

The Passover - Part 2

by Les Wheeldon

Les Wheeldon emphasizes the necessity of spiritual engagement and the dangers of secular influences on ministry in his sermon on the Passover.

Duration: 1:26:22

Scripture: Exodus 20:4, Exodus 20:13-15, Psalm 1:1-3, Revelation 10:8-10

Topics: "Passover"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of preparing oneself to preach the word of God. He acknowledges that learning to preach involves making mistakes and learning from them. The preacher then discusses the qualities of a blessed man, who does not follow the counsel of the ungodly, stand with sinners, or judge others. Instead, the blessed man delights in the Lord and meditates on His word day and night. The sermon concludes with a reminder to be faithful in prayer and fasting, as well as to cultivate a life of faithfulness in the things of God.

Transcript

Where it says, if I can show you there, to begin with, it tells there very clearly, that in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 7, which Mickey just read, it says there, to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And we're all given that grace. So in one way, we don't have to be asking to get that grace, it's given us.

You already have gifts from God, probably more than one gift, and you already have ministry. And those ministries that are given will be varied, they'll be different, they're already there. Now, I wanted to share with you something, first of all, I just thought I'd share with you some thoughts I have, they're not entirely my own, but just an idea, it has nothing to do, it's a kind of introduction, something that might interest you.

Something that's about the way things are moving in our present world. And you know that we're living in a world where, it's just a kind of a background to lead me into Scripture. It's the kind of pressure on us in our ministry, and what I wanted to bring you to this morning is very simply that the answer to our need is spiritual.

It's spiritual. What do I mean? I mean that it is to do with spiritual exercise, spiritual activity, faith, and things like this. Faith, prayer, fasting, growing close to God.

Often the answer of the world is not spiritual, it is natural. And the pressure on the minister, or the ministry altogether, is to conform to that which is natural. I want just to share a few things with you, just five or ten minutes on this, because I find it quite interesting.

This is some of the extremes that are happening in America. And you see, if you look at the way we've moved in the philosophy of the world of influences, we are living in a secular world, totally secular world, where God is not mentioned, and people are embarrassed to mention God. And that is different.

God, therefore, is totally a private matter. Totally private. So if you were working in an office, the fact that you believe in God is a totally private and personal matter.

This is the power that influences us in our thinking, that if we have beliefs, they're private. And they're also totally personal. And therefore we all have different views, and there's no absolutes again, and all they produce is a kind of self-centeredness in our thinking, which is basically the philosophy of the world.

Self-centered. And we all have to respect each other's centre. Your centre is yours, and mine is mine, and it's all self-centered and so on.

And here are different words that are used. The imperial self is a phrase that's used. I didn't know this, I just sort of looked at it, so I don't know the philosophy.

Others will probably argue with me or correct me. But these are phrases that are used by people. The imperial self, which is the emperor, is you.

But your cow, your imperial authority, is totally private. You have no empire to rule over other than yourself. And the great empathy is on self-fulfilment.

And then, of course, the great virtue in our world is not righteousness. The great virtue in our modern world is relief from boredom. So a man who is a great minister will come on the way to change you, always bringing something new, not someone challenging you in matters of righteousness.

And man's chief goal is, as I say, not virtue, but relief from boredom. And I read this quote again. I'll think therefore I am, was the statement of Descartes.

But the modern man says, I see TV, therefore I am. I see therefore I am. He's glued to the visual and the entertainment.

And so, the movement, and this is a very curious matter actually, although we're smiling and we're looking at each other, this is a very, very dangerous move. Because what you get in the churches is the effect of what I can call consumerism within the ministry, within the Gospel. Amusement.

And if you've ever heard the origin of the word amusement, the word amusement is from two Greek words meaning atheism, or, and so on, meaning without. Muse is the word thought. So amusement is without thinking.

Anything to make you stop thinking. And we're living in a world of amusement, consumerism, personal thoughts and feelings, and so on. And so here's an example of how it works out.

Here's a big successful church in America. And if anybody's in any ministry, the moment you have somebody who's successful, ooh, there's an attraction. Here's a successful, it's called Phoenix First

Assembly.

I know nothing about it from what I've just read in a couple of lines. It runs like a country club. There are 10,000 people attending.

In 1979 they started with about 200. 10,000 people now attend. And in some of these big churches in America you can get cokes and hamburgers during the service.

And the preacher in this Arizona First Assembly, he has wires all around so that he can, he can say, he can make a list of assembly, a voting list. I'm just telling you because I find it interesting. No, no, don't worry if you're late, I'll have a set of wires.

The preachers hired elephants, kangaroos and zebras, brought them on stage suddenly to urge faith according. Now, although it is very funny and I know it's very extreme, the point is that the pressure in ministry can be very natural. We can do a lot of natural pressure.

And you go into other things, for example, there's a man in America named Robert Shuler. And him, for him, sin, the word sin is not used in any of his services. Because for him, sin is, we do not think highly enough of ourselves.

That's sin. So to mention sin is to run yourself down. So therefore they don't have sin in their hymns, no mention of sin in their choruses, even in their Bible translations, when they read the Bible, they substitute other words for the word sin.

Humanism is online. So the problem on the land is, they're being happy attitudes. No judgment.

But the thing is, Robert Shuler is not a comic. He's not a comic. This is a tragedy.

He is not comedic. He's serious. There was some research done in 1983 which said that 80% of new Christian titles dealt with self-discovery.

For example, here's a title by a man named Ego. His book was called Feeling Good About Feeling Bad. Robert Shuler wrote a book entitled Tell Love.

Grime wrote a book, How to Become Your Own Best Self. And therefore thought is relegated to feeling. How do we all feel about this? What do we feel about this? And the truth is, in the end, Christian leadership and ministry is following the popular.

But anyway, that's just something I found interesting, and you can go through probably other things here. I just found it interesting. I just thought you might be interested to know some of these things that I've read about.

They're not vitally important in one way. But the thing is, if you go to seminars nowadays in Bible schools in America, many of the Bible schools are not teaching the Bible. They're teaching modules which are specialist and often very psychological.

And so people are becoming specialists in this area and that area. And so I know in one way, that's just something I wanted to share with you. Because it's a background to the pressures that are coming on the ministry and are already there.

Now I suppose in our churches we don't feel the pressures so much because we're not so interested in being what I like to call trendy. But you see, there is a temptation in the ministry to be trendy and modern. Now I don't want to be a trout, but you don't know me.

I don't want to be a trout for your own sake. In my dress, I mean, I'm wearing a very decent tie this morning. Can you speak English? No, I can't speak English.

And so, a very nice tie too. Thank you. The thing is, one of the pressures on us is to grow modern and relevant.

Now the thing is, I don't want to be irrelevant. I don't want to be irrelevant, obviously, none of us do. But I don't want to be trendy to the point where I'm thinking, what do the people want to hear? What will draw the people to my research? You may say, well isn't that the whole purpose of the ministry? No, no.

The purpose of the ministry is different because what we have with all this movement in modern thinking, it really undermines the confidence of the ministry in standing for something that will never change. Because there are things that now should be said, things that... In other words, what are we talking about? The ministry, the church itself and the ministry is, if you like, it is not at all trendy, it's the opposite. It is the benchmark of everlasting truth.

And in the ministry you find everlasting truth. And it's the only place you find it. And the whole purpose and centre of this ministry is the church.

There is no other place for it. The place to find everlasting truth is the church. And if you don't find it there, you will find it nowhere else.

Now, aligned with this is the underlining of the Bible. So that increasingly there are fewer and fewer people who believe the Bible. Now I know that in one sense I'm preaching to the converted in this, but I want to reinforce it.

That the greatest activity of the ministry is connected with the Bible. You've got it in your hands. And I want you to know that the reading of the Bible has been so much under attack and increased in this world.

And the trend is so devastating that the churches in this country, in this island, they're going to be so weakened by this whole effect. Because when we talk about the ministry, we're not talking about giving you a gift. You have a gift.

The question is what it is that's going to bring your gift out. That's the big question. And so we have to return from the pressures of modern society back into the spiritual activity that will make you a man of God and a minister of Christ.

And that is the vital need. That each one of us in this room, as we leave this world and enter the presence of Christ as we one day were every one of us, and as we stand before him, he will say to us, well done, good and faithful servants. It's from that passage that you read.

Well done, good and faithful servants. Thou hast been faithful. And this is the thing that I want to bring us to.

These, certainly, I want to talk about a few things of spiritual importance, of spiritual life that will call each one of us to know spiritual reality in our lives and therefore cause the flourishing of our ministry. Now your

ministry, your gifting, are like seeds in your heart. They're there.

But all they need is the right condition and they will appear. They will appear. And you know that I cannot in one way produce ministers.

I'm a pastor of a church and one of the things I want to do is to produce ministry. Now I've been doing this since I was a pastor in Cameroon in 1979. I've got a lot of work there.

All of these years pastoring and encouraging people right from the beginning. The word go, the thing that came to me is I must encourage these brothers into ministry. Very good.

But what I found was that there's not an awful lot you can do. You can give opportunity. But when you give somebody an opportunity and they haven't got a preaching ministry, for example if they're not preaching at that moment, ask somebody to preach and they can't preach.

What do you then do? You might encourage them for ten pounds but the clock gets a bit erratic. And again you must not pretend that everybody can be a preacher. This is not true.

It's a gift. And some of the brothers I know who are most frustrated are those who have got everything except a gift. They can read, they can study, but they can't preach.

And there are gifts and we cannot substitute this sheer simple thing of a gift. A book was written by Martin Lloyd-Jones. He said that if he ever met somebody, he said, never encourage anybody to be a preacher, he said.

He said, in fact, put every obstacle in their path. And he said, well that's not very good, is it? And he said that if people are going to become preachers, they're going to have to become it in the face of opposition. Not from the church, obviously.

But there's going to be something that's going to make them really keep God and go through it. And he said that he gave an example of a man who had been encouraged to go into the ministry, go to Bible school and become a pastor and so on and so on and so on. And the man became miserable.

Because he was out of his place. And there's a proverb in the book of Proverbs, I don't know where it is, and I hope I've quoted it well enough. It speaks of a man who leaves his place like a bird that wanders from his nest.

And a man who leaves his place can be geographical, but he can also be in terms of gifts. If we leave our ministry, leave our true gifting to try and get another one, we're like a bird that's wandered off of its nest. We feel lost, we feel bereft, we don't know what to do.

So we're not trying to make preachers everybody. God will do that and God will make you come into some kind of inner conflict whereby you have to preach. Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.

That's true of preachers. Preachers have got this woe. They cannot be silent.

And they must preach. And woe unto them if they don't preach. Now, what then are the things I'm going to bring up? The first thing I want to bring up to you then about spiritual activity, I want to turn you to the Ten Commandments for a moment, and to enter this chapter 20.

And here's the first one. Just to talk about this for a little while. This is the first one.

Verse 8. The fourth commandment. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and all thy work.

But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gate. For in six days the Lord may have an urge to see it all that is in the midst.

And rest is the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. The Sabbath day. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

This is the first thing. Keep the Sabbath rest. This is the first thing.

If you want your ministry to come to life, and to flourish, the first thing you must do is keep the Sabbath rest. Now, most ministers, always, all Christians will agree that, verse 13, Thou shalt not kill. Alright, no problem there.

They won't kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. No problem there, they won't do that.

Thou shalt not steal. No problem there. Thou shalt not lie.

No problem here. Not have any idols to bow down. Of course, if there is idolatry, it's unrealised.

People don't realise what they're doing. But in the question of a Sabbath rest, most people completely ignore it. They don't even think of keeping it.

Yet it is placed alongside the sin of adultery to ignore the Sabbath rest. It's placed alongside the sin of adultery, and none of it. So, in other words, let's go back in our thoughts, let me just turn from Exodus chapter 20, but let's go back in our thoughts to the creation of man.

God created man in his own image. In the image of God created him. And he made on the sixth day, and probably by the evening, the evening was coming on, and the first thing that man was to do was to have a day off.

That was his first day. And God said, here you are, you start work on the first day of work, the boss says, good to see you, have a day off. Oh, I like this.

I like this, Miss Gloria. Have a day off. Now, if you're going to begin the ministry, one of the first things you must do is have a day off.

Have a day off. What does that mean? Does that mean the Sabbath day? Am I a member of the Lord's Day of Worldly Society? Well, I am not a strict sabbatarian. By that I mean, I am not a legal sabbatarian.

I will fill up my car with petrol, or be Lord of the Sabbath, on the Lord's Day, Sunday. Now I know that the Jewish Sabbath is a Saturday, but let's just forget that whole issue for the moment. And let's just say that the thing about the Jewish Sabbath is it has two sides to it.

It's the one commandment in the Ten Commandments that has two sides to it. See, the Ten Commandments were not rituals. There was no ritual in the Ten Commandments.

All right? No ritual. In other words, nothing to do with sacrifices, nothing to do with the clothes of the high priest, nothing to do with the tabernacle. The Ten Commandments were moral.

They were not rituals. So if I said, thou shalt not kill, there's no ritual in that. And the fact that you never kill anybody is nothing to do with anybody.

No, this is taken for granted normally. You don't kill anybody. All right? If I said to you this morning, look, we're going to have a nice discussion later on, question and answer, but please, I hope you all have your guns at the door.

So if you don't like what I say, you don't go, clang! You don't kill anyone. All right? We know that. But the thing is, in this law of the Sabbath, there is a mixture of ritual, the only one of the Ten Commandments, but it's a mixture of ritual and moral.

And nevertheless, there is a moral dimension to the Sabbath. Now this is vital for you to understand, or you will think it's all mutual. I am not legalist, therefore I do not have problems.

There must be, or whatever it is, if I want to go into a shop on a Sabbath I have no problems. I'm neat. No problems.

That doesn't mean I'm encouraging the change from Sunday to be like, I don't encourage it. I don't like that. I think it's tragic.

I think it's ridiculous. I think it's against God's wisdom and law and everything. The Sabbath, in that sense, the Lord's Day should be set aside for going to a meeting, to worship, for a breather.

I'm not legalistic about it. But I believe that the true moral dimension of this commandment is unchanged by anything, unchanged, as this verse I'm offering is of. The fact that you must keep a place of rest in your heart and life is absolutely fundamental to your spiritual life.

You must be a man of rest. It's said in other places, for example, in Egypt, it's told that they were not to wear woman clothes because that would make them sweat. They had to wear cotton.

And God said, I don't want any of my ministers sweating. I don't want any of my ministers sweating. And when they built the, when they built the temple, they had to make all the stones at a distance so that when they pictured them, it was in utter silence so that they couldn't hear a hammer.

There was no hammer heard in the building of the temple. So the temple seemed to rise up without a sound. Now just to view this, we can view this now as we live on account of the state in Epsom.

They just knocked the house down. They had to board up windows and they sort of knocked the building down. They built it, it took about a year, it must have been a lot of money, I think, for this building.

It took about a year. But the thing is, every day, bang, bang, bang, knock, knock, knock, all this chugging, jiggling, all this noise. It didn't go quietly, slowly, but noisily.

But the temple just seemed to grow in silence. No sweat, no noise of human labour. Now, go back to the garden back there when God made man and he introduced him into it.

And the thing is that nowadays you come into the garden and I know it's not the garden we visit anymore. Let's just look at the Garden of Eden, let's call it the Garden of Eden. We go down into the high street and the first thing you meet catches your eye in this modern Garden of Eden is, vroom, cars, motorbikes, and, er, aeroplanes.

What have you got? You've got this chimney. Why do we have cars? Now, I came up with it, I haven't got a motorbike car, by the way. I came up with that high street saying.

I would have told you if I could, but there you go. Erm, speed, why do we want speed? Why is there something so built into our modern thing? Speed! If you want speed, you've got to be quick. Quick, quick, quick, you've got to be quick.

Quick, quick, so you don't waste any time you've toasted it out of God's will. Modern man is a million miles from God. And the fact that he doesn't keep this sabbath special is only a little part of it.

Because the holy glory is lived in a hurry. And the man who wants to join ministry must lose the hurry. You've got to lose the hurry.

This is a truth. This is a truth. Every one of us in the church must lose the hurry.

You've got to go for yourself. Jesus said, come unto me all you who labour under heavy rain, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke, the yoke of Jesus, upon you.

Be yoke to Jesus in the ministry, the truth of every one of us. For my yoke is easy, and my yoke is light. And you shall find rest for your souls.

I am meek and lowly in heart. This is what he said. It's all there.

I am meek and lowly in heart. You shall find rest to your souls. And the great foundational basis of all ministries is that you have a whole of rest.

When David wanted to build a temple, God said, a man of rest, he will build it. A man of rest. And he chose Solomon, this son of peace, Shalom.

Solomon, son of peace, this man of peace. And this is the truth, this is the spiritual absolute. You cannot get round, none of us in this room can get round it.

But when God created that first man, he didn't give him a car for the unborn child to cross. He didn't give him a machine to make his life quicker, he gave him a lifetime of time. Never going to die, no fear of death, no fear of the end of time, no fear of dying, his whole life stretched ahead of him, and there was enough time.

Now one of the things I want to tell you is you have enough time. You have a whole bit. Are we going to be in the tyranny of Jesus coming soon, are we going to be redeemed of time? Oh yes, yes, yes.

But you don't redeem the time by hurrying. You redeem the time by entering into rest. You waste time by hurrying.

And why do men hurry? It's because they have a totally wrong attitude towards life, they think they must live under the tyranny of what is urgent. Rather than living under the lordship of what is essential. And I

want to urge upon you that the essential is not urgent.

It is not urgent. What do I mean? The urgent thing is, you've got to do this, you've got to do that. No, you don't have to, that's urgent.

The essential, you can do tomorrow, or the next day, or the next day, or the next day. But if you do that, you will never do it. The essential, you must do today.

And the essential is that you have rest. Keep the subtle rest. And step right back.

No hurry. This is one of the things you find in third world countries. You go to a village where you've got no telephones, no emails, no nothing, no taxi service, and you've got nothing.

Now, you begin to taste a little more of what it was intended for us to be. We were not intended to be Russian all over the world. I'm not saying we shouldn't use it.

Now it's there, OK. I'm not going to walk around it. But realise that we have lost this dimension of rest.

And part of it is you must totally stop what you do. A total stop. People rush into prayer, they rush into Bible reading, and they rush to work, and they rush home, and they rush to their dinner, and they rush to their entertainment, and they rush to sleep, and they rush to the Bible reading.

They've lost perspective. And it is most true of a full-time minister that he must not come under the tyranny of the urgent. He must keep the essential.

Alright, now we can talk about this later on. But you must stop and let your soul come to rest and find rest in the Lord. Of course, faith is the key ingredient here.

Faith. The presence of God. The unhurried presence of God.

The leisure of God to have time. Now, of course, if we say, could you leave the laziness? Well, laziness is a sin. We're not talking about that.

We're talking about this whole state of God's heart, which is part of laziness in nearly my own way. He's a rat. Alright, that's the first thing.

The second thing I want to talk to you about is in Matthew chapter 6. Which is prayer and fasting. Prayer and fasting. Prayer and fasting.

Now, here in chapter 6, Jesus is in the midst of this great exposition of his kingdom, his laws. Now, when I say laws, it could be killed, because he was giving the spirit of his law, which is perfection. He wasn't talking about laws.

You know, I used to debate this. If an egg is laid on the Sabbath, can it be eaten? They used to debate that. You know, all the laws, but the spirit of the laws you've got to get into.

The spirit that I know, when I talk about I'm talking about the spirit you've got to find a place where your soul loses hurry. Now, there will be a time when your book of work says, look, this job is going to be done by a spew of fucking enemies. You've got to get it done now before it loses your hurry.

OK, no problem about that. You might say, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

I'm OK. And he says, you've just got to sit down to the princess. You know, I'm not making fools of us.

We could have foolish questions. Of course, that would mean, but what I'm saying is, in your spiritual fountain, which is the only place you must keep, keep thy heart, for some of the issues of life. Here's the first thing to keep in your heart, is rest.

Now, here in chapter 6, here's Jesus talking and he's now moved from moral things. Now, I can't talk about all of them. It's a very big subject.

You can't go into all of these things, but he's moved from moral matters, talked about adultery and murder there, and losing your temper, all these things there, chapter 5. And now in chapter 6, he's come to spiritual activity, giving, praying, fasting. Now, Jesus, here in chapter 6, is taking it for granted that his people will give, will pray. And in that context, I would say, I'm not particularly going to talk about giving at the moment, but just one of the things that we must remember.

The thing is, true giving is born in prayer. Because you give by faith. And as you feed on the person of Christ, if you're going to grow there, you will give.

If you don't give, you will be hindered. But in these three things, giving, praying and fasting, Jesus assumed that his followers would do these things. And so he doesn't say, well now I realise that on occasions you may be forced to fast.

No, no, no, no. He says when you. The constant, the constant life of the believer is to give, to pray and to fast.

Now, in other words, you cannot be a righteous man without giving, praying and fasting. Now I realise, I'm not going to lay too heavy on you to fast. Don't worry.

I'm not going to say you're a terrible, unrighteous sinner if you don't have a past. I'm not saying that. But the point is spiritual life must be nurtured.

That's the point. You cannot be righteous without spiritual life. At the end of chapter 5, Jesus said this.

He said, chapter 5 verse 47. What do you more than others? What do you more than others? Now, he isn't saying, oh you've got to put a bit of extra effort here. He's saying that the Christian must be, I'm going to use this word, I'm not being careful about my words, he must be superior to the unbelievers.

What do I mean? I'm not saying, oh I'm superior, I'm not talking about that. I'm not choosing my words carefully and that may be a better word. If you like, he must be superior to how he was when he was a sinner.

If there is no moral improvement through salvation, what are you saved from? So what, Jesus said, what do you more than others? And I'll tell you this. Some people have said that some unbelievers have a greater moral testimony than some believers. So, in that case, what do you more than others? Some people will say, well those believers do nothing.

They do less than some believers. And I would have to say to you on that basis that they are not saved. You cannot make Jesus say that if a man believes in me, his life may be more in it than other men, but he must be saved.

That would be a monster. It would make God a kind of a, you know, pulling rabbits out of hats. Slag of hands.

You're not morally improved, you're not repented, you're not better than anybody else, you're just the same or worse. But you're saved because you signed a decision card. It is nonsense.

There must be, and in fact the word Christian is not the word used in the New Testament for us. It's only used once, or twice, probably in Peter and in Acts of the Apostles. Peter uses it once, Acts of the Apostles uses it once.

Christian. The word used again and again and again described it as holy. We are God's saints.

And that is a wrong word to use, because the word saints sounds like something strange. But the true word for it is we are holy ones. If you turn to Matthew's Gospel chapter 16, 17 you have this event which is quite classic.

It's a well-known event. I'll just read this, verse 19. Then came the disciples to Jesus the Father and said, Why could not we cast him out? They could not cast a devil out of a boy.

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