

The Three Most Important Questions in Life

by Lou Sutera

The sermon emphasizes the importance of total submission to God and living for Him, as revealed in the Owner's Manual, which is the Bible.

Topics: "Surrender To God", "Sin And Pride"

Description

Lou Sutera preaches about the importance of surrendering to God, emphasizing the need to ask ourselves the three most important questions of life: What is the meaning of life? Why did Jesus Christ die on the cross? What is the basic sin we are most tempted with? He delves into the significance of total submission to God, being located and vocated by Him, and living in alignment with His will. Sutera highlights the essence of sin as living in pride to gratify oneself, and the necessity of surrendering our will to God's will to experience true fulfillment and purpose in life.

Transcript

In 1991 the Canadian Revival Fellowship sponsored the Briercrest Bible College annual fall Missionary and Bible Conference in Caronport, Saskatchewan with the theme of "Revival and Missions." High school, Bible college, and seminary students were required to attend--a captive audience indeed! I caught a flu bug while traveling to the conference, only to go to bed, missing all the sessions.

I was scheduled to preach the last message, though blizzard conditions of twenty to thirty degrees below zero wind-chill factor existed. Each day I looked out the window at that bitter cold weather and saw the faces of the two thousand students all covered up, going back and forth to the meetings in the chapel. I tried to put myself in their place, and thought, "I wonder what they really think about all this, being required to go to all the sessions. I wonder what they're really getting out of these meetings."

I barely got out of bed that last night to preach to the packed auditorium. The Lord seemed to be saying to me, "Why don't you ask those young people the question: 'What is this conference really all about anyway? Is it simply more meetings, simply to put in some time? I wonder if you appreciate what you're doing or if you are just required to attend? What is this really all about that you have to sit in session after session all these hours?'" They had sessions daily on missions and some on revival teaching, hearing tremendous preaching from Dr. Erwin Lutzer from Moody Church in Chicago, and other men whom God has mightily used.

God impressed upon me to answer the question in this last session as to why these young people had been asked to spend all these hours in sessions, and what it was really all about. I shared with them that these meetings basically related to The Three Most Important Issues and Questions of Life.

1. What is the meaning of life?
2. Why did Jesus Christ die on the cross?
3. What is the basic sin to which we are most tempted as we walk on this earth?

Each question follows the other in a natural sequence. The first two questions automatically lead us to the third: what is the biggest problem and temptation every one must face as we walk and live and breathe on this earth?

1. What Is the Meaning of Life?

The answer is wrapped up in four verses:

- a. "All things were created by him, and for [emphasis added] him [God]" (Col. 1:16b).
- b. "The earth is the Lord's [emphasis added] and the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein" [emphasis added] (Ps. 24:1). We are the Lord's!
- c. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for Thou hast created all things and for Thy pleasure [emphasis added] they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). We were created by God and are going to worship Him around the throne in heaven saying, "Lord, Thou [emphasis added] hast created all things, and for Thy [emphasis added] pleasure they are and were created."
- d. To see how your car was made and how it works one must read the "Owner's Manual." The best way to find out what life is really all about is to go back to the Owner's Manual, where God created man. It is found in a very simple statement. "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15). The Owner's Manual tells us three things about life.

First, "the Lord God TOOK the man." That is a picture of a man in total submission to the Creator who made him. It doesn't say that man dragged his feet or dug in his heels and said, "God, I'm too busy. I can't come right now." It says, "the Lord God took the man"--the picture of total submission of a creature to his Creator. There is no bucking from the creature at the Creator. Thus the original Manual teaches that man was made to be in total submission to his God.

Second, The Lord God PLACED him in the garden--man is now in proper location with God. Man's location is settled by God. He placed him in the garden; thus, God's original pattern and desire for you and me is that we should be in total submission to Him so He can PLACE us wherever He wants. Thus, my LOCATION is ordered by God--HE OWNS ME.

Third, the Lord TOLD man to cultivate, dress and keep the garden--God giving him his vocation. And that's all it says about God's purpose in the creation of man. "The Lord God took the man"--a man in total submission to his Creator. Then God has the privilege and right to LOCATE him and put him where HE wills, and to give him the job HE wants Him to have--"keep and dress the garden"--and thus VOCATE him. Who made the decisions? God!

I believe that in this 20th century God wants to do a work of restoration in our lives, bringing us back to these true original reasons for which He created us. But because of the Fall of man and his sinful nature, we kick up our heels and buck, instead of living in total submission to God. The fallen heart of man does not want to submit to an Almighty God, doesn't want God to tell him where he should be, and the last thing in the world he wants the God of the Universe to tell him is what he should do in life. God created us in a state different from the animals, the sun, the moon and the trees, and He made us so He can pick us up "by the scruff-of-the-neck" anytime He wishes, and put us any place He chooses, without a solitary objection from us. In that way He can reveal to us His will and His purpose for our lives. We are totally His--"whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's [emphasis added] both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14:8-9). That's God's Manual for life.

Remember, these three areas: God wants to bring us back into total submission to Him. He made man so that man, in total submission to his Creator, could be located by his Creator. Then, He could give him a job--man could be vocationed by his Creator. That is submission to the Creator: being able to be located by the Creator, and being vocationed--getting his direction and marching orders from his Creator. It follows in sequence, one after another, as cause and effect. If you miss out on the total submission, you'll miss out on the location, and then the tragic matter of missing out on the vocation that God has planned for you. That's what the Owner's Manual states we were made for (Gen. 2:15). All of our problems, our frustrations, and the "messes" we get into, come when we buck God's original blueprint.

What, then, is the meaning of life? It can all be wrapped up in one simple statement: We are God's and we were made for God. Young people, if you don't learn this early in life you'll spend years spinning your wheels until you come right back to the issue--that you were made for God. Augustine said, "Man was made for God, and restless is he until he finds his rest in God." It will always be that way.

I was excited about preaching this kind of message when back in my twenties, but I am more excited about it after years of preaching, because of the privilege of traveling up and down the land and in other countries, seeing men and women desperately trying to write a meaning in life apart from the Owner Himself. He wants to restore us to the original purpose in the Owner's Manual. You and I were made by and for God. That fact then naturally leads right into the second question:

2. Why Did Jesus Christ Die On the Cross Anyway?

You say, "Lou, that's a simple question with a simple answer. I know why He died--to pay for my sins." "Well, thanks for your answer, but you're only half right." That's just the beginning, and Satan doesn't want you to know the other half of the truth. The removal of your sins is just a by-product of the cross, but it's not the main issue of the cross.

We have Easter season, and whole so-called Christianized western world celebrates the cross. But why did Jesus Christ die on the cross? The power of the cross is not to redeem us from our sins only.

That isn't the total meaning of that cross. Yes, God sent Jesus to die on the cross to forgive us from our sins, and to set us free from the shackles of our sins, but, in fact, the removal of our sins is just a by-product of that cross. Basically God really isn't interested in our sins. He's interested in us. That is the real purpose of the cross--the bottom line--not just the by-product? It is for God to be able to restore man back to the original reason and purpose for which he was created. Have you ever seen the cross on that dimension?

God does not want my sins; He wants me, He's interested in me. In the process He has to clean me up because He's a holy God. He wants you to belong to Him. He wants to have total authority over every aspect of your life. The tragedy of the matter is that this principle is just mere words to so many who profess to be Christians. Most of us who call ourselves Christians are not in actuality really the possession of God. We call ourselves Christians but God doesn't really have us. God wants to possess His possession. We have our sins forgiven but we have not been purified unto Him. Therefore we are not being "zealous unto good works" as He wants us to be. This is the heartbreak of Christ and the Church today.

Genesis 3:15 is the first promise of the Redeemer, prophesying that Jesus Christ would die on a cross, that He would crush the head of the serpent while the serpent bruised His heel. Isn't it interesting that in Genesis 2:15, in the Owner's Manual, God created man, and then just one chapter later we already have the need of the cross, prophesying Jesus' dying for our sins! Already between Genesis 2:15 and Genesis 3:15 we see that man had been made for a specific purpose: that he would be in total submission to his God; that he would be at God's disposal to be picked up and put anywhere He wants him to be placed (located); and that he would do any job God wanted him to do (vocated). That's why we were made--to be God's. That comes from His Manual in Genesis 2:15.

By Genesis 3:15, we already had the cross! Was it because man had become so wicked? Adam and Eve never had a chance to get drunk; they weren't wicked; they weren't immoral; they weren't adulterers; they weren't thieves; they weren't extortioners. Why, then, was it already necessary for Jesus to go to the cross? It wasn't for the wicked acts that we categorize as sins today. The primary reason Jesus Christ had to die was that a God-man relationship was broken which demanded the death of Jesus Christ. It was not sin like the outward sins we primarily tend to think of when someone says the word "sin," but it was the sin of breaking a relationship with God. What caused the breaking of the God-man relationship? It was man wanting to do his own thing and man wanting to run his own life. It's because he got away from the Owner's Manual. It was a sin in relation to his position to the Creator; it was a sin in relation to fulfilling the purpose for which he was created. Man had lost the place and purpose for which he was created. It was not a sin in the realm that I am so wicked, but it was a sin against God. That's why Jesus Christ had to die on the cross.

In Titus 2:11 we again see the real meaning of the cross. Perhaps we have been living on a superficial level concerning the cross. Perhaps Christianity is a bore and a drag because we don't know the real meaning of the cross. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation..." What is this salvation all about? We get salvation from the cross. What salvation? What is the grace of God that brings salvation? "Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;" (2:12-13). That's the grace of God--bringing salvation. Then God gets more specific with us: "Who gave himself for us, [that's the cross--for what?] that he might redeem us from all iniquity, [that's the first aspect, and secondly] and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Paul said to Titus, "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (2:15). Don't let any man change your message or water it down. Don't let anyone intimidate you to preach something less. Jesus Christ gave Himself for us--

- To redeem us from iniquity--to take away my sins.
- To purify us unto Himself, a peculiar people--to restore God's property.

God wants something for Himself. The word "purify" means to make us totally clean so we are fit for His presence and His use, to sanctify, to call unto Himself.

Paul's favorite picture to depict the relationship of a Christian to Jesus Christ was that of a slave. Being a slave was a person that was actually controlled by his master. He had no rights of his own, no future of his own, no money or decision-making of his own. Everything belonged to his master.

That's what the cross is really all about--for us to get back to the cross ourselves, to give up that spirit of rebellion, to give ourselves over to His Lordship, to get back to total submission to Christ as originally designed for us at the dawn of creation. We bow at the foot of the cross, we bow at the foot of Jesus Christ.

One brother knelt as we were worshiping God in a meeting. That was not a casual thing, but it was saying something in his spirit--a giving over, bowing at the foot of the cross. It means, "I put myself under submission to the God Who made me, and redeemed me."

When you buy something, you own it--it's yours. When you go into a store to make a transaction and pay money to the clerk, you expect him to give you the item purchased. Wouldn't it be strange for you to pay for something, and then the clerk refuses to give it to you? He says, "I won't give it to you," and he rebels. You say, "What do you mean? I paid for this?" That's what we do to God when we say, "O Lord Jesus, redeem me from my sins, save me so I can have a one-way ticket to go to heaven," and then go on and live for self, while God says, "I want YOU." He paid for us. Now He says, "Give me that which I paid for--your life. I'm not interested in your sins. That was the price I had to pay to get you." We hold ourselves back and act as if God has no right to our life.

Christ died to redeem us from ourself, then He wants total authority over our life. If He bought us, He owns us, and wants total authority of our life. If the cross has done it's work in our life, we will be living totally for Jesus Christ; otherwise the cross has not been allowed to do it's full work. Are we true followers of Christ?

That we might be "a peculiar people" does not mean one doesn't smile or wear the right kind of tie, but wears odd clothes. It's a peculiarity in that we have a separate calling, a divine purpose, a specific commitment. We live having a citizenship from above with commands coming from a realm that this world knows nothing about. We belong to someone else! God wanted to purify a people for Himself. Christ died on the cross to "purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

We'll be peculiar in the eyes of people around us, but we are to be "zealous of good works." We live in a world that had Communist zealots for years. God wants to raise up a generation of people that have been purified unto God--zealots, zealous unto good works. What God has made and paid for (redeemed), now He OWNS. Our response back to that truth is where the problem lies. Theoretically we are His, but in practical terms we are not really the possession of God. He redeemed us--we have our sins forgiven. But we have never been purified unto God, and therefore are not performing the zealous works for God that He desires from us.

Don't take the story of the death of Christ casually! Don't take it for granted when it comes along at Easter! Why did Jesus Christ die on a cross? Romans 14:7-9 makes it so clear. "For none of us lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." Notice the next words: "For to this end Christ both died [here is the purpose for His dying], and rose, [Why did He die and rise again?] that He

might be Lord (emphasis added] both of the dead and living." The purpose for which He died is that He might be Lord--that He might own His possession. You see, the Owner's Manual said that when God made man we were the Lord's. When sin entered in and destroyed that holy estate and that proper perspective of what man and life were all about, Jesus Christ had to die. "To this end Christ died: that whether we live or die," we should be the Lord's--"to the end that Christ might become [once again] Lord of both the dead and the living." He wants to get His property back, and the dying of Jesus relates to the fact that God wants to claim His own again. Something happened in the Fall of man that God again needs to possess His possession. And Jesus Christ died that God would have the privilege again to possess His possession! What a tremendous truth!

People say, "Oh, first of all you need to make Christ your Savior, and then you need to make Him your Lord later on." In the Bible Jesus Christ never commands people to accept Him as Lord per se. Nowhere in Scripture are we told to make Jesus Christ Lord. He IS already Lord! We need to submit to His Lordship; He IS Lord. Jesus Christ died that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living. And our problem is in submitting to His Lordship so God can once again possess His possession. He is Lord of it but He wants to possess it, and we need this in our day.

The Bible says, "...sanctify the Lord God in your hearts..." (I Peter 3:15). It means to "come apart from the world; let Him be holy in your heart; in the very core of your being be wholly focused on Him." It means, "In your heart reverence God as Lord--to enlarge and make Him big in your hearts." That is the way to live your life. That is saying, "Yes, Lord, what is the question?" He is LORD.

Paul states in I Corinthians 6:19-20, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." [Emphasis added.]

Why did Christ die? These verses all teach that what God created, He lost, and then paid for it with His own Son. He owns it and wants it back for Himself.

The biggest mistake we make when we talk about sin is that we are prone to think of sin as simply external acts as murder, cheating, stealing, adultery, fornication, and lying. We think of these as the essence of sin, but these are external expressions of sin, not it's very essence. We can ask God to cleanse us from some of these external expressions of sin because they are not good for us. We could even be delivered from some of these external expressions of sin but still go on wanting to plan and run our own life. We go on doing our own thing and calling the shots for our life, but we never deal with the true essence of sin! We may even tithe, go to church, and give to missions, but God is talking about our basic motivation in life. We hear people say, "Well I don't smoke, I don't chew and I don't run with those that do," and they think that they are alright. But still our basic motivation is, "What I want to do, I do; nobody tells me what to do." We go right on living for ourselves.

What, then is the truest essence of sin? Somebody said it with such discernment: "At its very center, sin is living in pride to gratify myself." Christ's church is filled with people like that, and I believe God's heart is broken. Why did Jesus Christ die on the cross anyway? To make it possible for us to get back to the original purpose for which we were created--to live under the loving, joyful authority and Lordship of our Creator, Jesus Christ Himself, and for God to have and own us once again. Because of sin we pulled away from His Lordship and Jesus had to die to get us back to that purpose. And that inevitably leads to the third question.

3. What Is the Basic Sin to Which We Are Most Tempted As We Walk On This Earth?

"For the love of Christ"--it was all love to redeem us from our sins--"constraineth us"--holds me in a vise (II Cor. 5:14). Men have a vise on their work bench. What is it used for? It holds an object in its grip so you can work on that object--held in a vise, immovable. That's the meaning of the word "constrains" us--holds us in a vise. We can't do anything else, we are gripped by the meaning of the love of Christ. "The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." We were all dead in trespasses and sins. We come to the conclusion because we judge that if one died for all--He had to die for everybody--then we were all dead. He did die for us all, and verse 15 tells how it changes us.

II Corinthians 5:15 says, "And that He died for all, that they which live..."--do you live because He died? You say, "Yes, I want Christianity, but I want to do my own thing. I want my sins forgiven so that at least I'm on my way to heaven." Paul continues, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves." In other words, stop doing what you used to do, but from this point on, change your direction and quit living unto yourself. If you believe in the cross you must then get off the wave length you used to live. The cross says that Jesus Christ died for all them which "live unto themselves." That's what the world is full of--people wanting to live for self, to do their own thing. "Nobody tells me what to do; I run my own life, call my own shots." But if I believe in the cross, I am to know that Jesus Christ died to set me free from that approach to living. We should henceforth no more do what we used to do--live for number one. We should henceforth no more do what the world is busy doing--satisfying and gratifying number one. We should quit that life. We've been changed from that life. We were made for God. The cross says, "no longer live for ourselves, but live unto Christ."

You know that you were made for something and for God! You can have life with all its trimmings, but it would be like a bicycle with a beautiful tire and nice spokes on the wheel, but if you don't have a hub it will collapse as you start down the road. This world is filled with men and women who have all the trimmings of life but who don't know what the "hub" of life is all about. I deeply admire every young person who dares to go God's way in his life, who dares to follow God's standards, who believes that God's plan is the right way to go, that God's standard of holiness is going to be his standard of life. And even if he is laughed at for his stand in high school, he will still stand for God. So many are guilty of sacrificing the permanent on the altar of the immediate, and with temporary thrills sacrifice their permanent eternal destiny.

A preacher who speaks in many Christian high schools asks the question regularly: "How many of you really want the will of God for your life?" He has been most shocked at how few are interested in even fulfilling the will of God for their lives as Christians. They want to be saved, but they still want to run their own lives.

While lying in bed at that Briercrest conference, was an article about cutting health costs in the Regina Leader Post newspaper. It stated that the goal was to "keep people independent." This might be a good idea medically, but I thought, "Isn't that our real problem? This is the essence of sin: that we can be independent and do our own thing. This is still the basic problem: most of us living for ourselves.

When Christ challenged people while walking on this earth, He did not tell them to quit drinking, smoking, gambling, chewing, and all the rest. He said, "Follow Me"--take up His cross and follow Him. He said to deny myself. He dealt with a more basic issue than simply externals. He talked about the life; He talked about the heart. He condensed the problem down to one central issue and it was: deny yourself. "I want you, first of all, to lay down your life and your rights to your life." He knew that if a man would die to

selfishness he would be completely at His disposal, and God could do with him and through him whatever He desires. And that's what God wants. God is calling us these days with, "I want people at my disposal." Where are we?

We say that we are the children of God, but are we at His disposal? We're at the disposal of everything else--the things we want to do--everything except God's will. We say, "Lord, I want my sins forgiven. I want the benefits of Your cross but don't tell me what to do. Let me plan my own life. Let me be independent." Christ came to destroy the root of sin, which is selfish pride. That is why He died! Many of us have never fully surrendered our lives to Jesus and asked, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" I believe that what God wants to do in His Church around the world is to bring us to the place of such absolute surrender to His will that we can respond like the Apostle Paul on the Damascus road: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Lord, what is Your will for my life?" Let me explain this with two very simple illustrations.

A young non-Christian college student was studying to be a lawyer. He went to a camp and got right with God. He then returned to college for his law degree, graduated, and became a lawyer. Was he wrong or right in doing such? He had no right after becoming a Christian to assume he should continue in what he had planned for his life. Instead, he should have said, "Lord, is this Your purpose for my life? Is this Your will for my life?" When he became a Christian he was now under new management. His first responsibility was to check in with his new Master. He was not his own anymore. Can God come on the scene of your life to change and do with it whatever He wills at any time? Somebody said, "The most marvelous thing in life, the most important thing in anyone's life is to do the will of God." That means, let Him be the Lord and Owner, let Him dictate my life. I'll do the will of God.

A primary school teacher went to a Christian school teachers' convention. She became a Christian there and upon leaving, the man who led her to the Lord said, "Wait a minute before you go home to simply continue your school teaching. You need to recognize that, having become a Christian, you are now under new management." He then explained what he meant. "You have no right now to make any decisions about your future without first asking God. You are no longer your own. You're under new management. Have you asked God about your teaching?" She said, "No, I never gave that a thought." "Then go back into that room and ask your new Manager whether you should continue being a school teacher, saying, 'Lord, what is Your will for my life?'" She went back and prayed, returning with an uneasy spirit. She had no peace about going back to schoolteaching. She finished her contract and went to Bible college. The Lord put His hand on her and she is now in full-time service for Jesus Christ on a mission field.

Does God have that kind of right on your life and mine? Can it happen at any age of your life? The actions of these two young people after they became Christians are so typical of thousands, both young and old. We became a Christian and simply assumed that we can go on with our own interests, or own desires, go where we want to go, do what we want to do in whatever we've planned. We never thought about our new management. We were made for God and God is getting back His property once again; first of all, to be in submission to Him, so that then He can locate us--put us any place He wants; then vocate us--give us the calling He wants for our life.

When in the British Indies I saw an elderly lady who had recently arrived before my brother and I arrived. What a wonderful thing--going to the mission field at such an age for the first time! I was amazed and asked her, "What are you doing here at your age in the West Indies? Are you physically strong?" She said, "No I have a heart condition." "And you came to the tropics with its heat and humidity to be a missionary?" She said, "Well, I got this paper from this mission saying that one of the missionaries had to leave for

immediate surgery." She sent and corrected lessons for a children's correspondence course for students all over the area. She said, "As I read that letter, I thought to myself, 'I could go out there and fill that missionary's place for a year or so and do that work.'" "But," I said to her, "You just arrived, and to do that work, and you tell me you have a heart problem!" I was trying to find out what made that woman decide to do this at such an age. She said to me, "Well, I just thought I could die as easily back home as I could out here!"

I have seen God come on the scene of people even at the age of 57 and change their whole situation. A retired couple traveled many miles with us singing for God. Another couple that God had put His hand on were farmers and now travel with us, working on logistics in our crusades as well as much counseling. They had beautiful homes and nice retirement situations but God is claiming his own and put His hand upon them to do something more than settle back and say, "We are of retirement age; we can just do our own thing." They are giving their retirement in service to God because He changed their direction in life. Does God have rights like that on you?

Years ago in our evangelistic ministry, we would preach one night in each crusade to young people about answering the call of God for full-time service. Many of these young people who heard the call of God were for the most part 14 to 16 year-olds, and even some 12 year-olds. They would say they felt the call of God to go into the ministry or to be a missionary and so forth. They had education, finances, marriage, and other things ahead of them, with many never even getting to Bible school. After God changed our ministry, directing it to the inner life of the local church, we emphasized the real essence of what it means to live under the Lordship and authority of Jesus Christ. We haven't preached once on full-time service in the crusades since. Yet, we now see more people answering the call to go into full-time service than in all those years when preaching one night on the subject in each crusade. Many now are out around the world without our even preaching about it.

Why is this so? God is claiming His own. God is dealing with His people about ownership. Now it is not just the 15 and 16 year-olds that have education and finances ahead of them. It's the 25 and 35 year-olds, with wife and children, having to be uprooted from business, and all the other big responsibilities related to changing their whole course of life. This all relates to God's dealing with the problems of our unyielded wills and our selfish living. That's what revival is all about--God's right once again to locate and vocate what He owns.

A greatly respected pastor for many years in western United States was deeply touched by God. God broke him and did a marvelous work in his life. God started to speak to him in the midst of revival. The pastor spoke these words to his people: "It's so good for God to break you. You know, the truth is that our wills are all the same. You and I are like a wild animal. My will is no different from yours. It's wild; it's rebellious; and until God breaks it, you are going to stay wild. And God broke my will and I hope He keeps it broken, because it's so much better that way."

What God wants to do is to take the "kick" out of our stubborn wills and get the selfishness out of our motivations in life. You know what the "kick in the spirit" is? Psalm 51:10 says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit [emphasis added] within me." It is not enough to have a clean heart. The right spirit is also necessary. It is not just saying, "Lord, forgive my sins." It is the surrendered will where God comes on the scene and takes the "kick" out of our will. Our motivation for living is to allow the Spirit of God to work in us what is His will for us. God deserves our ALL, but when we hold back or question God's workings in our life, we are resisting our Creator. God wants no kickback from His creation!

Young people, the sooner you learn this principle, the greater will be your fulfillment in life. You must come to the place where you say to God, "Yes, Lord, what is the question?" You give Him the answer before He even asks the question. The question is then no question at all. It's just a marching order because you have already given Him the answer. Now we are talking about the real meaning of the Lordship of Christ in your life and mine. God owns His property, and that's what He wants, but some of us want to say, "Lord, what is Your will for my life? Tell me what Your will is so I can go off somewhere to pray, and then spend a couple of years to analyze and rationalize it to decide whether or not I'll do it." The problem is that when we are trying to decide to do God's will we are still the boss, and are still running the show. We are still in control. The truly surrendered heart will give God the "Yes!" even before he knows what the question is.

As any young man does while growing up, my brother and I had our plans. At first we planned to be architects or ball players. We "cut teeth with a basketball in our mouth," starting as little ones. Also, our dad owned a grocery business that was handed down from his father, to be handed down to us. Now, isn't that a combination--from an architect to a ball player to a grocery man! Dad and his brother had an Italian-American grocery store in New Jersey. Each of the five Suterases in the next generation were going to manage a chain store. Envision it in the New York metropolitan area as a big situation for 21 year-olds owning a business that was worth 40,000 dollars. In those days that was quite a sum. We had everything planned, and then God came on the scene. In a moment's time our whole direction was changed. At eight years of age we gave our hearts to Jesus. At ages 12 and 13 God put His hand on me again and said, "I want you to preach." I knew that God had made a colossal mistake.

I was the most shy teenager He could ever call. "Surely not me, Lord!" When I would walk down a sidewalk and saw somebody coming down the same side, I'd quickly run across the street so I wouldn't have to say "Hi" to him, because if he said "Hi" to me I would go right through the cement--and yet God said, "I want you to preach." But I had enough sense to know that what God orders is the only way to go. I am His, and He owns me, and I said, "Yes, Lord." Within a year after God laid His hand on me I had to speak in front of a crowd of 1000 people even as a 16-year-old. We learned that if God ordered something, He'll pay the bill. We have now travelled all across the continent for many years! Get with God's order! He will give you what you need to fulfill it. I thank God that early in my life I learned that God's way is the best way to go and God's will is the only will to have.

Romans 12:1-2 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world"--don't pick up this world's philosophy to run your own life, do your own thing, settle down, pursue pleasure, take it easy. "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." That you might know "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." There must be a commitment of our will to the will of God. Thus we say, "I want to know the will of God. I want to know I have been located and vocated by God."

God wants to bring our wills into subjection to His will--the God Who is our Lord and Maker. Billy Graham said, "We need people so committed to Jesus Christ that sacrifice becomes a way of life." Another has said, "The essential nature of sin is to claim my rights to myself." Oh, that God would shake us! When we come to this place of denying our rights for ourselves in life, God will then bring us to the place where we'll say with Jesus, "I delight to do Your will, O God"--that is "delighting in God's will." Does He need to bring you to that place? This is why Jesus died, so that God can have you at His will, in His will, moving at His dictates, loving His will, knowing that His will is the only real place to be and the only real way to go.

In the Lord's Prayer we say, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We are praying, "Would You do in my life, would You perform in my life, would You bring about in my life Your will for me while I walk on this earth just as You planned it in heaven for me? Don't let there be one iota of difference between what's on your menu for me and what I am living down here."

This is precisely what the will of God is all about--God having the right to do what He wants. Jesus said in the garden of Gethsemane, "Let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my will but Thine be done" (Matt. 26:39). Remember, sin is missing the mark! What mark is it? Sin is missing the purpose of God for your life. Sin is basically living for yourself instead of living in the will of God. Do you know that you are living in the will of God? God is ever trying to bring us to the place where we say not only, "Lord, I'll do Your will," but also, "I delight to do Your will." We are now talking about the real meaning of the Lordship of Christ in our lives.

What is the real issue of this message? It is God taking us right back to the Owner's Manual--right where we started. God is wanting to do a work of restoration in three areas: whether I'm in total submission to Him, in the location of His choosing, and in the vocation of His choosing. This is not a negative message but a very positive one: the surrender of one's will and life to the will of God!

I'm not regretting the fact that I didn't become an architect, ball player, or grocer. After what I've had the privilege to experience while in the will of God, I wouldn't trade places with anyone in those positions if they are not in the will of God. The sweetest experience this side of glory is to be doing the will of God, because as Andrew Murray said, "The will of God is the will of His love. How can you fear to do that wonderful will of God's love?"

You will find three wonderful things about God's will:

- a. The greatest thing in life is to know the will of God.
- b. To do the will of God is to enjoy life at its fullest.
- c. The greatest thing at the end of life is to be able to say: "I have done the will of God."

Basically, God wants to bring us back to TOTAL SUBMISSION, LOCATION, and VOCATION, with God having us at HIS disposal.

We sing, "Take my life and let it be...", but the tragedy is that so many say, "Lord, take my life, but just let it be!" What should it be? "Consecrated, Lord, to Thee...[Emphasis added], Take my love, My God, I pour at Thy feet its treasure store; take myself, [that's what its all about!] and I will be ever, only, all for Thee; Ever, only, all for Thee" [Emphasis added].

Another song writer put it so succinctly when asking two questions, and then gives the answers according to how we answer the questions. "Is your all on the altar of sacrifice laid? Your heart does the Spirit control? You can only be blest and have peace and sweet rest as you yield Him your body and soul." C. S. Lewis stated, "There is one thing Christianity can never be and that is moderately important!"

A teenager said: "I want God to guide me on my journey through this life." One in the 31 to 50 age group answered: "To have desires that God wants me to have." That's saying, "I want the will of God and nothing else." Someone in the over 50 group said: "That I should deal with my pride and selfishness." That's the basic sin--pride and selfishness that must be dealt with. For every young person or adult it will have a

different meaning according to how God will direct. But are you God's? Jesus died for all, that they which live should quit doing what men who don't believe in Jesus' death do--live unto themselves. He died that we should henceforth no more do those things, but live unto Him Who died for us and rose again. That's the issue! Revival brings us back to surrendering our will so God once again has the right to everything about us: all we are; all we have; all we ever hope to be. Oh, that God would break through and show us!

Magdalene Klinsiek wrote the song, "Claim Your Own, Dear Lord, Claim Your Own!" Does God really have you--everything about you? The ends of the earth will feel the effect if God has us at His disposal, changes our location and vocation to conform to His will, and each life takes on new meaning such as it never had before.

At the age of 13 I began preparing for the ministry, and at the age of 16 my brother and I started holding revivals like we conduct presently. We spent summers preaching between our high school years, finding little churches anywhere that let us preach. During our college years we also preached for ten weeks during each summer. Now through the years and looking back on our life, I wouldn't trade places with anybody in the world for the joy that was mine. Those were years of fulfillment, knowing that I was doing the will of God, being a blessing to people, and God blessing my life--filling up my life with the joy that comes with doing the will of God.

I'm asking the question: Are you guilty of the basic sin--living for self? Have you recognized why Christ really died for you? Have you recognized what life on this earth is really all about--we are God's and were made for Him? Does He have His rights to everything about you? I doubt if we could ever face anything more important than to settle this, drive it home, and allow God to walk through the corridors of our hearts and lives and everything about us. I covet this for every teenager as well as adults. The greatest way to live in life is to come to the end of my life and say, "I have done the will of God!"

The three most important questions:

- What is life all about? I am God's! Don't ever forget it.
- Why did Jesus die on the cross? That He could be LORD once again of His possession.
- What is the basic sin to which I am most tempted in this life? To pull my life into myself and grab it, do my own thing, call my own shots, and run it my own way. We're tempted every day to do this. We see this spirit in the newspapers and on television. Everything around us says, "Do it!" We are tempted, but we should henceforth not live unto ourselves, but live unto Him and let God write the script of our life, teaching us what it means to live unto Him, the One who died for us and rose again.

The verses following II Corinthians 5:15 explain what it really means to "live unto Jesus." II Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." If you are in Christ, if you get serious about that cross and say that you are a Christian, a child of God--you are a new creature. What's going to happen? Old things pass away. What are the old things? "That we should henceforth no more" [That's what it used to be. Emphasis added.] "live unto ourselves, but" [now with all things become new] "live unto Him who died for us and rose again" (II Cor. 5:15). The next verses describe the "new" things.

"And all things are of God"--He is the Owner. What has He done? "...who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 5:18)--God has drawn us back to Himself by Jesus Christ. What does that mean?

Once we are reconciled to God concerning our sins and are back in fellowship with God, look what God does: "and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;"--the very thing He did for us in reconciling us back to Himself by the cross. God then turns to us and says, "I give you the same ministry--a job in this world, that you would be reconciling men to God." That's living unto God. No more living unto yourself, but get busy reconciling men to God, like Jesus reconciled you to His Father. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them [forgiving our sins through Christ]; and God hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:19). Here is what it means to no longer live unto ourself. God gives us the ministry of reconciling others to God, then God gives the Word, and He puts the Word in our mouth to reconcile men to God. Then God puts it all in a nutshell with, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,"--that's living unto God. You are an ambassador for Jesus Christ, "as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (II Cor. 5:21). We are to speak as if God was speaking.

I have been in 20 countries of the world and in American Embassies in Beirut, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. When you are in that environment with such suspicion all around, you have to show your passport or identification; and there are always passing soldiers looking at you suspiciously, with everything having to be checked! (This was back in 1964. Imagine what it's like now!) It was a refreshing experience to go to the American Embassy when spending a month in Beirut, Lebanon preaching in that environment. The City of Beirut was beautiful, but it was wonderful when the missionary said, "Would you like to go to the American Embassy?" It was so good to go into the American Embassy in the midst of that sort of suspicious society to feel relief, and where you could "let down your hair" and take a deep breath. You didn't have to be careful what you said and how you looked at someone. You felt like you had taken a BOAC (British Overseas Air Command) Airline and flown back to New York, and were back in your homeland again. Here in the midst of that society is a little place called the American Embassy, with the decor like it is in America. You can have an American hamburger there and feel at home. It was a little bit of your homeland cut off in a foreign land. God says we are ambassadors--this is our business, and no longer are we living unto self. We are ambassadors for Christ, and I am suggesting that ambassadors live in homes that are owned by their homeland. If you're an ambassador for Christ you don't own the embassy. Secondly: The environment of the homeland was in that embassy, and I hope it is in your home--the environment of heaven.

The ambassador is the spokesman for the head of his government, standing in the stead of his leader or president. He represents the official voice of the president in that foreign land. When God says "no longer living unto yourself" He means that you are standing and speaking in God's stead with His message: "Be ye reconciled to me." And your message to others is, "Be ye reconciled to God." We are ambassadors for Christ, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, [that's the cross!] who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (II Cor. 5:21). This is the real meaning of what it is to be a Christian and what the cross is all about. It's really going back to the basic Manual of why God made me. It is allowing God to locate us (in a place of employment) and then vocate us as His ambassador to represent Him in that place of employment. Too many of us consider our place of employment as our vocation, and have lost a vision of why Jesus died and rose again--to have a people whose vocation then, is not to live unto themselves, but to first be reconciled to God and then have the vocation of being an ambassador for Christ, speaking in God's stead and reconciling others to God.

May God grant that our understanding be truly enlightened as to the true meaning of why Jesus died on the cross. May our lives then be adjusted to so live in the light of this understanding.

Perhaps we ought to give John 3:16 a rest when dealing with this issue of being a disciple of Jesus Christ and becoming a true Christian. We quote, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That's true, but the tragedy is that we have watered down the word "believe." Perhaps we need to use I Corinthians 6:19-20, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." What is it saying? We've been purchased with the precious blood of Jesus. If you buy something the buyer owns it. We belong to Him. He is the rightful Owner of our life. For man to refuse to give over his life to the Owner is robbery. Stealing is when I'm not the rightful owner and I keep my life for myself, refusing to give it over to God.

May God forgive us for living so much of our lives unto ourselves, and not "unto Him who died for us and rose again."

Let us pray--

Lord God, I pray that Thou wilt, in Thine own way, take this truth and project it into our lives so that we cannot be the same. Set us free, O God, from every area that would keep us from coming to grips with the most important truths concerning the essentials of life. Lord, I pray that Thou wilt bring us back to basics, back to understanding what Thy heart really is like and how we can walk in that right relationship with Thee. We know that Thou wilt not deny us as we respond to Thy truth. Begin that work of reviving and refreshing by a spirit of obedience, submission, and surrender to Thy will. Let us praise, glorify, and exalt Thee as God. Beside Thee, there is none other. Claim Thine own, dear Lord. We long for Thee to have us in full submission. Have Thy way. Amen."

Invitation--

God may be speaking to you as a young person or adult. Let me ask you a simple question: When did you quit asking God about His will for your life and His hand on your life? Was it when you became 35 years of age, when mission boards don't take people anymore? When is God going to get His Body again to do His work; to be His hands, His feet, His eyes, and His voice? I pray that every wall will come down that obstructs God's right to every area of your life. That is sin--doing my own thing, living for myself. Are you hearing God's voice in your spirit? Is God excluded in your life even though He is your Savior? Does He have the rights of your life? Give Him the right to be able to perform what He wants to do in your life. God truly longs to have His property at His disposal. If there are areas in your life that you are holding back from God, then say, "No more living unto myself." If God has ministered to your spirit, go to a place of prayer. Go to your knees, surrender and say to God: "I'm sick and tired of my half-hearted commitment. By the act of my will I want You to own Your possession. Live Your life through me. I surrender it all at the cross. No more I, but Christ, and by faith I claim a fresh infilling of Your Holy Spirit," and thank Him for it. Make this the beginning of the rest of your life in the truest sense.

I ask a second question: Are you really sure you are a Christian and have actually allowed Jesus Christ to come into your life and live in your heart? Maybe you have doubts, or you have all the head knowledge and proper theology, but you don't know that you are a child of God. Acknowledge Jesus as your Savior by:

- RECOGNIZING your condition--a sinner separated from a holy God (Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 3:23).

- CONFESS and repent of your sins--specifically the sin of controlling your life and rejecting Christ as Lord and Savior. Claim forgiveness and cleansing (Isa. 53:6; Jn. 3:18,36).

- OPEN your heart to invite and receive Christ into your life by faith (Isa. 55:6-7; Jn. 1:12).

- THANK God for forgiveness and cleansing as you turn from sin. Thanking is always the first step in exercising faith.

(II Cor. 9:15; Heb. 11:1,6a).

You can close with a prayer-- "Lord, I'm trusting Thee for victories as I surrender the rights of every area of my life to Thee. I pray that Thou wilt deliver me from any spirit other than the Spirit of Christ. Set me free so the kingdom of God can be extended through me to the ends of the earth. Have Thy way in my life, O God. I thank Thee, I worship Thee, I love Thee, I magnify Thee and adore Thee as God. Beside Thee there is none other. I praise Thee, for it is in the name of my blessed Lord and Savior Jesus Christ I ask these things. Amen."

Three Most Important Questions of Life, 2 messages combined, given at Aberdeen, Wa (1-12-92) AND St. Catherines

COMBINED WITH

What is the Truest Meaning of the Cross?, given at Lynnwood, WA (3-29-91)

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