

Are You Preventing Christ's Return

by Leonard Ravenhill

The sermon challenges believers to reflect on their actions and faith in light of Christ's imminent return and the need for obedience to God's will.

Duration: 52:51

Scripture: Isaiah 9:6, Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:16, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:1-2, Colossians 1:15

Topics: "Second Coming"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of finding freedom in Jesus Christ. He uses the example of a blind man, George Madison, who is given a picture of the queen. Despite his blindness, he is able to imagine what she looks like by feeling her profile. Similarly, God gave his son to a blind world so that we can know what he is like. The preacher also highlights the value of relationships and the joy that can be found in them, even in the midst of difficult circumstances. He encourages believers to continue laboring for the Lord and to live in such a way that they are always ready to meet God. The sermon emphasizes the transforming power of Jesus in the lives of believers and the love that compels them to share the message of salvation with others.

Transcript

Well, this has been quite a week, hasn't it? For better or for worse. For worse, I think. I noticed nobody mentioned the name of God until last night, and then Mr., I never call him Spurgeon, Mr. Reagan, mentioned a number of times about God.

God wasn't mentioned one in all the discussions all the week. But the last slap, did you notice what Gorbachev said when he signed the book? In the name of eternal man. That was subtle.

But it shows where they stand. A smile didn't change the degradation and misery of Afghanistan. It didn't help the people in the prisons in Russia.

I think the situation worldwide is infinitely worse tonight. The devil has scored a triumph, and yet God's still on the throne. A hundred years ago, I wasn't there, but a hundred years ago, William Booth said that to talk about peace while you're building armaments is like talking to a drunkard about sobriety when you're making whiskey.

And this stupid world gets no better, you know that. There's only one answer, that's the Prince of Peace. And we don't want him.

But Russia is still anti-Christ, anti-American, anti-everything that's pure and holy and good. And we're going to have to fight for all we're worth to present the truths of Jesus Christ in the days ahead. Okay, the epistle of Paul to the Colossians.

Just making some comments on this chapter as we go down. Colossians chapter 1, again, I'm reading from the Living Bible, King James Version, the best, the purest. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy is our brother.

To the saints and faithful brethren. Those are not two different groups. There's not saints here and faithful brethren there, it's a double title for them.

Richard Colossi, Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father. We give thanks unto God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you. Now if you jump over into verse 9. For this cause, we also, since the day we heard, do not cease to pray for you.

Now I would imagine that immediately they got a letter that said the apostle Paul, I think the greatest intellect the world ever had and the most superior Christian in the world apart from Jesus himself. I would imagine if they got a personal letter and this is what it is. And they said to each other, you know the apostle Paul, that amazing man that stands before kings, the man that's been to heaven and came back, the man that's been brutalized, he's been lashed 199 times, in weariness, in fastings, in painfulness, in perils of the deep, in perils of his own country.

That awesome man is praying for us. Wouldn't you think that was good? If he was around now, would you call him on the phone and say pray for me? I've got a flat tire. Or some other tragic thing.

Sure it would be great to have the apostle Paul pray for us. But what about the fact that Jesus lives to make intercession for us day by day. However imperfect our prayers are, we don't convince God by eloquence or oratory in prayer.

He reads the heart, our words don't mean that much to him. It's out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth really speaks. And so he knows our hearts.

Again and again the word of God says that. So in Colossians chapter 1, verse 9, How many people look for that? They want to be filled with the Holy Ghost, to just have more energy in prayer, to get so-called anointed. But almost everybody that comes to my office, and too many come, but what they do, most of them are trying to find out the will of God.

The most difficult thing in the world, I think, is to find the will of God individually. Except for one thing. There's one thing more difficult, and that is when you know it, the difficulty is doing it.

The will of God for Noah was to build an ark. He took 120 years to do it. The will of God for Abraham, that he should be a modern spiritual man.

What happened? The Lord got into his life, he was 75 years of age, and God was still operating on him, working on him at 175. And boy, you think that 10 weeks in Bible school is tribulation. Wait till you get out of it, you'll find it really is.

But this is what it's all about. He's praying that they may be filled with a knowledge of his will. That's number one.

In all wisdom, number two. And spiritual understanding, number three. Number four, you might walk worthy of the Lord unto pleasing and be fruitful.

A walk in God that's pleasing and a walk in God that's fruitful. And remember the word of Jesus. You know, people snatch at that verse in the 15th chapter of John, where it says, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, whose is addressed to the people he's been pruning.

And we back off from the pruning. But God starts to prune only to one end, that we may bring forth more fruit. And so he's praying that they may know the will of God, filled with a knowledge of his will, filled with all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that they might walk worthy of the Lord in all pleasing, being fruitful unto every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Strengthened with all might. How do you get strengthened? By walking. That's what people do today.

I saw an announcement on TV. It's better to walk than almost any other exercise. Jogging isn't good because it sends a repercussion up your spine.

And walking is the best. And constantly in the word of God we are urged to walk. But where to walk? He's not concerned that they walk.

He's concerned that they walk worthy. How do we walk worthy? We walk in obedience. God may be telling you to do one thing and telling me to do another.

And I can only walk worthy as I walk in obedience. And as I walk in obedience is a progressive revelation of the will of God. All revelation is progressive.

Boy, if you'd met me, you know, if you'd met me 50 years ago, I knew almost everything. I could answer any question anywhere about anything in the Bible. Then I got old and smart and found out I still know nothing.

But I'm trying to catch up. Strengthen with all might according to the glorious, what? Power and all patience. That's a snag, isn't it? As a man said, Lord, I need patience and I need it now.

But it's the patience we need. The patience to do the will of God. The patience to be lonely.

Whether the walk is uphill or downhill. Seen or unseen. Difficult or easy, we're going to do the thing that God asks us to do.

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers. Of an inheritance of the saints in light. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.

And hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. This is incredible. You see, when people say, oh, I don't really know whether I'm saved or not.

Well, they aren't, for sure. If you walked in darkness, down that corridor. And suddenly I turn you around bringing this room in the light.

Would you know it? Sure you would. If you're carrying a hundred pound sack and I snatch it off your back. Would you know it had gone? Well, sin is a burden.

And immediately a man passes from death to life. How can he not know? One of the most common messages John Wesley preached. And he preached, what? 40,000.

And one text he loved the most was from Romans chapter 8, verse 16. Where he talks about having the witness of the Spirit. The Spirit answers to the blood and tells me I'm born of God.

And we know, we know, read the epistles of John. We know that we've passed from death unto life. There's that accent the whole way through.

We have redemption through his blood, even forgiveness of sins. From whom? One who is the invisible God. The invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

Let me just read this verse and then I'll come back to that. Listen, for by him, remember now. He's talking here to people who had been in trouble, were still in trouble with Gnosticism.

Which was a mixture of Atheism, Judaism and Mysticism from the East. And what he's doing, he's making very, very sure. That they know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

And all this forgiveness is possible through one person only. The Lord Jesus Christ. And so he says, by him are, look, all things that are created.

That are in heaven, in the earth, visible and invisible. Whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created by him.

By who? By the one in the previous verse. The firstborn of every creature. The one mentioned in the middle of the 18th verse.

The firstborn from the dead. He is the first and the last. He's the sentence and circumference of the Christian life.

Things are only possible because of him. We've got to contend for this in the day in which we live. You see, in the day of Jesus, you remember he had constant trouble with the Sadducees.

And the Pharisees. You know the old quip about the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. That's why they were Sadducees.

Okay. But the Pharisees were arrogant and self-righteous. And the man here is, Paul is actually getting firmly into their minds that Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end.

All things consist because of him. He was before the beginning and he'll be there after the end. And it's not possible for me to pass it up without thinking of a... Look at the alls a minute.

In verse 16, all. Further down in verse 16. All things again were created by him and for him.

For he is before all things. And by him all things consist. We gloss over Christmas time and it's so commercialized.

It's so ridiculous. You go in town, you'll see a... What they call it? A crib scene or a manger scene. And you'll see a manger there and you'll see the kings there with their crowns.

And they never were within a hundred miles of it. They never were there anyhow. The shepherds were there, but not the kings.

The second chapter of Matthew tells you the kings came. For a babe, no, for the young child. Who were destroyed.

Children from two years of age. That tremendous massacre that they had. Well, you sang a phrase tonight that always stirs me.

Hark the herald angels sing, Charles Wesley wrote two hundred years ago. Mild he laid his glory by. You mean that that little thing there in that crib is the creator of all things? Because of him all things exist.

All principalities, all powers. Everything centers around that little child. Again, we swooled right over the thing.

This is the very essence of Christianity. This is the most outstanding miracle in a book full of miracles. Without the incarnation, the resurrection is impossible.

Without the resurrection, the incarnation is incomplete. This little babe, Wesley put it in a hill. For our God, the heaven of heavens can't contain him.

But God is contracted to a span. How do you put that holy being in eternity? And cram him, if I may use that phrase, into the womb of a woman. There's nothing like this in all history.

And it's contested. And lots of people during this Christmas time will be fighting against the virgin birth. I was astounded today to notice that even Campbell Morgan, that's pretty sound, says it doesn't really, it's not too vital a thing.

It is a vital thing. He was born of a virgin Mary. Not of a young lady, he's born of a virgin.

What do you think happened? You see, we go over it. Oh, he's born of a virgin. As I've told you before, you think of this pretty little Jewish lady.

Maybe a teenager, I don't know, maybe 19 or 20. And this little tramp, they say, she's pregnant. We've asked the boyfriend, Joseph.

He does no thing about it. What do you think she felt like? What do you think he felt like? Don't you remember there were times in the life of Jesus when those skeptics and critics came and said, show us the father. You talk about your father, show us the father.

It's a fight, isn't it? What are they inferring? You have an earthly father, bring him round. What did they say on another occasion? We're not illegitimate. We were not born of fornication.

You were, they imply. How would you like that? If every time you went down the street, somebody said, look, there's that little bastard coming up. And that's what it means.

She had to bear the reproach for months. The Lord said, you can't share a thing. What did he think? As he's getting more and more near to the time, the day I saw her pregnancy, when she was to be delivered.

And he does no thing and she does no thing. He must have been a wonderful man. A very understanding man.

A very glorious partner. Well, that's how God puts folk together, I guess. But he says, show us the father.

And it's a fight with us. I usually tell the children a story, so I'll tell them one now. We had a queen in England, we have one now.

All the bosses are women these days, all over the world. Even the queen, that's terrible. Time we got her out of office and put a prince there.

But previously we had a queen. We had a queen by the name of Victoria. Queen Victoria was, she ruled for over 50 years.

She was very godly. She read a scripture every morning at breakfast and spent her time in prayer. And when she had castles, she lived in Buckingham Palace.

She had another castle called Windsor Castle. She had a castle in the Isle of Wight. Her favourite castle was in Scotland.

What was it called? I've forgotten the name of the castle. No, no. I've forgotten, it doesn't matter anyhow.

But when she went to Scotland, she invited one of the great preachers to come and preach to the staff. And when the preaching was over, she went into a vestry, as we would say, or an office, and she had a framed picture of herself, or a picture of herself. And she would take the name of the man and right underneath she put Victoria Rex, Victoria Reigns.

So George Matheson, we usually sing his hymn, Oh, love that will not let me go. The blind preacher went. He wrote another hymn that isn't in our little shabby hymn book.

It's in a good Methodist hymn book. Thank you. The other hymn is, Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free.

Force me to render up my sword, and I shall conquer a bee. I sink in life's alarms when by myself I stand. Imprison me within thine arms and strong shall be my heart.

My heart is weak and poor until it must define. It has no spring of action, sure. It trembles with the wind.

I only stand unbent amid the clashing strife when on thy bosom I have lent and found in thee my life. Make me a captive, Lord, and then I shall be free. You see, we're only alive when we're dead.

We're only free when we're slaves. There is no freedom outside of Jesus Christ. We go to pits, all of us.

But when it came to George Matheson, what's the good of giving him a picture of herself? He's blind. So people said, Oh, the service has been so wonderful. The Queen can't give a picture now.

What did she do? Oh boy, she jumped ahead of that. She had a bust of herself. And she said, Dr. Matheson, come this way.

She reached for him and and she took it, give me a finger. She took his finger and she ran his finger over her profile and said, Can you imagine what I'm like now? Yes, yes, I can. Even in my blindness, I know

what you're like.

That's exactly what God did to a blind world. He gave us his Son. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

Well, look, let me put that narrower still. When people have seen you, have they seen Christ? Or are you just a Methodist or a Baptist or something? Do they see Christ in me? That's what it's all about. You can preach your head off, but if you're cancelling everything I say or somebody else says in your home, if you're not living the Christ life before your children, you're missing it totally.

The biggest thing in the world is not standing here and preaching, it's living it. Mrs. Wesley stuffed into the minds of those 17 children, imagine that brood. And she said, there are two things to do with the Gospel, believe it and behave it.

Well, what do you think happened? Angels came to Jesus in the sky. It doesn't say they sang, but they shouted, glory to God in the highest. Angels ministered to him after his days battling, the 40 days he battled in the wilderness.

Angels ministered to him at Gethsemane. Angels were on the stone when the stone was rolled away from the door. Constantly he has the attention of angels.

What about the other witnesses? Can you imagine somebody saying, hey, did you hear the news? You know that little tramp that's been around here so long? She's been missing a few days. Oh, I heard she had a baby in a stable. Yeah, just what she should do.

That's just on her level. A reprobate like her. She shouldn't be born in a house.

She shouldn't be delivered. And Jesus, the Son of God, the holiest being that ever lived. I only know one man in history who was born in a stable apart from Jesus.

Do you know who it was? Martin Luther. Martin Luther was born in a stable. But you can't read this, surely.

He's the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. How can you read that without thinking of his pre-existence, which, of course, will be denied today by the liberals and Jehovah's Witnesses and others. But John 17, 5, in that tremendous prayer, remember what Jesus said? That I may have with thee the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

There's not a person in history ever been able to fathom that glory. We don't know that Cherubim and Seraphim bowed down before him. I've no respect for the Mohammedan religion.

The only thing I like about it is they take their shoes off at the door. They won't bring the dirt of the world into the sanctuary. But, dear God, we've got people, they can't go to church on Sunday if the car hasn't been washed.

They'll go with a dirty heart. They'll go with dirty desires. But you must keep up appearances.

All the sham, all the emptiness of it. What do you think, what do you think the angels felt? They went back to heaven empty-handed. They'd seen him in his glory, in his majesty.

How do you know there hadn't been parades in eternity with all the angels and the Cherubim and the Seraphim? How do you know Isaiah and all the other saints hadn't met him and adored him before he came to earth? And he comes down to hostility, impurity, everything that's antagonist to his spirit. I'm sure, again, I'm sure the people said yes. Oh, I heard that little girl, that little girl that had nowhere to live had a baby in her stable.

That's fine. What do you think the Jews thought? All hell is afraid that Jesus will be born. All heaven is excited he'll be born.

What about the Romans there? Oh, they heard that somebody had been born. There's a great excitement amongst just a few old people. An old woman, a hundred years of age, old Hannah, had gone to the temple year after year after year after year and never given up.

She had a faith that would not shrink though pressed by many a foe that would not tremble on the brink of poverty or woe. She knew that God's word was true. God had said it and he's going to do it.

Isaiah said a virgin shall be with child. His name to be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Priests. But if you took all the names that have ever been in history they wouldn't be sufficiently descriptive.

There's an old hymn here. I can't recite it to you. I wish I could.

It's a good hymn. It's English. But apart from that it's written by the man who wrote When I surveyed the wondrous cross.

That's when he's in that mood. In this mood he wrote Joy to the world, the Lord is come. Do you know I suppose we don't have extreme joy because we don't have extreme sorrow.

We don't delight in God. We go up and down. Oh, we'll be happy Christmas Day.

Dear Lord, will we. We'll hardly contain ourselves. Once you get the wrappers off.

Boy, some things I get the wrappers are worth more than what's inside. You ever get them like that? Isn't it a trick? Dear, dear, dear. How many, come on, God help us.

How many of us really live, move and have our being in God? You don't get excited over trivial, material, perishing things. You appreciate them, but dear God, you don't rise on a crest in a wave. But Christians do.

We're so like the world outside. Those Romans heard. Oh, the exact.

So what? A dozen babies have been born in Bethlehem and Jerusalem. And so this little Jewish has had a baby in a stinking stable. Wall to wall dung.

Heated with what? The sweat of the animals. It had curtains, cobwebs. It had stench.

It was the very opposite of the holy place from which he'd come. Where there was nothing but defiled. And here he is in the midst of all antagonism and impurity.

I think it's typical of the human heart to which he comes, which is full of dung and darkness and blindness and rotteness. I don't care if you're a first number one Baptist or number one Methodist. If you haven't

been born again, bring me without God and without hope.

And Jesus comes to bridge the gulf. Our God contracted to a span. Incomprehensibly laid man.

Listen to what? What's his name? Isaac Watts says. Think about the names we call Jesus. He says, join all the glorious names of wisdom, love and power that mortals ever bore.

That mortals ever knew and angels ever bore. All are too mean to speak his worth. Too mean to set our Saviour forth.

Great prophet of my God, my lips shall bless thy name. By thee the joyful news By thee the joyful news of our salvation came. The joyful news of sins forgiven of hell subdued and peace with heaven.

Let me read just about one more verse here. Jesus my great high priest. That little baby.

He put everything in the world. Every tree, every flower, every seed. He put it all there.

And yet he has to cling to the breast of his mother otherwise he'll die in this humanity. And yet, great prophet of my God. He's going to supersede every priest that ever lived.

He's going to supersede every prophet that ever lived. He's going to do what no one could do. Samson with all his strength couldn't lift it.

Solomon with all his wisdom couldn't solve it. That little babe there. There's a poem that says they were looking for a king to bring salvation nigh.

He came a little infant thing that made a woman cry. Don't you think hell shook from top to bottom? I do. Hell said that's a babe.

That's why they tried to destroy him so many times. That little babe is the son of God. The Romans, I guess they joked about it.

The rabbis were afraid of it. Because they read it over and over again in Isaiah 35. When he is come, what's he going to do? The eyes of the blind shall be opened.

The ears of the deaf unstopped. The lame man leaps to the heart. The tongue of the dumb shall sink.

I believe there's a shadow over the life of Jesus from the very moment he left the womb of his mother. All hell was against him. They tried to destroy him.

And yet we don't think of that. We don't think of the hostility. We don't think of heaven rejoicing when he's born.

It echoes around every corridor of eternity. The angel will sing unto us a child is born. They came and escorted him to earth.

His name shall be called Wonderful. He is Emmanuel, God with us. What's he going to do? Let me skip over here now a bit further in Colossians.

Did he go through all the grief of a man who's dying in his sin? It wasn't his sin. But he suffered the pain to the dam. My God, why hast thou forsaken me? He cries, Eloi, Eloi, lama, say back to me.

My God, why hast thou forsaken me? I don't like people that drop me. I'll be honest about it. I've lost more friends the last few years than ever in my life.

I'm quite happy to make a hell of a difference. I feel it. But remember, Paul said none of these things move me.

He didn't say none of these things hurt me. If they don't hurt you, you must be a stone. Of course they hurt.

But they don't move us. And yet Jesus asked hostility all the way. I was thinking of that word today where Paul, the apostle, he's reaching, he's straining.

Dear God, with his record, all the churches he's built, all the epistles he's written, and he's still crying. And you and I think we've got up the road. We're saved.

We're through with the spirit. We have a little ministry. We do a nice choosing.

God forgive us. How much do you know of God? I remember a precious couple in England. They were pretty well off and, well, they got married and they went on their honeymoon.

They'd already furnished the house. But everything you could imagine, it was exquisite. Everything that that girl wanted.

One room had to be pink and one room to be blue. And they got this, they got that. They spent a fortune on it.

And while they were away, the house caught fire and burned to cinders. Somebody met them at the train station and took them so they wouldn't see the house coming up. And they said, now look, prepare for a shock.

They got out of the car so they said to the young man, well, you hold that young lady tight. Why? I want to see my house. Opened their eyes.

They hadn't got a thing. All his years of saving, all his planning, all his culture, all burned up. What did he do? They hugged each other and said, we're just as rich, we have each other.

There are people in Russia, I will not live a day without praying for Russia. My opposite number in Russia who's been in prison 20 or 30 years. And God, because you don't get a prayer answer at the end of the week, we think God's gone out of business or the Holy Ghost has filed for bankruptcy.

Come on! Patience! I tell every preacher who comes in my office, God almighty doesn't care that much about your ministry. Told that to a fellow recently, he nearly fell down, I'm glad he didn't. Couldn't have picked him up.

But he trembled. What do you mean God doesn't care about my ministry? I said, God is concerned about making you. You'll be existing when your ministry's been forgotten in the dust.

He's making character, He's making us like Christ. He wants to do anyhow. And yet Paul says that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection.

What do you mean the resurrection? He's written volumes on the resurrection. He's told us about the coming in different orders, different styles of flesh. First this order, then that order, then the other order of resurrection.

And it says that if by any means, well what else does he have to do? Good Lord, he's been stoned, he's been beaten, he's been shipwrecked, he's been kicked out of the synagogue, he's been driven out of cities. What does he have to do to attain this prize? He doesn't ask for the prize of the high calling. He's not asking for the high calling, that is the holy resurrection, the out resurrection.

The prize of the high calling is asking for the out of the out bunch. But to get there I have to have, I don't have to be the world's greatest preacher. You don't have to be more tied than anybody else.

You don't have to do something that everybody clamors for in these days. I have to know the fellowship of His suffering to be made conformable to His death that not only then but even now I shall know resurrection life. Verse 13 let's go slowly now through this.

Verse 13, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, speaking to the Jewish circumcision there. He hath quickened together having forgiven all trespasses butting out the handwriting against us. Now verse 20 says wherefore if you be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world why as though living in the world are you subject to ordinances? Now again he's talking to these Gnostics he's talking to these people who had a hangover.

They were people who had initiation rites. There were certain things you had to conform to otherwise you couldn't enter. But he says now look forget all about that.

The rudiments of this world. Why do you follow the world? Why do you dress like the world? Why do you talk like the world? Why are you interested with the world? You're not. Touch not, taste not, handle not.

Then verse 23 he says which things indeed a show of wisdom in will worship and humility. You see they'd come into angelology they believed in worshipping angels they degraded themselves and persuaded themselves that they weren't worthy and therefore they'd taken over to worshipping angels. And he's concerned of course that they really worshipped the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3 verse 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above. Set your affection on things above, not things of the earth. You know that's the problem with most of us.

What does he say elsewhere? He hasn't, what's the other scripture where he uses affections? Set your affections not on earthly things, but on things. Oh they the Christ who crucified the flesh with the affections. Lots of people have got mastery over the flesh.

It's the affections that's the trouble. It's that friend of yours. They don't help you.

And you don't like to say don't come round so much, you take my time and spoil my worship. But you're so concerned about a little affection that you forfeit some of the love. And God is a jealous God.

If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above. Now verse 3 says ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. These are people again who've been delivered from this present evil world.

You're dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life? Is that right? Is Christ your life tonight? Or is Christ a part of your theology? Is Christ a character who came at Christmas so we think?

Is Christ somebody who's coming in a future day? Or is Christ your life? If he is, you won't seek the things that are below. You'll shun them.

You'll turn from them. They're contaminated. There's sin in them.

We're to search for the invisible thing. The things which are above, not the things which are beneath. Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear in glory. Therefore modify your manners which are on the earth. Fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil cubism, ignorance and covetousness, which is idolatry.

You notice that? Boy, it's popular these days to preach covetousness, although we preach it under prosperity. Covetousness. What's it called in here? That's all it does.

It makes people pee. I had a man, would you not believe this, a man came to my door yesterday, big, handsome, attractive man. I almost felt I wanted to put my arms in and hug him.

Just a guy, twenty, no, thirty-three or four. He drove all the way from California, driven over thirty hours, and I told him for two hours and he got in the car and drove back again. He was so hungry, been passing a church that talks about faith and possessions and positions and everything else.

And the whole thing had collapsed and he was so disappointed. He said, Mr. Raymond, I've gone back to the virgin birth, the physical resurrection. I believe that believers should not only go to the cross, but get on the cross, and I believe that's exactly what God wants.

You see, we're afraid to die. We want to live. We don't want to die.

We want resurrection life, but we don't want to be put behind with the eccentric. People say to me, people tell me you're the most radical person. I said, boy, that's a compliment.

I'm thrilled to be a radical. Good Lord, I don't see anybody else around I want to be like. I want to be radical.

Jesus was radical. Here's a man making out an income tax. A shadow falls over the income tax.

Here he is writing out a bill for somebody. Shadow, and he looks up and he sees the most amazing face in the world. The man behind the face says to this man that as far as I know he'd never seen him before.

Or maybe it's done on the edge of the crowd. Maybe it's seen this amazing man raise the dead. Maybe it's seen them cast out demons.

Maybe it's seen the people shouting hosanna. But when he looks up he sees and the man behind the face says, leave all and follow me. And he did.

In 66 years of hearing preachers I've never heard anybody take Matthew as an example of faith. He didn't say Lord, give me a week to resign. Let me see.

He said, give me what you get when you leave. They give you some money for what? Have you had it? You get some severance pay. He says, Lord, could you just wait a week.

I want to get my severance pay to tide me over. Things are expensive. The motels up in Nazareth are expensive and food's expensive.

He doesn't say that. He leaves all and follow him. Oh boy we moderate that.

It does mean that today. It does mean that today. In the old hymns we sang, one was the dearest idol I have known.

What e'er that idol be, help me to tear it from the throne and worship only thee. One of the great saints of the last century. Which one was it now? F.B. Meyer.

He said one day he was handling his keys and he said, I took one key off and put it in my pocket. And I said, Lord, here are the keys of my life. Here's the key to my future.

Here's the key to my profession. And he goes through a list and the Lord said, keep the keys. Give me the one in your pocket.

That's the problem. So tonight what's the one in your pocket? Afraid a boyfriend will leave you? Come on, there's more fish in the sea than ever came out. He may be a crab.

If the Lord is a man for you you'll get that man. That other girl won't get him. Don't worry about it.

You see, Paul isn't leaving it till he shuffles off this mortal body. Shakespeare said that. Shuffle off this mortal coil.

He says, now I want to know him. Wherever they put it, however they phrase it. Everybody has been to my office this week and there have been some well-known figures.

Everybody's saying, there's a dimension I haven't touched. There's a power I haven't known. There's a revelation I never received.

There's some burning fire I haven't had it yet. I'm yearning for it. That's a healthy thing to be in.

A corpse doesn't get hungry, does it? As far as I know, they don't. Jesus says, a sign of your health is blessed are they who hunger and thirst. I used to be satisfied with my preaching.

God, I was one of the best preachers in England, so they told me. I got great crowds. And it doesn't satisfy me now, whether I preach to 2,000 or 2,000, doesn't matter a hell of beans.

What is my daily walk with God? Am I nearer God now than I was years ago? What's the good of having a good library? I look at these shelves and say, you dead men's brains, can't you help me? They don't. You see, Christianity is not a creed. Christianity is not just a dogma.

Christianity is a person. In essence, Christianity is life. I said to a fellow yesterday, you trouble you preachers, you take a congregation, you leave them in the end of Romans 7. Oh, you say, like Paul, poor Paul, even with all he knew of God, he says, there so miserably in Romans 7, it is not I, it's sin that dwelleth in me.

I said, brother, you're a liar. Go up the road, he says, it is not I, it's Christ that liveth in me. You can't have an indwelling Christ and indwelling sin.

One of them has to go. But it's a problem again, not just of going to the cross. Come on, let's be practical.

I never, when you say nursing a baby, the woman means she's feeding it. But in England, nursing it is taking care of it and all its problems. I never did that.

I always had to go to pray when I needed diapers changing. I never did any practical things like that. Well, see, when Mary washed that dimpled hand, do you think she was thinking of Isaiah 53? One day I'll see that hand with a nail through it.

Come on. Supposing the doctor would give you at the birth of your child, say, listen, this is the life plan of your child, from here for the next 30 years. And including it was suffering, beating, anguish, 40 days in the wilderness, lonely, in the midnight, twice black, the blackness of midnight, the blackness of hell beating on him.

Supposing you could have all the outline of your child's life, would you like it? You know, we just gloss over the whole thing. Oh, Mary was a nice little woman, sure she was. You think God would have trusted her to somebody inferior? The quality of that woman is amazing as you follow it through.

And you know, if you and I are going to be trusted, you've got to get character. You can get a job anywhere because your brain except in the kingdom. And qualification in the kingdom is not necessarily intelligence, so I'm glad there is intelligence there too.

And yet you have Jesus Christ. He's the essence of all wisdom. It's all crammed into him.

In him dwelleth all the fullness of a Godhead bodily. That little one is going to mature. He's going to be the most wonderful preacher the world has ever had, giving us some old wonderful sermons.

We don't need Golgotha, any other junk preacher coming around or politician. We've got the sermon on the mound. The church can't live like that, never mind the world.

It's an impossible standard. It takes a miracle. This little babe has come.

He's taken human nature that we may be made partakers of the divine nature. Tell you that word partakers in Hebrews. Partakers of what? The divine nature.

Partakers of the saint in light. Partakers of his holiness. I used to look at some of those characters when Teen Challenge first began 25 years ago.

We worked there when nobody knew about Dave Wilson or anybody else. But I look across the table at somebody like Nicky Cruz or some of those guys. Boy, they had a criminal record as long as your arm.

They just sunk themselves in vileness and impurity. And every, they absorbed everything that carnality and the devil could give them. You can't change them by psychological processes.

It takes a miracle of a new birth. And he has come and he's become, he's made partaker of our human nature that we may be made partakers of the divine nature. And we try to parallel that.

The human nature with human birth and spiritual birth. And you can't do it at all. There's no way in which it can be done.

But he has come, invaded our human nature. He's divided history before Christ and BC and AD. I know dominated the year of our Lord.

You can see wherever this book has gone. What was he? He's light. Wherever Jesus Christ has gone darkness has had to go.

The darkness of slavery, the darkness of ignorance. Wherever the word of God went and after all it wasn't the politicians and the scholars that smashed slavery. It was brought in England before America and it was brought by a bunch of fellows that went around with Wesley and Wilberforce was the greatest character in it.

A man who was almost a hunchback. He had extra long legs, extra long arms and they used to say jokingly when he stood up to speak in Parliament he looked like a frog. But it said when he stood there on a box and began to preach about slavery he was like an archangel.

He flamed, he burned with indignation and hatred. I've been reading a story some of those books that Jack's selling you need to get them. They knew their God.

Volume 2 I think. Number 1 character is Woolman, the Quaker. Boy I read that the other night it moved me to tears.

They didn't talk about things, they did it. He was one of the main factors in breaking slavery. Do you know how much he loved the word of God? He was a tailor.

I used to be a tailor. And that was a common point. He used to cut clothes, buy clothes and make clothes.

People would come he got so busy he said please, please don't do it. I can't work extra hours. Working overtime takes me from prayer.

Working overtime takes me from reading the word of God. How many people do we have like that? Tell me what you do in your spare time. I'll tell you what kind of a man you are.

Nobody has any spare time this side of eternity. But those men had deep conviction. The absorbing thing was that Jesus Christ was God reconciling the world to himself and that included me.

And he came and transformed my life. He took out my bitterness. He took out my hatred.

He took out the core of selfishness that in me was as strong as anybody. And when these men felt the transforming power, they didn't preach it because they wanted to. It wasn't earning a living.

They preached it because they had to. There is a love constraining me to go and seek the lost. I yield, O Lord, my all to thee to save at any cost.

The Marashal wrote it. There is a fire which was given me as in the upper room destroying all carnality, dispelling fear and gloom. There is a life which was given me, a life divine and strong.

It carries me through every sea of sorrow, storm and wrong. Do you know what would happen if Russia invaded this country? Within a year, within six months Christianity would be abolished. You're not going to tell me people are standing up for Christ that can't make it to a prayer meeting Wednesday night.

Never on your life. We've got such a false idea of our own strength. Come on, have you satisfied the heart of God today? Did he buy you some new shoes to get something? Do you get along with him and worship him? It's easy to sing in a congregation, O come let us adore him.

But adoration doesn't come from my lips. Adoration comes from my life poured out before him. Wise men came and worshipped him and somebody added on to that, they still do.

And yet the wise men went where? To the capital city, Jerusalem. King David was born there. Jesus will be born.

No, he's born in a village, miles and miles away. Oh, revival may come. It'll come to the theological seminaries in Dallas.

Forget it. I doubt it will. It'll come to some obscure place.

That new church, whether you make it of glass or make it of anything, won't attract the Holy Ghost. Brokenness, contrition, hunger. You can get people to join anything, anywhere these days.

This guy was telling me in California, what churches they put up. What crowds are there? They go from one church to another. This church doesn't satisfy, join that one.

A year after, something else will come and join that one. But you see, the Lord is looking for those who have a marriage contract with him, to love him with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. Jesus didn't say, well, I'll go to earth and I'll see how it works out for a year.

In fact, every year he lived, it got worse and worse and worse. And again, I say that precious little woman watched that child grow and she knew where he was going. What about the heart of the father watching his son gradually going to the cross? You see, the center of Christianity in Christ himself was sacrifice.

And it's the center of the day. There can be no progress in the Christian life, yours or mine, without sacrifice. We gain our Christian life, we get to a plateau and you know this is true.

You may not nod your head, I don't care whether you do or not. Every one of us, we've gone for a while this way then we go up and we get on to a plateau and we want to camp on that plateau when God says, there's another hill to be climbed there's another cross to bear there's another difficulty there's no easy street to the cross. It's difficult every inch of the way and yet Jesus knowing what was before him he endured the cross.

I don't believe he enjoyed it in the way we think of enjoyment. Just the other week I read something I've never read in 50, 60 years of reading, 70 years. I've always believed it.

A man giving a sketch of the cross and he said there they took Jesus and they stripped him we know that they stripped him. And part of the humiliation was to hang in a public place naked. Oh you can pass it over.

What about when God does it with you? In your church people begin to ridicule you. You're stripped of this and stripped of that and stripped of something else. It's hard to take.

But that's the way you make character. And so Jesus, I'm glad he didn't come from the sky. He's going to come before long.

The biggest mistake made in this last week, they never once mentioned Jesus. And you've got millions of people in America or any other country. They're afraid of death.

They're afraid of a Russian invasion. They're afraid of atomic war. They're afraid of bankruptcy.

They're not afraid of God. They're not afraid of death. They're not afraid of the judgment seat.

Where in God's name have we drifted to? I don't know how you sleep every night in bed. I don't think preachers are worth a penny that can sleep all night. I give myself as little sleep as I can, eat as little as I can.

Boy I'll tell you if we knew what's going to happen a year or two from now, boy we'll be developing our spiritual muscles, our spiritual intelligence. It will be the biggest disaster you can imagine if there's an invasion of this country. And I don't sleep every day or night.

But what I pray for my opposite number in Russia that hasn't had a decent meal maybe for the last ten years. Maybe hasn't had a bath for ten years. And we're troubled about trivialities.

When I see all this vanity in Christmas shopping, I'm sick of the whole thing. So vain, so useless. And yet here's Jesus.

He never had anything. No home, no protection, except the protection of God which was all he needed. What did he do when he died? We thank the night when I surveyed the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died.

Actually the origin of that is when I surveyed the wondrous cross Isaac Watts wrote where the young Prince of Glory died. What did he leave? Well on the cross he says woman behold thy son, son behold thy mother. He was a king.

No he wasn't. He was a king of kings. Did he have a house? No.

Did he have any soldiers? No. Did he have any possessions? No. What did he have? No home, no soldiers, no money.

And yet he gave them the treasures. What did he give them? My peace I leave with you. You need something more than a house.

Dear God that might go but peace won't go because he doesn't give me my peace. He is my peace. He doesn't give me joy.

He says my joy I give with you. The joy that was there when they tried to push me over the precipice and destroy me. Go labour on says Andrew Bonner.

Go labour on. Spend and be spent. Thy joy to do the Master's will.

It is the way the Master went. Should not the servant tread it still? Toil on and in thy toil rejoice. For toil comes rest.

For exile home. Soon shall thou hear the bridegroom's voice. The midnight cry.

Behold I come. If we knew what of course we don't. We can make some guesses.

If we knew what was ahead of us the next five years I think most of us will be shaking. We'll be reinforcing our minds and our spirits more than our bank books. More than our circle of friends.

As I've told you often. I want to live so at a minute's notice I could walk into the presence of God and not be an embarrassment to Him and that I wouldn't be embarrassed when I saw Him. I don't know any other way to live.

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