peril, in nakedness.

Those are tremendous. He said nothing to laugh at. I'm not laughing at those things I'm laughing at what he said about them.

He said our life's affliction which is the fulfillment. That must have made the devil blazing mad. I guess the devil gnashed his teeth and said I've just about run out of weapons I don't know what to try on Paul I've tried them all and do you know what he does? You may as well try and blow out the sun you may as well try and sink a cork you can't get the guy to gripe or grumble or anything.

I got him locked up in jail he'd already been bruised and beaten and he got about enough to kill six men and old Silas was saying boy this is hard here and he says you know there's only one way to get out of this and he says well Paul what do you suggest?

He says I think we ought to sing a few hallelujah choruses you know this is the time to sing at midnight nobody's singing the Lord isn't too busy he'll hear us and they struck up and the whole of the prison cell rang with the praises of men who ought to have been so in love send us deliverance don't let the saints forget to pray for us tonight don't worry about the saints Paul they're all sleeping anyhow so forget it so often we look for other people to get us out and God says get out yourself sing make a joyful noise unto the Lord I've got a beautiful voice it gets spoiled coming out but inside man I can sing man sometimes when Martha isn't even aware in bed I lie there early nights early morning I go in my office and I put my feet up on her chest and I just sing I don't say a word it's

in my heart you know I sing parts of the hallelujah chorus I sing better than Gally Gertrude or anybody ever sang sure that's what the scripture says make a joyful noise in your heart making melody unto the Lord in your heart oh yes when a man has surveyed the wondrous cross like the apostle he's not worried about circumstance he says listen I want to tell you what it all is Satan if you want to keep working overtime and keep putting the fire on in hell and make some new instrument to torture me and get me to break you've missed it and he says let me quote a little note I wrote to the Romans the other day you know Paul wrote his best songs of praise when he was in jail maybe that's where we'll have to go before we get tuned up but anyhow he writes to the Philippians he says rejoice and

listen and again I say rejoice and he's in a lousy prison he swaggers and he says what shall separate us from the love of God tribulation, distress, famine peril, nakedness, sword he says neither height nor depth and then he thumbs his nose to the devil and says listen you can't invent one thing that can separate me from the love of God separate me from the church you may separate me from the fellowship of the saints you can separate me from the Bible you can but from God you can't separate me so what if I've got him Charles Wesley's lovely hen thou O Christ art all we want more than all in thee I find nigh, nigh, nigh how sufficient is of God all right these men I can imagine again they're saying well you know he's a wonderful man you see Paul's strongest point to me after knowing Christ

was this he was the best example of his own theology wasn't he he says listen I follow so close to Christ if you follow as close to me as I follow to Christ and you end up in trouble up there I'll pay the bill I'll be responsible he says what things you have seen in me do and the God of peace be with you be ye followers of Christ no he doesn't say that he says follow me I wonder how many preachers of us in the country dare stand up before God and a congregation and say you live on the same level of joy or victory

or travail come on yes you can come in the tower and we'll sing and magnify and tune our hearts up and glorify the Lord but listen next week we're going in the dungeon we're going to sit where they sit we're going to have two days of groveling before God and saying God in heaven

we can groan on a lush rug like this in a beautiful building and some of those saints in China and wonder death would be a joy God lets them go on in the misery alright let's wind this up here's a man who says well you know I've been listening to that man Paul and I'm sure he means what he says but I'll tell you what it doesn't include me I mean I hold every record for impurity immorality indecency vileness lust you know I'd like to have a word with that fellow Paul you mean to say that if I have 50 years record of devilry enough to damn a hundred men never mind one if I come and kneel at the feet of Jesus and say Jesus I'm a sinner I'm sorry forgive me you mean to say he takes the book of record my record and here's my life story in heaven and God says snatch it there that old drunk

there licentious libertines praying take it and throw it in the sea of forgetfulness you mean to say God can forgive all that sin in a split second and he says exactly just that they tell the story in England of a man who got redeemed like that like a man we had in our church he exploded now and again and he'd send a shouting hallelujah through the church they got a new preacher from college and he took the man on once come to my apartment the old man got there and he says now friend I've got to talk with you you see this business of yours shouting hallelujah some of the people have objected to this you sit behind an old lady and every time you shout she jumps and thinks she's going to have a seizure now I want you to tone down then the doorbell rang and the fellow went oh Jack nice to

see you one of my old college friends so he says to the old man sit in my office there just for a few minutes and he thought well the old boy won't he won't get anything out of that theology, Hodges theology, Luther's theology, Wesley's he'll not get anything in there most likely go to sleep so I said hallelujah I said it's an old chap comes to my church it's a big crib I'm going to tone him down a bit later here's a bigger hallelujah he goes in and here's the old fellow praising the Lord hallelujah he says what are you reading I said Encyclopedia Britannica and you're shouting hallelujah he said yeah so the Encyclopedia Britannica no what are you reading what does it say in it well it says just off the coast of the Philippines the sea is how many miles deep is about 8 miles deep and then

there's another spot they've never found the bottom of it they can't find the bottom of the ocean hallelujah what do you say hallelujah for well he said I was just reading this morning he said it cast my sins beyond the depth of the sea and then he put up a notice no fishing you can't bring them back oh my sometimes we ought to go back Alexander White was travelling one day to an appointment one night and the train was very slow and it was very foggy and I've been in trains like that when I had to preach at night and you go to the window and you rub the fog off the window and you look out and they've got dim little lamps and you can't see and he saw the name of one of those Scottish towns you know Lungasaki or something oh man dear he said sure now and I've missed the station he'd been in

the train half an hour too long there was no train back he got out there and they said well you'll have to wait for hours there's no train going back and he said suddenly I realised the Lord said to me you've never thanked me for all the sins you've missed you've never been a drunk you've never been a thief you've never done this you've never done that and he went home and wrote a list of sins he'd never committed and he said my heart rose in gratitude to God I knew there was a lot I hadn't done but then I never thought of the things I'd never done in the area of sin and I thanked God I didn't have to repent of them I thanked God I wasn't stained with them can God forgive me now then I can imagine a man saying but wait a

minute what's the guarantee that I won't go do them over again it's

one thing to get rid of the past it's another thing for me to have the strength and the stamina and the grace of God not to go do those things this is a corresponding verse in my judgment in the Old Testament to this one in the New Testament Ezekiel 36 and 25 says listen to this beautiful statement then will I sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you a new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you you see that from all your filthiness from all your idols that's the past he'll erase it all doesn't matter how much doesn't matter how black but once I hate it I'm not willing to confess my sin I have to confess it and forsake it and if I confess it and forsake it he says I'll wash the record

away from all your what filthiness and your idols will I cleanse you that's pretty negative but wait a minute listen to what he says a new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you if any man being Christ no no no that's not what he says he says if any man being Christ he's a new creation a new heart well that's what a man needs he doesn't need a new part he needs a new heart he doesn't need a new leaf he needs a new life he doesn't need a new resolution he needs a regeneration it isn't to resolve his own will it's the impartation of God you know as Dave said last week reminded us there God brought Israel out of Egypt not merely to bring them into the promised land but to bring them unto himself but you know I consider there's something a little further than that

because when he writes there to the Ephesians what's the chapter Ephesians I don't remember it now Ephesians 1 I think it is let me find it Ephesians chapter 1 and verse no that's not it it's in Ephesians what's the but anyhow this is what he says he says that we are to the praise of his glory he says he has an inheritance in us you see that you see this again is the miracle that the supreme purpose of God and I believe this is true of Paul's theology as magnificent as it was the supreme purpose of God in redeeming us is that we might have union with God union with him we are to be an inheritance of God himself in other words God has an investment in you do you remember what he says in writing isn't it to the Colossians where he says Christ in you the hope of glory so then Paul is able to

say as long as I live on earth Christ liveth in me the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me in other words as long as I'm on earth Paul says I will magnify Christ in my body whether by life or by death if I die so what I go up to him if I live he lives in me well if he lives in me he sees through me he loves through me he walks through me he indwells me the eyes are no longer my eyes the heart is no longer my heart the will is no longer my will the desires are no longer my desires that's why I say we've preached half a gospel we've preached you can be forgiven for your sins but what about the thing inside that made me do those sins am I going to do them over again a new heart will I put within you one of the great

hymns that Charles Wesley wrote was oh for a heart to praise my God a heart from sin set free a heart that always feels the blood so freely shed for me a heart in every thought renewed and full of love divine perfect and right and pure and good a copy Lord of thine thy nature gracious Lord in parts come quickly from above write thy new name upon my heart thy new best name of love alright he says well number one you say he's able to do it number two you say he's willing to do it but tell me this I've a 50 year record of sin now what ceremony do I go through for my cleansing what are the tribal rites what's the initiation ceremony what's the cost and you come to him and say look Jesus Christ took your sins in his own body on the tree and because of his death and his resurrection every sin

you've committed can be forgiven but not only that he wants more than that he wants to cleanse that heart and indwell that heart by his spirit and then he wants to live in you and love through you and see through you and talk through you well there's nothing more sublime in my judgment this side of heaven than that a new creation you say God can take ugliness out of me and put beauty there yes he can take jealousy and pride out of me yes he can take a vicious spirit out of me and give me tenderness yes he can take a grudging spirit out of me and make me a generous person he can take hate out of me and fill me with love that's what he says you see Wesley has it in another hymn I guess it's been sung all over the world today love divine all love excelling joy of heaven to earth come down

and do you remember what he says in that hymn a new creation again it's not exemption from trial it's not exemption from temptation it's not exemption from the assails of the devil or doubt or fear I'm a human being minus this thing that he has come and cleansed this heart that was once a veritable playground of the devil I found the verse I wanted it's in Ephesians 1 and verse 18 the eyes of your understanding shall know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints God has an investment in you he's going to guard that investment you should get up every morning and say look I'm not like anybody in San Antonio I'm not like anybody in Luling I'm not like anybody in San Marcos or Seguin or I'm like a minority but you see God has an

investment in me he says a new heart and a new spirit I'm glad God makes all things new he says I'll give you a new heart I'll give you a new nature I'm going to take you to the new Jerusalem I'm going to write a new name on your foreheads I'm going to put a new song in your mouth and then as though he says well I'm running out of time isn't that great as parents you know it's maybe when we get the family grown up I was looking at this lovely baby we have nicest in the world as you know I know the other day I looked at her there on the road kicking her heels and she's no worry about taxes she isn't worried about what flight they're going on to Ireland she got no cares at all you know well the scripture says we're not to be like children in another scripture it says we're not to be like

children because they're immature but you know one thing that always thrills me is this oh well let me take it back a minute one thing that scares me is this I hear some woman's going to have a baby you know there are 10,000 hazards aren't there it could be born blind could be born retarded could be born crippled heavens you think of all the possibilities maybe you'd never have a baby isn't it wonderful to know that if somebody's really born again there's never born handicapped when they're born again huh? no Christian was ever born limping when it came into the world as a Christian it was never born limping it was never born with dull eyes it was never born retarded because I often wonder about that but anyhow I wonder why you don't make more speed a lot of us don't make more speed but

isn't it wonderful that every child in the world my few told Nancy that that baby she has is a reincarnation of Haman Hotep's wife 5,460 years ago she wouldn't believe you anyhow she's more sense than that some people believe in reincarnation that's the devil's substitute for regeneration but isn't it wonderful that every little babe that comes in the world is a new babe like so and so I don't like that you know you've got a little boy hasn't got a hair on his head and a tooth in his mouth and suddenly he says isn't he like his daddy that's an insult maybe like his grandpa poor little guy has no tooth he can't do a thing isn't he like his daddy but you know what that's exactly what God expects us to be a duplicate of Jesus Christ don't, don't, don't if somebody says are you saved you'll

answer oh yeah I remember going down there if somebody says to you does Christ live in you hmm well if he doesn't you're not saved you may not be a drunkard you may not be a liar you may not do a lot of lousy

things but unless Christ is in me he says we're reprobate it's the greatest miracle of all creation Jesus didn't die to redeem stars he didn't die to redeem Michael the Archangel or Gabriel he died to redeem somebody as bad as Leonard Ravenhill was or as bad as this man who's been through the cesspools there in Corinth but you see Paul has a marvellous track record he must have been excited I'd like to have lived with Paul for about five years it must have been wonderful hear him arguing with philosophers on Mars Hill all the learned men are there listening and then he steps down

into the gutters into the sewers of hell and he has a confidence because you know what he says he says Christ in you the hope of glory Christ in you the hope of glory you know that hope isn't like a hope, a shallow thing that we say well I hope so that word there is actually Christ in you the confidence of glory isn't that wonderful you say to somebody are you saved and they say yes you say you're not they'll get mad well you can prove they're not or they may be saved from sin but you know the last gift God's going to give me this may not thrill you athletic folks so much it thrills me with a body that's usually praying like 24 hours a day but it thrills me to know that one day I'm going to have a body likened to his glorious body the last gift of God to me will be a body likened to his

glorious body wow that will be wonderful won't it a body like his resurrection body a mind that has no limitation a spirit that can soar as high as anybody in eternity and put all the combined cries of the earth together why we haven't even tasted we haven't got our feet wet he's begun a good work in us he's going to perfect that good work if I let him you know I believe again one of the secrets of this great man the apostle Paul was this that in the three years he was there in the wilderness I believe he spent that time in meditation in contemplation in aspiration and in appropriation I think if you like God filled him up in that three years and said look Paul after this you're going to work it out now one thing I like most about Paul the apostle he wasn't a swivel chair theologian he

wasn't sitting in a high tower in some college he sweat out his theology he worked it out every inch of the way it worked through his body it worked through his emotions it worked through his spirit it worked through his mind it worked through his gut as you think you're a heavenly bunch listen I'm going to tell you I was the top of the rung of the ladder and he changed me and turned me inside out and he filled me with his love and with his peace and with his joy and if he can do it for me he can do it for you and if you despair look at those forking carins what he did took hold of them and transformed him this man doesn't gift-wrap Jesus and say would you accept him? it isn't like reaching in a barrel you know where they wrap a parcel up in some places and you reach for it and you don't

know what's in. do you know what he does? he spreads it all out and he says I'll tell you what you get if you come to Jesus you'll have an awful lot of problems.

I'll tell you what he says here reading again Phillips translation you know where in the authorized version it says we're troubled on every side and yet not distressed persecuted and not forsaken this is how Phillips puts it we are handicapped on all sides but we're never frustrated we are puzzled but never in despair we are persecuted but we don't have to stand alone we may be knocked down but we're never knocked out sure we get knocked down but we don't get knocked out we do get under pressure but greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world we're persecuted but we're not forsaken we're cast down but we're not destroyed you see he's making it very clear that the Christian life isn't a party it's a pilgrimage on earth there is no such thing as a goal it's only a gateway

children of Israel again were to come to Kadesh Barnea a stepping stone it became a stumbling block it was to be a gateway it became a goal they settled down it was to be a thoroughfare it became a terminus once nobody whipped them with a lash once there was no Pharaoh to curse them they said this is great why go any further don't you think most of us got stuck at Kadesh Barnea we haven't gone to possess our possessions again to court dear old Tozer as he would say Len you know it's gonna be embarrassing when we see him we got so satisfied to have given up our lousy way of life so satisfied just have a little peace and joy we didn't go in you know and become strong and get our muscles developed and our vision lengthened and our passion deepened really we settled for very little if any man

anywhere at any time be in Christ this is the test I can't check up on you you know it he's a new creation his old desires have gone he has a new heart he has a new spirit he has new desires he has a new language he has new interest in life the old ones all went down the drain and now he has a new song now he has a new relationship with God now he has a new hope now he has a new power beneath his feet the world of flesh and the devil and Paul as I sometimes say has a kind of a holy swagger as he finishes Romans 8 and he's listed all those terrible things that can threaten our spiritual life you know what he says at the end nay nay nay he says in all things not in some not in many not in the hardest but he puts it all in that one word or in all things we are more than conquerors through

him that loved us you wonder he keeps putting doxologies in his writings you wonder he says thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ for Christ is the center and he's the circumference he's the beginning he's the end he is the light and he is the life all things are in him and all things are yours and near Christ and Christ is God father we thank you for the wonder of your word I think of that old song that says oh what a salvation this that Christ liveth in me Lord we ought to go forward with a holy courage to the most desperate people we know and tell them that there is a sufficiency in Jesus Christ that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God that he is able to break every fetter that he is able to undo whatever Satan has done in the

heart that he's able to remove the malignancy of sin and come and dwell in purity and peace and joy within us God as we think of the expense it's a costly thing to go to hell the devil never yet Lord as we think of it the devil never said to a man sit down and count the cost of going to perdition Jesus did when he needed men badly he said sit down and count the cost if you're able to make it Lord in one sense it costs us nothing to go to heaven you've done it we have to appropriate the power and the blessing to get there we think of those today who have a hangover from the last night last night sin we think of those who sold their bodies on the altars of lust we think of those who are in jail today they were free men yesterday we think of a costliness of every immoral thing every satanic

thing it has a price tag on it there's nothing free and men pay with their lives they pay with their brains they pay with their money they pay with their broken homes they pray with a thousand things they pay for their sin and then they're going to pay forever in eternity or as we think of this word where the Apostle began it in this chapter the God of this world hath blinded their eyes we pray that something of this amazing fourth chapter will seep into our spirits knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men knowing Lord but if they kill us we have a home eternal in the heavens we pray Lord that we may be fully rounded Christians that we won't merely read with our eyes from the word but we read with our understanding and our spirits will be edified and our lives will glorify thee as

we turn again to this world of business problems tomorrow we pray that people may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us and we'll give you praise in

his name

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