

Travailing - Part 1

by Leonard Ravenhill

Paul's incredible courage, faith, and love are rooted in his experience of being crucified with Christ and seeing the world as corrupt and antagonistic to the gospel.

Duration: 9:30

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:14, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 4:19, Galatians 6:14, Philippians 3:7

Topics: "Sacrificial Love", "The Cross"

Description

This sermon delves into the profound courage, faith, and love displayed by the apostle Paul as seen in his letter to the Galatians. It explores how Paul's unwavering commitment to the message of the cross and his identification with Christ's crucifixion shaped his perspective on the world and his sacrificial love. The sermon emphasizes the transformative power of fully surrendering to Christ and the radical nature of living out the gospel message.

Transcript

Galatians chapter 4 and the verse is 19. My little children of whom I travel in birth notice again until Christ be formed in you. See the tenderness he has? He doesn't even say children, he says my little children and you think how much protection they need and counsel and wisdom.

Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians four years before he wrote this letter to the Galatians and in his letter to the Philippians he says I'm Paul the aged, Paul the aged. Well he was older by four years at least when he wrote this epistle. I admit that Paul is my hero after Jesus himself.

I was pondering about him today and wondered this, where did he get his incredible courage? Where did he get his unshakable faith? Where did he get his unfailing love? I believe he explained it all in this amazing epistle. One of the best-known writings of Paul surely is Galatians 2.20. Tell me what it is. Good, very good.

How many of you know that by memory? Come on let me see your hands. Good. How many believe it's real in your life? That's a bit tougher isn't it? I believe that the reason that Paul had what I call incredible courage, unshakable faith and undying love is explained by two things that he wrote.

In verse 14 of chapter 6 he says this, but God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world. I believe there came a moment in his

life which is explained again by Galatians 2.20, I am crucified with Christ. I do not believe anybody enters unconsciously into an experience with God.

Demands our intelligence and our will and I believe again the reason one reason is this, there came a place in his life where he wrote the world, all the world's systems off as corrupt, as totally antagonistic to the gospel of the grace of God. In plain language he saw the world as a boneyard. He saw the world like Ezekiel 37-36 where the prophet is carried out into a valley full of bones and Paul sees every human system has been fallible and deathly.

Now one thing none of us have ever seen, I've seen a lot of things but never seen the crucifixion, I don't think I'd like to see one. I know when a man went out to be crucified as dear Dr. Chaucer used to say Len, when he went out with a cross you knew one thing, he wasn't coming back. A cross was a one-way ticket.

The other thing is at six o'clock at night you could go to that crucifixion and throw anything you like on that man on the cross. Bucket of filth, rocks, rotten eggs, rotten fruit, curse him, kick him, do as he likes. Once he was nailed to that cross he lost all his rights.

Come on, did that happen in your life and mine? Happened in the life of Jesus. Six o'clock at night you could do as you like, six o'clock in the morning nobody went. The first birds there was something like these horrible things we have around here only a much larger edition, vultures.

I remember seeing a lot there in India, huge horrible things about this height from the ground with seven or eight foot wingspan. They hide their necks in their feathers and so they should because when it comes out looks like a long string of meat, they've no feathers on their necks. They were there, they pecked at the eyes, they pecked at the body, they pecked at the body until the guts hung out and the dogs came and licked the blood.

Nobody went to see a crucifixion twelve hours after the person was crucified. Now look at that horrible picture. You know that's the place where Jesus was crucified, outside the city wall, the dump, where they put dead bodies, where only lepers were allowed to live, where all the garbage was.

It stunk, it smelled, it was full of everything, it was putrefying and it was there they crucified the most spotless man that ever lived. And all he had in the gallery were skeletons hanging from crosses. Now a woman might rush up to the cross when her husband was being crucified but she didn't rush up to the cross in the morning when the birds had torn him apart, she didn't go two or three weeks after when he had no flesh at all.

That's the figure that Paul, the world is crucified, it's hideous, it's corrupt, it's so totally unattractive to me. You know, very often in the heat of a meeting when the preacher knows the temperatures at the right degree, he says, how many of you will pray half an hour a day for the next year or something? All the hands go up, okay. Or the other thing he asks is, how many people will give so much every week for the next period? Never make a vow in the heat of your emotions or the heat of a meeting.

Paul didn't just scratch his head and say, well I think I'll be crucified with Christ too. He took the sum total of his life and he says there in Philippians chapter 3, what things were gained to me, he says in verse 7, those I counted for loss for Christ, yea doubtless and I count all things lost for the knowledge of the excellency, for the excellency of the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ my Savior, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things. It was a calculated deal he made.

Elsewhere he said he lost all his tribal rights. He was of the tribe of Benjamin and the seed of Abraham. He was one of the most cultured men in the world.

And yet, I think one of the few people who could really say with eyes of quartz, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride. You know it's easy for you to pour contempt on your pride, it's when somebody else pours contempt on it you're in trouble isn't it? You know when somebody rubs you out and says you're only a zero anyhow, you haven't much intelligence, you've no social standing, you don't have this, that and the other and boy you start going down, down, down till there's nowhere else to go. Then can we really put up our heads and say as this dear man said, I rejoice, I glory in infirmities, in necessities, in reproaches.

We run away from them all don't we? Lord I'm heading into trouble, Lord send an angel, send anybody but don't let me get into that situation. When that's the situation I need to prove my spirituality. Not prove it to God, but God has to prove it to me.

But he says all these things, I suffered for the loss of all things and count them but done, that I may win Christ and be found in him. I said again that this man has an indestructible unshakable faith, an unquenchable zeal and an unfailing love. Think of his letter there to the 2nd Corinthians chapter 5, he gives us the nearest to his theological outline I think.

He says in chapter 5 of 2nd Corinthians, we know if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved we have a building of God and house not made with hands. Verse 10 he says we must all appear at the judgment seat of Christ. Verse 11 he says knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men.

Verse 14 he says for the love of Christ constraineth me. Now on the negative side he was crucified with Christ, on the positive he has this great driving force, the love, the agape love of John 3, of John 3 16, God so loved the world is that love, sacrificial love. I think the world around us is just about fed up of black book theology and notebook theology.

The world is not waiting for a new definition of Christianity, it's waiting for a new demonstration of Christianity. And it can only have that when that love of Christ is constraining us. Now Paul has a desperate love for these people.

That's an interesting word isn't it? In the 4th chapter there verse 19 again.

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