

Authentic Christianity

by Michael Durham

Michael Durham's sermon emphasizes the stark contrast between authentic Christianity and worldly values, urging believers to focus on the Gospel's transformative power rather than societal acceptance.

Duration: 52:39

Topics: "True Christianity", "Holy Living"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the stark contrast between authentic Christianity and the worldly culture, highlighting the need for believers to be counter-cultural and not conform to the wisdom of this age. It stresses that true Christianity will be despised by the world, as seen in the message of the cross being considered foolishness. The sermon underscores that salvation is not by human efforts but by the power of God alone, and that holiness, suffering, and surrender are key aspects of thriving in the Christian faith.

Transcript

I recently read about a Christian University professor speaking about a sex-dating app that was the craze of the campus. This is an app where you scroll profiles under the auspices of online dating for a one-night stand, often being used several times a night by individuals. I then read an article from a leading national magazine that discussed these kinds of apps.

They interviewed 20-somethings. One of their interviewees was an investment banker, and he said, you know, it's kind of like ordering fast food and delivery online, except in this case, quote, you're ordering a person, end of quote. And when I read that, I felt a despair literally settle upon my heart.

I had no idea this kind of thing was going on. But what bothered me the most was to think that on a Christian University campus, this was a popular app. That pained me the most.

Now this is a very stark illustration of how much of what is called Christianity is following the worldly popular culture. But the comparison should not stop at a Christian University campus, oh no. Much of what is happening in the name of Christianity, even a good many local congregations, have been influenced by the same spirit of this present evil age.

In fact, I will go so far as to say that many of us, if not all of us, are to some degree influenced by the world around us. To some degree, the philosophy of this age has its influence, and so many today do not know what authentic Christianity even looks like. And when they do see it, they're confused as to whether it's

authentic or an aberration, an abnormal form of Christianity, because they have no point of reference.

These words from the Apostle Paul are, to me, the very sum of Christianity. And it's this summary that I believe is greatly needed at this particular hour. What is the gospel? Well, the Apostle answers.

It's the power of God, and it's the wisdom of God. And such is opposed to the wisdom of the world. True Christianity, are you listening? Listen.

Give me some feedback. Are you listening? Amen. True Christianity will always draw a stark contrast to its environment.

It is never at home in its surroundings, even religious surroundings. Authentic Christianity is so different that it cannot be at home in its environment. That's why the Apostle Peter addressed believers as pilgrims, and he wasn't meaning men with tall black hats and buckled shoes who have Thanksgiving feasts with Indians.

No. He was saying this is a man or a woman who temporarily lives in a strange place, and he or she will always be different. Now, Paul, in these first three chapters of this epistle, uses as a sub-theme wisdom, the wisdom of God versus the wisdom of the world, the wisdom of heaven versus the wisdom of the ages.

And our text is at the very heart of this sub-theme of wisdom, the wisdom of God and the wisdom of man. And what he shows us is that the two cannot come together. They will never come together.

And I want to show you this evening that it's those differences, it is the differences of authentic Christianity and the wisdom behind it that's so counter-cultural to the wisdom of this world that is the hallmark distinct things of authentic Christianity. And so the Apostle Paul first directs our attention here in this text that the world will always despise authentic Christianity. How do you recognize authentic Christianity? Watch the world.

They will always despise what is genuine Christian faith. Look at what he says in verse 18. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

It's absolutely ludicrous to a lost man. The gospel makes no sense. Even Jesus said, you will be hated by all men for my sakes.

Why? He was warning us. He was warning us that the world would reject his followers. They rejected him.

So authentic Christianity is despised by its environment. Verse 22 and 23. The Apostle Paul tells us that the Jews request a sign.

Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. They are utterly opposed to it.

It's counter to their thinking and philosophy, counter to the way the mind works, and the rationale of the human heart. If you move to the third chapter, verse 18, the Apostle says it this way. Let no one deceive himself.

If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. Now what does the Apostle mean by that? He means this. If you are an intelligent person, a man of learning, you've achieved some status and understanding and been able to parse and to discern and to reason, if

you are to be a true follower of Jesus Christ, you must be willing to be ridiculed by the intelligentsia.

You must be willing to be considered a fool, scoffed and mocked as an ignorant person. This is what he's saying. Why? Because the world always disdains authentic Christianity.

Now I suggest to you that the world would be more than happy to accept the Christian faith if the Christian faith would solve the social problems of the world and leave it at that. They'd be quite happy to accept you and I if we could somehow have an answer to the dilemmas of war that we face in this age. If we could have a solution, if the churches of this country could come together and solve the racial tensions that we now feel once again dividing people in this nation, well, maybe they might extend a hand to us.

And if we could solve the problems of poverty, no doubt they would accept us. If we would just simply relegate all of our efforts, all of our ministry and time to the social ills of our society, then we would be accepted. Point in case.

Never has there been a people more maligned and spoken evil of than the Salvation Army and its formation in early years. The booths were mocked by the people of London. They were considered the off-scouring, the lowly, the lowly, the ignorant, the do-gooders.

And today, the Salvation Army has departed from authentic Christianity and its message. And today, even our federal government and other civil agencies work in conjunction with the Salvation Army. Yeah, if you can just be one of those kinds of people and adopt a social justice message, we would be more than glad to accept you.

But Jesus said, this can never be. The poor you will have always with you. In other words, He's clearly stating that He never intended His church to be simply about social justice.

The church is not called to be a social justice agency. And the reason is very simple. Please listen.

The social ills that you and I now are experiencing in our times are simply symptomatic, not the source. They are the symptoms of a problem much deeper. The racial tensions, the rise in crime, and the hatred and the uncivility that we are experiencing, even in places of importance, is only a symptom of a far greater problem.

And the problem has never changed because man has never changed. The human heart is still in trouble. And only the Gospel has the answer.

And so if you and I were to be distracted and begin to focus on simply social justice, here's what's going to happen. You're going to fall into the snare that many have fallen and been entrapped before us. I didn't say that we shouldn't be light or salt.

Jesus said, you are salt and light to this world. But if we're to be salt and light, we need to focus on the source of the problem, the real problem. Let me give you an example while I'm trying to communicate.

Let's suppose you were having a heart attack and you were rushed to the ER. And while the doctor in the ER was examining you, he happened to look down at your feet and he noticed you had a severe ingrown toenail. And he forgot about the heart problem and he began to try to fix your ingrown toenail.

What would you say about such a doctor? You'd say he was a derelict in his duty, utterly foolish. And you're right. Beloved, we have a message.

And it is that message which is the salt and the light that the world is needing. Our message addresses the problems that the others will not address. Salt and light always comes to us in Christ.

And Christ alone is the only cure for this nation. And what is it? And if you are faithful to the message of Jesus Christ, you will not be accepted by your culture. It is a sad thing that so many of us believe that if we could just gain the acceptance of the people we're trying to reach, if we could get them to like us, to respect us, then we could give them the gospel.

My dear friend, that is a dangerous path that leads to nowhere. It has never worked in the past, and it shall never work in the future. You must understand that if you're faithful to authentic Christianity, you will be despised.

I read of a university professor who was an agnostic having come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He was just a baby Christian. He only had two or three verses he'd memorized, but he was faithful to witness to his other colleagues, of which were sadly disappointed in him.

How could a man of your intelligence go off the deep end and follow such fables and myths? He was often criticized. There was one particular professor that he was closest to. It was a lady professor there at the university.

They always had lunch together, and often in his attempt to try to share the gospel with her, it ended up into being conflict. And so he decided on one particular lunch, as they said at the table, that he wouldn't say anything. He'd just tend to his business, eat his meal quietly, and say absolutely nothing.

But he noticed she was beginning to get agitated. He could tell by her body language. Something was bothering her.

And with wide eyes of innocence, he looked up at her, and she exploded with these words, even when you're silent, you are a living accusation. Even when you're silent, you're a living accusation. That's it.

Authentic Christianity is a thorn in the side of this popular culture and world in which we live in. The light of Jesus Christ in you will have an effect that you don't even have to open your mouth. The countenance alone, the demeanor of the body will preach light to a world that wants to remain in its darkness.

Well, the world would accept Christianity if Christianity was just merely offering psychological help to the people who are in need. You know, help people feel better about themselves. Build up their self-esteem.

Tell them that they have a purpose and they're somebody. Well, many church leaders have advocated this way. A more progressive theology.

Do you know what progressive theology really means? Popular lie replacing an offensive truth. That's all progressive theology is. People like Joyce Meyer, Joel Osteen, have decided that this is the way to reach their generation.

And so they have their television programs. They have their stadiums. They have their masses and their crowds.

But what do they do not have? They don't have a gospel. They avoid the subject of sin. They avoid the subject of man's heart and the condition of the soul.

They avoid it like the plague. You would think that was what was dangerous and deadly. What would happen if the authentic gospel was being preached by those people? I'm telling you, their stadiums would be empty.

Except for the power of God. The world maybe would accept us if we were just keeping our faith through our worship services. Isn't this what we hear today? You have the right to be a Christian and believe what you want to believe.

Just don't take it to the marketplace. Don't bring it to the public. Many, many years ago before I was pastoring at Oak Grove trying to survive and provide for my family, I was working at a secular job where on a Monday I was just talking about some of the things that God was doing and what I had heard on Sunday.

And an older gentleman, the senior of that company, walked up to me and says, Now Michael, haven't you learned that you don't let what you learn on Sunday slop in over into Monday? That's exactly what he was saying. That's what he meant. I was to be quiet.

Don't bring that to the marketplace. Don't bring it to the office. If you want to believe that and go to your worship service, fine.

And friends, they would accept us tonight if we would succumb to their suggestion that we keep it private. But we can't. We must not.

We have the answer that they need. We have the only cure. The message of Jesus Christ is a wisdom that does not come from this world.

It comes from above. And this is part of the problem as the Apostle Paul saw it. He said that the world despises Christianity because of Christianity's rationale.

You see, Christianity contradicts all the major world philosophies. Look at verse 27. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise.

And God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty. In other words, God's wisdom is diametrically opposed to the wisdom of the world that the world cannot follow or accept Christianity's logic. Cannot do so.

You see, the philosophy of the world says pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. Be your own man. Be your own woman.

Don't succumb to anybody. Assert yourself. That's the philosophy of the world.

Look at every major world religion and that is what you can reduce it down to. Everyone except one. The Christian faith.

Jesus's philosophy, if I can use that term, is if any man wants to come after me, let him first deny himself and pick up his cross and follow me. Christianity contradicts the spirit of individualism. Every religion requires man's salvation to be upon his own shoulders, her own shoulders.

But Jesus comes and says, all you who are heavy laden and weary, I will give you rest for my yoke is easy and my burden is light. Why? Because I'm going to do the work. All you must do is trust.

That's so contrary to the spirit of this age. Christianity contradicts the world's societies and communities. We have a different community born out of heaven.

We have a different family to which we belong. The world has its societies, its communities, and they say this is the way. This is the way to a better life.

You've got to be part of this organization. You've got to be a Democrat. You've got to be Republican.

And so the church thought that this was the way to go. You remember the 79-80 election? What was so distinct in that was that it was the beginning of the moral majority. And evangelical leaders in this nation fell once again into the trap of the devil, believing that politics was the solution.

And once again, we're falling into this trap every four years. Here we are once again, leading evangelicals have thrown their hat into the ring, supporting their particular candidate because they believe they, that person, is the solution to the social problems in the heart of America. Please listen to me.

The moral majority of the past was a false hope. It's like trying to grab a whiff of sand. Couldn't change this country.

Now look at us, 30 years later. We're in a worse shape morally than we've ever been. Now we're told to believe in higher education.

Now we're told to believe in other organizations. There's only one organization, one organism, God endorses, and he's the head of it. The Church of Jesus Christ.

That is the only true society and community that has the answer. But what I would like to do just for a few more moments with you is to show you why and how the wisdom of the world eclipses the wisdom, the wisdom of God eclipses the wisdom of this world. Look at verse 19.

1 Corinthians 1, 19. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. This is what God says he will do.

How is he going to do this? He does it by his wisdom and his power, which are intricately linked in this text. He says that the foolishness of preaching to this world is considered completely ridiculous. But instead of saying that we have been saved, verse 18, we believe it's the wisdom of God.

No, he doesn't say that. He says what? It's the power of God. He doesn't use the word wisdom.

Later on, he will. Once again, he uses the word power of God, which we've talked about twice. Friends, the wisdom of God and the power of God have been linked in the person of Jesus Christ, and this is so superior to any philosophy, any intelligence yet, more and greater than the academia of this present day.

Let me tell you why. Christianity is superior to the world's intellect because of the counsel of the Lord and His ways. It leaves man so puzzled, even the most brilliant of us.

The power of the Gospel looks so foolish to mankind because it's on a higher plane of intelligence than the most brilliant scientist, the most brilliant philosopher. It exceeds any intelligence. He shows us that the Jews wanted miracles in order to believe, and the Greeks wanted a brilliant philosophical argument that disproved all other philosophies.

And what did God offer them? A crucified Messiah that was resurrected. And that appears to the world absolutely foolish. But the problem is that it's not foolish.

No, no. The problem is it's so brilliant. It's so massive in its wisdom and its intelligence that man on a human level cannot understand it.

Then is the problem. That man by his own mind and intellect cannot perceive of a wisdom that eclipses his, he might as well try to get a gnat to instruct an intelligent genius. It won't work.

Now listen to what God's wisdom says. The lost man listens to the Gospel message, and he says it's just utter madness, sheer folly. Cannot accept it.

It doesn't make sense. Why would smart, intelligent people rely upon these stories, a book archaic, a book of the past? God's wisdom is so marvelous that they miss it. And that is the problem.

First, I want to give you some things here from the Scriptures. Godly wisdom says that God wins by dying. God wins by dying.

Look at verse 18 again. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. How did God save us? How did God win us over? By bearing our sins on the cross and giving the ultimate sacrifice, His very life.

He died. It's the message of His death and His resurrection. And thereby proving that He is far stronger at His weakest, lowest moment than the greatest, strongest man living.

Look at what He says in 1 Corinthians 1, verse 25. I didn't read it as a part of our text, but it's there in the context. 1 Corinthians 1, verse 25.

It says the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men. God's not foolish, nor is He weak. This is Paul's best way to try to describe in human terms what's going on here.

God who appeared to be at His weakest moment and what could be more weaker than to be pinned to a tree dying. Yet in that low moment, when He's bearing the sins of the world and He is crying out to the Father, My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? In that low moment, He was stronger than all the demons in hell. In that moment, He surpassed all the powers of nuclear and armies and anything else that man has devised.

God in His appearing to be foolish, submitting to the death of the cross, is far more intelligent than the smartest angel. That's what He's saying to us. And the human intellect listens to that and says that cannot be so.

How can a man crucified and then on top of that, to believe that three days later He rose again never to die, how can that have any hope? How can that give me any idea of stability and satisfaction in this world where there is none? It doesn't appear to be wise. God's wisdom wins by dying. Secondly, God's wisdom says this.

You must lose your life to save your life. I don't think that will get you into Harvard. If you want to save your life, you've got to relinquish it.

You've got to turn loose of it. You've got to give it up for whoever desires to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

For what profit is a man that he gained the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? The wisdom of God says the way to salvation is through surrender, not success. Not pull yourself up by your own bootstraps. Not develop some great strategy or formula for the Christian life.

No, it's a matter of absolute surrender to Christ even when it doesn't make sense. To give yourself away is the way of salvation. And so if you want to lose your life, if you want to save your life, you've got to lose your life.

Or how about this one? The wisdom of God says Christianity thrives when it suffers. How wise is that? If you were going to devise the Christian faith, would you have set that up as one of your operating principles? That the more you suffer, the more you thrive. The more you endure hardship, the more you flourish.

The church survives the worst that hell can spew out of its vile mouth. The floods of evil that would overtake God's people like a tsunami and wash her from the face of the earth has acted like a tide and spread her all over the earth. Watch them there in that early church in those early centuries.

They tried to stamp it out by the sword. They'd kill one Christian and ten would come up in his or her place. Whoever said it, that the blood of the martyrs is the seeds of the church was right.

And the more Satan hounds her, the more Satan harasses her, the more Satan pursues her, she seems to strengthen, to grow, to be something that cannot be conquered or vanquished. Because the way of wisdom God's wisdom is you thrive. How many of you are here suffering tonight? Oh, I pray you hear God's wisdom.

I'm wanting you to thrive. I'm wanting you to flourish. I want you to have success.

This is my wisdom. How about this? Holiness is the greatest success. Holiness is the greatest success.

The world thinks completely different, does it not? If we were to define what the world would say is success in one word, what would we say? Probably happiness or pleasure, enjoyment, contentment, something to this degree. And so we've got people in Christian churches trying to be happy. And we've got plenty of preachers that will tickle their ears and tell them just how they can be happy in Jesus.

And they miss it a million miles. You seek to be happy? You'll be miserable. The wisdom of God is completely different.

It does not think like we think naturally or carnally. No, no, my dear friend. God says you want to be happy.

You must be holy. Pursue holiness. You're chasing after the wrong thing.

You're chasing a pipe dream. You'll never catch it. But be holy.

Pursue me, the standard of holiness, and you will be happy. You'll be filled with joy inexpressible and full of glory. A young woman who lost her husband to cancer, a Christian woman who wrote these words, and I want you to listen.

Very powerful. One thing that I've become convinced of is that God has different definitions for words than I do. Have you yet learned that? God has different definitions for words than I do.

For example, He does work all things for my eternal good and His eternal glory. But His definition of good is different than mine. My good would never include cancer and young widowhood.

My good would include healing and dying together in our sleep when we're in our nineties. But cancer was good because of what God did that He couldn't do any other way. Cancer was in fact necessary to make Bob and me look more like Jesus.

So in love, God allowed what was best for us in light of eternity. Now beloved, that doesn't make sense even to Christians. Oh, we can sit here in a comfortable church having no trials or extremities or difficulties and we can say amen.

But you let the trial begin. You let the hardship swallow you up. You let those moments feeling defenseless as if God Himself had abandoned you.

And not many of us in this room right here would say this is God's best. We'd be tempted to doubt it. But that's God's way.

Because His ways are not your ways. And His thoughts are not your thoughts. There's someone in this room right now.

You're not a believer. And you're hearing this message and you're wondering, I don't understand. This does not make Christianity very appealing to me.

I know it doesn't. I understand that. But I want to say to you that God has something to teach you tonight if you'll listen.

I want to move to the last thing that I believe God's wisdom says from this passage. And that is this, salvation is not by your efforts but by His power alone. Salvation is not by you conforming to some moral code, doing your very best, turning over the proverbial leaf, becoming religious, changing your habits, no longer running with the same crowd.

That's all the wisdom of this present evil age, my dear friend. And thousands and millions before you have tried that and many of them are now suffering the consequences and eternity without God. God's wisdom says, no, salvation is not by your efforts but it's by my power.

Again, verse 18, the last part. To us who are being saved, it is the power of God. What is necessary here tonight is God's power come to you.

Verse 21, He says, For since in the wisdom of God the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. God saves. You see, a man's heart's not changed by the empirical evidence of the scientist or the sharp blade of a fundamentalist.

None of these things can transform the sinful soul who's as dead in spirit as Lazarus was rotten in the grave before Jesus resurrected him. God has that power. I want you to look for a few more moments to 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verses 7 through 10, and may the Lord help us to see that God's wisdom has left salvation to Himself and taken it out of your hands.

1 Corinthians chapter 2, begin with verse 7. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. See, this is not foolishness, friend. Please listen.

Salvation is not really foolish. Man has passed judgment on it as foolish, but it isn't. No, no, it is the wisdom of God.

A God of omniscient wisdom. He says, we speak the wisdom, this omniscient wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew. For had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Do you see what he's saying? When Jesus came to this world, the power structures of the time, the intelligentsia, the academia, the political powers of the day did not ascertain or rightly discern the wisdom of God that stood before them. In a moment of irony, even Pilate asked, what is truth to the very truth that stood before him? Couldn't see it. So he eclipsed and superseded his own understanding and knowledge.

Had they understood the wisdom, had they had an intelligence far superior than what they had, they wouldn't have crucified Him if they would have known. But they couldn't know by the sheer strength of their own mentality. He says in verse 9, But as it is written, eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.

But, you know, I don't understand why verse 9 is so misunderstood. It's one of the most misunderstood and decrypted churches today. I don't know about you up here in New England, but sometimes in our region of the world, not our church, but they used to, they'd like to sing songs that had those kinds of words, these very stanzas.

Eye has not seen, ears not heard, talking about heaven, we don't know what we're going to get into, we have no idea what it's like and that's probably true to most degree, to a good part, that's true. But that's not what this verse is talking about. He's talking about the wisdom of God.

The wisdom of God in the locus, in the person of Jesus Christ. But you, me, we've received it, why? Verse 10, Because God has revealed them to us through His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. Do you see this? Do you hear what the apostles say? That those of us in this room tonight who are truly converted, you're converted not by the power of your own intellect, but in spite of it.

You're saved here tonight because God in His mercy granted you understanding. Otherwise, you would have been just like the rulers of that age that crucified Christ. You'd be like those who are out there today lampooning the Christian faith as something archaic and belonging to a yesterday that doesn't need to be revisited again.

The difference is the power of God has visited you. You have been visited by the wisdom of God and that has enlarged your understanding so that you could know not that Jesus died on the cross, oh, even Satan knows that Jesus died on the cross. He was there! But you know He died for you.

And the knowledge that He died for you had such power that it did something to you internally. It transformed you. It gave you a whole new perspective, a new way of living, a new philosophy for life.

And so Paul would say to the Romans, I'm not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ for you. It is the power of God to salvation to everyone who believes. So then it's not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.

Everyone here tonight that is a Christian was not born not of blood or of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. Now please listen. I want to reason with you for a few moments.

I want to appeal to your intellect. Because I do not believe God saves apart from the intellect. Everything I have said up to this point is not derogatory towards the intellect and reasoning of man.

I'm just not wanting you to put your confidence in it. The intellect can only take you so far, my friend. Now I flew up here, but had I gotten in a car and driven from Kentucky to here and decided that I want to go over and visit some of my friends in our ministry over in Romania and I got my car to the water's edge, how far will I go? My car cannot take me that far.

I've got to get out and get on some other type of apparatus, a boat or a plane. Your human logic is given to you by God. We're created in the image of God, in the likeness of God, a God who is intelligent, who has intelligence and has given to us an image of that.

But it can only take you so far. At some point it breaks down and cannot compute until the power of God shows up, the spirit of the living God and takes you all the way. You say, but it seems to me that if God was fair... Now I think there's a problem with that premise, but I won't even deal with that tonight.

We'll just accept your premise of God's fairness are not so fair. If God was fair, it would seem to me that He would answer my intelligent questions because certainly He doesn't want me to be a gullible person, a dope, somebody who's just falling for anything. No, no.

We should be able to reason the Christian faith and come to reasonable answers. Correct? Now friend, here's what I do want to address with that premise. And what are you going to do with it if He was to grant you the intelligence to understand it and answer every one of your questions perfectly and completely? What would you do with that? Would you really believe it? Would you accept it as the truth and commit yourself in absolute surrender to the Lord? Listen to me, you would not.

What you're really saying is, I want God to answer all of my questions so that I can evaluate according to my judgment whether or not I want to accept it. And I want to say, maybe it may seem harsh, but if it awakens you to the fact of where you are spiritually, separated from God, then so be it. Listen to me, my friend.

Who are you to evaluate with your puny little wisdom? The wisdom of an omniscient God. You couldn't understand it anyway. You don't want a God that's no smarter than you.

If He could answer all of your questions, your satisfactions, that means He's probably about your intelligence level. He has a reason why He won't answer all your questions. There's a reason why the Christian faith supersedes the wisdom of man.

Are you ready? Are you listening? The reason is because there's only one way to God. Now listen, if in pride we rebelled against God, then it only is logical that in faith we submit to God. If in our stubborn pride, we reject God's offer of saving grace and restoration to Himself, then God's only demand would be that in humility by faith, you receive Him and accept Him for who He is and what He is and what He's declared to you.

And if you will not come on those terms, you will die in your sin. For who are we? Who am I to evaluate God's judgment and wisdom? But that's what we do. That's why you want all these questions answered.

I can tell you this evening that the Christian faith is the... there's no faith more evidential and based upon historical fact than the Christian faith. But there comes a point where the intellect cannot take you all the way. You need something far greater than your own power, your own wisdom, your own reasoning.

You need God to infiltrate your soul. You need God to show up and show you that you are a rebel against His wisdom and that by your wisdom, you can do nothing but damn your soul. Never, I think, is this more demonstratable than with God's own apostles.

When Jesus was resurrected, did you know those 12 men that followed Him saw Jesus and still would not believe? That's what the record... My brother read from the 2 on the Emmaus Road. But they run to the disciples and they tell the disciples locked in that upper room, we've seen Him. And they refuse to believe.

And there He shows Himself. He appears. There in Luke 24.

And in that 24th chapter, they do not believe their very own eyes. They think they're looking at a ghost. And He scolds them for their unbelief.

Why are you remaining doubting? Look at my hands. Look at my feet. And the Bible says that they still did not believe.

And so He asked for a piece of fish to prove to them that He wasn't a spirit, some apparition. But what is most remarkable is one little phrase that only Luke puts in the resurrection account. And the Lord opened their understanding to the Scriptures.

Did you hear me? The Lord opened their understanding to the Scriptures. These were men who had cast out devils, healed the sick. They were with Him for 3 1/2 years.

No one knew Him better. And yet they still couldn't believe what they saw. Human reasoning was not computing.

It could not take them all the way. And so God does a miracle that night. He opens their understanding.

That, my dear friend, is what you need here tonight. How will He do that? How can I get Him to do that? He says simply, it's the power of God to them that believe. And the word believe doesn't mean what you think it does.

It doesn't mean mental assent only. It means to trust. To trust.

And what does to trust mean? It means to commit something to someone. To trust means to commit something to someone. I'm sorry if you've heard this illustration from me, but it's the one that I know it helps us to see it.

We have a little girl. Our daughter is 17. She's Down Syndrome, autistic.

She cannot speak. She requires 24 hours, 7 days a week supervision. It's one of the reasons my wife's not here tonight.

It's hard to travel with her because of the autism. Very routine oriented child. Get her out of her routine.

She just really has problems. Terri and I have made a few trips together. Got out of town for a short period.

And when we do those short trips, we sit down and we talk. Okay, who in the church do we believe, believe can take care of Victoria while we're gone? And we name a few names and said, yeah, I think this one, I think they're going to be home this weekend. Let's give them a call and let's see if they'll do it.

And they arrange it, they agree, and we show up at their doorstep and we walk Victoria to their door. If I really believe, what will I now do? Turn around and walk away. That's no longer mental ascent belief.

But now it's trust. Because I've committed something and I've left it. How many of you are willing at this very moment to leave you with Jesus? Come on.

How many would say, I've understood the gospel, I've grown up in church, my friends witnessed to me, I understood Jesus died for my sins, I know I'm a sinner, but there's just some things I just couldn't breach, couldn't cross, couldn't bridge. God says, will you trust me? Will you trust me? Yes, Lord, I trust you, but I don't know how to trust you. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief.

And the answer to that prayer is give it, surrender it, release it. And walk away knowing he will not go back on his word but be faithful to you and save you. My dear Christian friends, you find it difficult in this hour as often we all do to be authentic because there's a price to authentic Christianity.

Even when you're silent, you're still a living accusation and it's difficult. And on top of that, God has brought more difficulty into your life. One challenge, one heartache, one distressing trial after another.

Listen to me. God is working out His salvation in your life. It is the wisdom of God being displayed in you so that you can be content in Christ, conformed to His image, finally saved.

And I pray this evening that there's not a single person in this room who will not surrender to authentic Christianity and say, Lord, I trust You with me no matter what You do. No longer will I try to command the way and dictate as if I had any kind of control in the first place. Lord, here I am.

Here I am. Let authentic Christianity have its work in us. This is what this nation needs.

This is what Portland, Maine needs. This is what Utica, New York needs. This is what Paducah, Kentucky needs.

We need a people who are authentic because the authentic God has come. He lives His wisdom and power through them. Amen and amen.

Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, thank You for the privilege of preaching Your gospel. The gospel is just not for lost people.

It's for me and all of my brothers and sisters. We live by it. Lord, I pray that You would do an authentic work here these next two more days.

We surrender, Lord, all of us. All of us. Our intellect.

Our fears. Our issues. Our sin.

Our unbelief. Lord, we yield it to You, believing that only You and You alone have the power to navigate us, to steer us through all that the world, the devil, and culture will throw at us. Help us to be, Lord, filled with the wisdom and the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to know it like never before.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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