

Not What These Hands Have Done

by Michael Durham

This sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing our absolute need for God's grace and sufficiency in our lives. It highlights the danger of relying on our own efforts, righteousness, or religious practices to please God, stressing the significance of coming to Him in brokenness and dependency. The message calls for a humble acknowledgment of our inadequacies and a surrender to God's power and work in our lives, ultimately leading to true peace and transformation.

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Scripture: Psalm 50:7, Matthew 5:3, 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 2:8, Romans 8:26, Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 1:27, James 4:10, Psalm 51:17

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Description

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Transcript

We were trying to calculate on the way to church this morning how many weeks it had been since I've been with you. I think it was nine. It's been quite a stint, but thank you for your prayers.

I think God has been so gracious in this last few weeks as we've seen Him do wondrous and good things. And we pray for that this morning, don't we? He is here. And I was encouraged and strengthened hearing you sing.

And I think that's what Paul meant when he said we sing one to another, hymns and songs and spiritual songs, one to another, making melody in our hearts. There's something about hearing God's people worship God that lifts the heart. And I'm thankful for that.

Would you join me in prayer? Our gracious Heavenly Father, we're here because of you. You're the most important person here. We're nothing.

We're absolutely reputed as nothing, as your word says. And we have nothing to offer you either. We come today, Lord, broken, needy, contrite, and absolutely needy.

You have what we need. And it's all in the person of Jesus Christ. And it's our prayer that He will be lifted up, that we will see Him, that we will be overwhelmed by the glory of the Son of God, and that, Lord Jesus, you will reveal the Father more and more to us.

Oh, God, not what these hands have done. It's not what we offer you here today, Lord, in praise and worship or even in preaching that matters. It's what you do.

And so we pray, move for the glory of the one who died and rose again. For His sake, answer this prayer now. Amen.

Amen. The text I pray the Lord be pleased to speak to us from is from the Psalms, Psalm 50. Psalm 50, we're going to look at verses 7 through 15.

Psalm 50, beginning with verse 7. I want to speak on the theme, not what these hands have done. Not what these hands have done. Or I could say not what these hands could ever do as well.

Psalm chapter 50, beginning with verse 7. Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against thee. I am God, even thy God. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings to have been continually before me.

I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle are upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains, and the wild beast of the field are mine.

If I were hungry, I would not tell thee. For the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows into the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble.

I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify. This text is most important because it gives us the very heart and essence of Christian worship. Now, by worship, I don't mean singing hymns in a, quote, worship service.

No, I mean by the word worship, a life. A life lived unto God and unto His glory. And this text, I believe, gives us the very foundation of what we have to offer to the Lord as we worship Him.

What is it that we render under God? What is it that you and I possess that we can, in turn, give unto Him and offer to His holy name? Now, I ask you a very simple question. Why are you here? Why are you here this morning? What is the very foundational motive of assembling with the saints and offering worship to the Lord? Do you realize at this moment thousands upon thousands upon thousands of people are gathered together in places dedicated to worship unto God? They are doing some of the same things that you and I are doing presently. But it would be foolish for us to assume that of all of those thousands upon thousands of people that they are doing them with the proper motive and foundation that we see in this text.

It would be very wrong and foolish of us to assume that. And so, I ask you once again, why are you here? Now, you would think that the answer to this most simple question is obvious. But the human heart has a great capacity for self-deceit.

And not just that, compound that with another problem we have. We have, you can have the very proper motives of worship, and yet not bring the only thing you have to sacrifice to the Lord God and His glory.

Now, I don't expect you to understand what I just said.

But I assure you that if you will listen attentively, you will understand here shortly. How many people today, how many of us in this room have a symbol simply because it's the hour of public worship and it's the right thing to do? And so, I ask you again, why are you here? Now, a young person may answer me and say, well, I'm a person under authority. I have no choice in the matter.

And I would say to you, you're probably the most honest person here. But it's the remainder of you that are not under such authority. Why did you choose to be here this morning? Is it because you love Him and enjoy serving Him? Well, I pray that's part of it.

But it is not all of it. You see, you can actually love God, enjoy the worship of the people of God, and gathering together with them, and still be wrong about worship. And so, again, we must look and answer this question that's most important.

Why are the deacons, why do they serve this body as they do? Why are the technicians serving us and the Lord at this precise moment? Why am I here preaching to you? Is it because the elders were kind enough to invite me and it was therefore I had to be here? It's the right thing to do? Is there any other motive except just doing what is the right thing? How then do you serve a God as described in Acts chapter 17? This God that made the world and all the things therein, seeing that He is the Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is He worshipped by men's hands as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all life and breath and all things. How do you serve a God like that? What do you offer to Him? What is it here that you have given to God? And I think the text answers these questions. It offers to tell us what is the only acceptable offering or sacrifice we can bring.

And it explains what I'm sure is one of the great impairments and difficulties that's facing so many Christians in churches today. I think it's one of the reasons why so much weakness exists in the Christian church. We've not gotten to the very heart of what worship is or we have forgotten it.

And so I am here to speak to you who are weak and who are weary and are burdened. You come thinking that worship means very little to you because you have very little to offer. And I want to say you are completely wrong, absolutely wrong.

Of all people, you should be the greatest worshippers among us. The psalmist becomes a prophet in the mouthpiece of God, and the Lord speaks through the psalmist, and He begins with a commendation that's really a rebuke. You ever heard of a compliment, a backhanded compliment? You know what that is, isn't it? It's a compliment tongue in cheek.

It's really a criticism. Well, the Lord begins here in verse 7 with a commendation, an accolade. It's really a rebuke.

Look at verse 7 and 8. Hear, O my people, and I will speak, O Israel, and I will testify against thee. I am God, even thy God, I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings to have been continually before me. In other words, what God is saying, I'm going to rebuke you.

It's not because you continually offer the sacrifices. You've been very faithful in that. You've been diligent in your ministry unto me.

You observe my law, and you do as the law commanded with quite regularity. These people were fastidious. They were careful.

They were very careful about how they fulfilled the law of Moses. And what about the worship of God at the tabernacle or at the temple? They did not neglect the worship of God. They did not neglect the hour of public gathering at the feast and other times when God had commanded.

And so God commends them for that. That's not the issue. The issue is not as future generations would come and God would have to rebuke them.

And He would actually rebuke them for their worship. If you look at Isaiah chapter 1, you see another kind of rebuke of ministry. Isaiah chapter 1, beginning with verse 10, the Lord says through His prophet, Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

You know it's not going to be well when God begins and greets you as Sodom, Gomorrah. And this is what He does. He calls His own people by these names.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifice unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fattest fed beast, and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. This is incredible. God is saying, I know I commanded it of you, but I'm sick of it.

I'm tired. I'm fed up with your sacrifices, even though I've commanded it. And you have done that according to my law.

I'm sick of it. Stop it. Isn't that incredible? Verse 12, When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? The word tread here is an idea of sacrilege.

They were actually trampling upon the sacred ground. Verse 13, Bring no more vain oblations. That means sacrifices.

Quit bringing me your offerings. It's vanity. It's empty.

It means nothing to me. Incense is an abomination unto me. The new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with.

It is iniquity. Even the solemn meeting, what would it be like? What would we feel if God said to us in some clear way, this gathering right now is, it's iniquity to me. I can't imagine that, can you? Thank God he would not say that to his people, because we are justified and acceptable in the beloved.

But this is what God said to a people who were, again, following the Mosaic law and worshipping God as he prescribed. But there's a problem. He goes on to say, Your new moons, verse 14, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth.

They are a trouble unto me. I'm weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you.

Yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. And here's the problem. Your hands are full of blood.

Wash you, make you clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil.

Learn to do well. Seek judgment. Relieve the oppressed.

Judge the fatherless. Plead for the widow. In other words, God says, you offer worship.

Yes, you're doing the things that I commanded, but you're doing it hypocritically. You're doing it with a double-minded, double heart. You live in sin, and then you come and worship me on the Sabbaths.

I'll have none of it. The problem was, not that they were faithful in the offering of the sacrifice, but the heart with which they offered. But back to Psalm 50.

That's not the problem here. This is not the occasion for God's rebuke. No, these people delighted in their worship.

They enjoyed their worship. Even like we here today, who has not enjoyed being together with the people of God. I tell you, after nine or ten weeks, it has been a great delight to me, just these last hours, to be with you, my dear brothers and sisters.

I know many of you. I know your hearts. And it's a great joy to me to come with like-minded people.

Like-minded. We have the same devotion. The same heart for God.

I know you pant after Him as the deer pants off to the water brooks. And it's an encouragement to this preacher's heart. I say that sincerely.

And like these, in Psalm 50, there's a great satisfaction gathering together and worshipping the Lord God. So here, there's no accusation of sin. No accusation of hypocrisy.

No, the rebuke is other. Something else. The rebuke is for ministry without this proper motivation and understanding.

Here's what these people were doing. They were offering sacrifices to God because they believe somehow God needed their sacrifices. He commanded it.

Therefore, He must need it. There must be something we are doing that adds to God. Contributes to God.

That's essential to His person. The worship of God somehow satisfies God in a way that contributes to Him. And my dear friend, that is absolutely false.

And if I say that and I begin to see heads nod, I would say, yes, we know that intellectually. No doubt this people did also. But they had forgotten what they knew about the living God.

In fact, notice what he says here in verse 7. Why does he say this? I am God, thy God. Well, you could say, preacher, it's simply because God does that all the time. It's replete through the Bible.

He's always announcing, I'm God. I am thy God. I am the Lord God.

Well, yes, but there's a reason why God has to continually repeat this. Because we forget. So easy to follow the tendency of the soul to forget just who it is we present ourselves to.

Not just in public worship, but in private worship. Why is it tomorrow morning you will rise and you will get alone with God and with an open Bible and an open heart you will pour out your soul before him? Oh, I pray you'll do that. But why do you do that? Why do you render to God that kind of service? I so appreciate my times alone with the Lord in the morning.

I call the time where I establish the thermostat of my heart for the day. It sets the tenor of my soul. I need that.

But why do we offer that to the Lord? Why do we render that as worship and service unto God? Is it because we somehow think we are pleasing God and therefore adding something to him, giving him something? Do we worship the Lord and sing the songs we sang today? Because if we don't, he'll be displeased with us. As if he's some egomaniac that has to be praised and his people won't praise him. He'll be deficient.

He won't be stroked. He won't be edified. Do you think God needs to be reminded that he's God? Do you think he needs us to worship and he's commanded us to worship simply because he needs to be told how good he is as if he could forget how good he is? No, the problem is we are the ones that forget how good he is.

It becomes just an intellectual fact. It becomes another part of our theological furniture. How God tells us so that we might remember.

And he says to these people, I'm God, remember. And they remember that I am the self-sufficient God. Look at verses 9 through 13.

Here's where the rebuke comes. He begins in verse 9 and 10 and 11 telling them that he owns all things. God owns all things.

I will take no bullock out of thy house nor he goats out of thy folds for every beast of the forest is mine and the cattle upon a thousand hills. In other words, I don't need your bulls. I don't need your goats.

Everything belongs to me. All the animals belong to me including, by the way, your bulls and your goats. I'm not taking something from you that belongs to you.

It ultimately belongs to me. I know, verse 11, all the fowls of the mountains and the wild beasts of the field are mine. That's a tremendous statement.

Do you realize that every bird that's flittering right now outside in those treetops and soaring in the clouds? God knows each and every one of them. I wonder if he's named them as he's named the stars. Not a sparrow falls to the ground but by your father.

He knows them like he knows you. And then he owns the cattle on a thousand hills. I can't hear that phrase without thinking about Corrie ten Boom.

I don't know how many of you are familiar with Corrie ten Boom. Her family was arrested in Nazi Germany during World War II for housing Jewish people. Most of her family was executed soon after their arrest.

But Corrie and her sister Betsy was sent to the concentration camp Ravensbruck where they were tortured and incarcerated. Just before the Allied Army swept through Germany and won the victory, Betsy, the sister of Corrie, died. And just weeks before the Allied Army's approach Ravensbruck, Corrie ten Boom was miraculously released.

Miraculously. Most of the people in that camp were executed before the American soldiers arrived. And she spent the remainder of her days, I think she lived to 93, going all over the world telling people of how God had took care of her and provided for her a message of encouragement.

And peace. Well, I'm departing from the story. The story is this.

That in the early 70s, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association wanted to make a movie of her life. And so she agreed to it. And somewhere about halfway through the production, they called Miss ten Boom and apologized and said to her, we're so sorry to tell you, but we've run out of money.

We can't finish the film. To which Miss ten Boom replied, oh, that's no problem. My father owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

He'll just have to sell some. A few days later, a huge cattle baron here in the United States sold a large herd and gave it to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association without being privy to the conversation that she had had with the team. Oh, yes, my father owns a cattle on a thousand hills.

He owns it all. What are you going to contribute to God today? What are you giving him when you give him worship? He owns all things. And so the problem was these people, they had forgotten this.

They were sacrificing to God what already belonged to him. Every beast of the field is mine. The cattle on a thousand hills, it's all mine.

Therefore, God needs what? Nothing. That's it. He needs nothing.

In fact, he doesn't need me at this moment. He doesn't need me preaching for him. Why? He could speak from heaven.

What am I contributing to the kingdom of God right now? Absolutely, I don't bring anything to God that he doesn't already have. And anything I contribute to this cause this morning has first been given to me. I'd be a fool to try to take some credit or glory from this meeting with you.

No, all that we have to worship God already belongs to him. It already is. God needs nothing.

Look at verse 12 and 13. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. Why should I consult with you, and you make up my lack? I own everything.

I possess all things. I don't need to talk to you about it, because God is speaking with tongue and cheek. It's a way of communicating that he owns everything.

Will I eat, verse 13, the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Do you think by offering these sacrifices that I'm somehow nourished? Now, you and I know that that's not true, that he wasn't nourished in any way by those things, but they didn't. Did you know that the pagan nations around them, they literally believe that somehow by offering these animal sacrifices, they were nourishing, they were sustaining their gods. And God is saying to them, do you think the sacrifices you give me, in other words, your worship, do you think that somehow sustains me, that I need them? Oh, dear friends, God doesn't need our worship.

Let us not think of him as having some deficiency that we've got to come here and bolster him up and lift him up. No, we need to worship God. We need it.

You need it. You don't come here to the hour of public worship or in private worship, doing your duty, checking off the list, having fulfilled your worship obligation. My dear friend, no, you are most needy for God, even when you don't realize it, for then you need him more, if not the most.

So the only offering we can bring is found in verses 14 and 15. Now, bear with me. Stay with me.

In verse 14, he says, here's what you can do. Here's what I want. Even the Lord God, the sovereign over microphone.

There's no imperfection in him. He doesn't need our imperfections or poverty, but he asks them of me. It's interesting, isn't it, that the very first beatitude of that blessed sermon on the mount is what? Isn't it interesting that that's the first one, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Why is it the first one? Because it's foundational to all the others that come. The one thing that you can give God is listed at the very top, your very poverty, your very emptiness, your shallowness, your absolute need. That's what God wants.

Why did we hear Acts 1A quoted by Jonah this morning? That's an important text. It's interesting, is it not, that after three and a half years with Jesus Christ, what Jesus tells these men before he ascends back. He says, you're not ready for ministry.

No, not yet. But we've been with you for three and a half years. We've seen your miracles.

We've heard your sermons. We've heard them more than once, in private and then in public. You've given us private tutorship, but surely we're ready.

We've seen you crucified, buried, and resurrected. Surely we're now ready. Jesus says, no, but you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you shall be my witnesses, witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

They still weren't ready for all of that time with Jesus Christ. Why? Because they had nothing in themselves. They needed power from on high, and so do you and I. A few short weeks later, after that great miracle, where Peter and John enter the gate called Beautiful, and there's the lame man, and God heals him, the Sanhedrin arrest them and threaten them, never preach in the name of Jesus again.

What do they do? They recognize their poverty of soul. They recognize that they don't have what it takes, and so they go and have a prayer meeting. And what do they pray at that prayer meeting? Now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto thy servants that with all boldness they may proclaim thy word by stretching forth thy hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done in the name of your holy child Jesus.

What do they ask God for? Power, because they had no power, and they knew it. Do you know your poverty? Are you greatly aware? Are you very familiar that these hands have nothing to bring, and therefore it is not based upon what these hands have done? Not even our worship, not even our prayers. It was the apostle Paul, who after three times praying that the thorn in his flesh be removed, that God spoke to him and said to him, don't you realize that my strength is made perfect in weakness? And from that moment on, what did Paul start boasting in? His preaching ministry? How many churches he had planted? How many epistles he had written? No, he boasted in his utter infirmities, weakness, his inadequacy.

Why? Because in his inadequacy, the power of God gravitated. It gravitates to your inability. I'm telling you this morning, that's what God is looking for you to offer him.

Your absolute inability to do anything for him whatsoever. But oh, Brother Michael, doesn't the Bible tell us that we're to be strong for God? It says to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Yes, but aren't we to fight sin? That's something I can do for God.

I can fight my sin, and I must fight my sin. Yes, but dear friends, you can't fight that in yourself. The Bible says, if you live after the flesh, you shall die.

But if through the spirit you do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live by the spirit. Oh, and to love him and to render unto him our love, and therefore by love we serve him. Absolutely, but have you forgotten? We love him because he first loved us.

You see, even our love is based upon him. It's contingent upon experiencing his love for us. You are never the source of anything except poverty and absolute brokenness before God.

It's all you will ever be apart from his grace. Oh, but surely we are to pray. We are to offer up our prayers.

We're commanded to pray without ceasing. Yes, but the Bible tells us that the spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for. But the spirit himself maketh intercession for us.

We don't even know how to pray. We're absolutely, desperately dependent upon God. Even this sermon.

Paul said, I labor on. We did labor for God. He said he labored.

Yes, but he said he labored strove according to his working, which worked within him mightily. Maybe this will help you bear with me for a few moments. When Karen and I were called to go to Oak Grove Baptist Church, we have to confess to you.

I'm making noise again, aren't I? I'm sorry. What the hell is this? Don't ever tell anybody I did this. Does that help? When we went to Oak Grove Baptist Church, we have to confess we didn't want to go to Oak Grove Baptist Church.

And the reason I didn't want to go because it was a divisive, that means fighting and feuding kind of church. Why a few months before we got there, two men had a physical altercation in a business meeting. Three times they had asked me to come and I said three times, no.

But God made it very clear he wanted us to go. And it was either that or disobeying. And I have done that before and it doesn't pay.

I told my sons, if you disobey, you have to pay. And paying is not a fine. So we went.

The tenor of the pastors that had gone before me in the last decade was 18 months. That's how hard they were on preachers. They would run them off and get another one.

Well, they'd gotten another one that was me. And so every day I would pray, Lord, help me. I don't know what to do.

I don't know what to do. I don't know, Lord, how to do this. Please, you've got to help me.

You've got to do something. I was doing what our text said. I was calling him in the day of trouble.

Sure enough, about 16 months in, here they come for me. They were well planned. They'd done this so many times.

They knew what to do and how to do it. They had the opposition. They had the numbers.

And so a Sunday, a week and a half before the business meeting, the leader of the opposition party, if you can call it that, said to me, Preacher, we've got enough votes to vote you out. And I looked at him and I said, You're not striving against me. You're striving against God.

And that's very dangerous. And from that moment on, that week, I prayed, where is the God of Moses? Lord, I didn't want to come here. You told me I had to come here.

You've got to get me out of this. You've got to deliver me. You think I'm joking? I'm not embellishing this story whatsoever.

This is not evangelistically speaking. This is the truth. Day after day, hour after hour, crying to the Lord, call upon me in the day of trouble.

I will deliver you. And I remembered a text of scripture found in 1 Corinthians 5, where Paul tells the church of Corinth to turn the sinning and unrepentant brother over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his soul might be saved in the day. So I turned this man over just like that.

Now don't look at me so strangely. You say we want to be a New Testament church. Well, it's in the New Testament.

So I did it. The next Sunday, at the conclusion of the service, somebody comes running into the sanctuary and said, call 911. Somebody's been getting the parking lot.

I knew immediately who it was. They never mentioned the name, but I knew. I went in, called 911.

Then I turned around, called his family, said, you better get here. And when I got out there, an EMT lived just around the corner. He's already there.

And I said, well, what do you think? He said, I don't think he's going to make it to the hospital. And so I gathered the saints together that was there, and we began to pray and ask God to spare his life. Two weeks later, I'm sitting on his front porch.

He had a neck brace. God spared him. And he said to me, he always called me preacher.

Preacher, God did this. And I want to apologize and ask for your forgiveness. And that man became one of my most faithful supporters.

And when I buried him, I buried a friend many years later. And that day, the church changed. About 30 people left.

And from that moment on, things began to happen. The church began to be reformed. Revival broke out.

Many people were getting saved. We filled up the sanctuary. We had to put seats out.

We contacted an architect, and we started a building program. But that was in 1995 and 2000 when the building program started. You would, you could, if you could listen to my prayer, you'd notice the

difference.

I was no longer saying, Lord, I don't know what to do. I was no longer praying, God, you got to show me what to do because I don't have a clue. No, I was starting to see some success.

I was seeing things happen. The church was growing. We now had a daily radio broadcasting.

People were coming from all over the place. I knew how to grow a church now. I didn't need to pray so much.

Oh, Lord, show me what to do because I don't know what to do. In January 2000, the Lord humbled me. He confronted me with the fact that I was building this church on me and not on him.

It was a Sunday night. I'll never forget it. So powerful was the conviction that I began to sob like a little baby in front of the people.

I couldn't even conclude the service. I darted off into my office and got on the floor, and there I laid for two hours, weeping before God. There were some people that would come in and pray for me, but I have to be honest with you.

I was pretty impervious to my surroundings. For two hours, I cried out to God, forgive me, please help me. And I made a vow to the Lord that day, that night.

If I have to keep any ministry alive and sustain it by my efforts, then it must be of Michael and not of the Spirit, and I'd let it die. And brother and sister, things started dying on the vine. One of my most closest associates and friends betrayed me and took people away from the church, and things just started declining quickly.

It got so bad that during that year, I began to wonder, where was God? Why have you abandoned me? Preaching became a drudgery to me. Prayer was a painful reminder of the absence of the presence of God. And almost a year went by, and I had gotten to the point that I even doubted I had been saved.

That's how bad it was. Now, I'm not a person given to depression, but I have to confess, I believe I was deeply depressed. I didn't know what to do.

I cried out to friends, please help me. Nobody had any offer or power to help me. And almost to the year to the day, I'm serious, almost a year to the day, I found myself about one or two o'clock in the afternoon with my head in my hands, just sobbing again, Lord, help me.

And suddenly, Ephesians chapter 2, verse 8 and 9, came flooding into my soul. For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, as any man should boast. And immediately, I knew, I knew, I knew what God was saying to me.

He didn't love me because of my ministry. And His goodness was not that the church was climbing in size, no, no. He loved me because He loved me.

He loved me for no other reason than everything I have done. It's nothing before God. It's not of works.

It's the gift of God. God doesn't need me. From that moment, my ministry changed.

I pray it never goes back. I pray I never become so foolish and shortsighted to return to thinking that these hands and the power of my tongue can move men or women's hearts, because it can't. God and God alone.

So what is this text telling us? It states that our blessed Lord is glorified by our desperate dependency upon Him. When we properly evaluate what we have to offer to the kingdom as Jesus judged it, without me, you can do nothing. Then and only then can He be glorified.

He's glorified in and through us as we bring to Him our absolute inadequacies and inability to do His blessed will, believing all the while He will keep His promise that He will work in and through us. That's it. You already knew that, didn't you? But like the generation of Psalm 50, we forget this.

You see, spiritual maturity is not becoming self-sufficient, and we think it is. The longer you're saved, the greater the temptation to rest in what you've learned, rest in your accomplishments, to believe that you are good, that you are righteous. Oh no, friend.

Today we are clothed with an alien righteousness. Simply means a righteousness does not come from you. It's not negative to you.

It's not instinctive to you. It comes from above. You stand 100% in the grace of God.

Spiritual maturity is believing that you are without Christ's help insufficient, and therefore you desperately depend upon Him. Too many of us here are trying to stand on our own two feet before God. And so listen to the way you pray.

You pray as if you can pull the wool over God's eyes, as if you deserve that you're worthy. Listen to you when you pray. And you pretend it all is well.

You try to keep the stiff upper lip of you. Try to persuade God that you're okay, that you're trusting in Him when you're falling apart on the inside. Tell me I'm missing it.

Tell me that's not true. Listen to the way we pray. Trying to impress God when he knows the truth about us.

And all he's asking for you is to humble yourself. For God gives grace to the humble and stiff arms to pray. Why is it that we do not want to admit our inadequacies and our inability? Why is it so hard that we have nothing to offer God, and God, that we must be desperately dependent upon Him? I think it is ultimately this reason.

It's the word control. Control. If I truly admit that I'm as spiritually poor as you say I am, if I admit I'm as broken as you say I am, I'm as flawed and failed as you say I am, then I'm not in control.

That's hard. That's hard to admit. And so we don't offer God our brokenness.

We think that we will impress Him by being spiritually strong, being able to stand on our own two feet. No! That insults Him! It says you don't need Him. The most spiritual person in this room is the person who will get on the floor before God and say, have mercy upon me.

I'm empty. I'm powerless. I can't do what you've called me to do.

My life is broken. Listen carefully. Listen carefully.

Why do you think your life is where it is today? Why do you think you are undergoing the problems and the heartaches and the troubles and the trials? I'm telling you, it's not because God is lying by suffering, trying to bring you down and low and humble. No, no. He's only trying to expose how low you already were.

We think incorrectly about this. We think the suffering and the trials are about making us more humble. No, the problem is you're already down and out and you just don't know it, so God has to bring travesty and trouble and these kinds of things to bring you back to the reality that these things are empty and powerless.

Does this make sense? The reason your faith is not growing because when God brings these trials and afflictions, you turn and run the other way. You won't face it like the man or the woman of God ought to face it. God's trying to show you just absolutely how great He can be on your behalf.

Call upon me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you and you will glorify me. It's in your brokenness and your abject poverty and you bring that to God and God comes through. That's what glorifies you.

Many of you are weeping. Many of you are hurting. Many of you have been laid low.

You can't pray. You can't render to God what you ought to render to Him. Because you're so consumed with the suffering and I'm here to say to you I believe on the authority of God's Word that you of all people have the greatest opportunity to glorify God.

You have the greatest opportunity to exalt God and you acknowledge your brokenness before Him. You acknowledge the pain and the emptiness that it has revealed. When the suffering and the trial has only exposed how weak you really are, now, now you can glorify Him.

Now you can exalt Him by letting Him fill you with all of His sufficiency, all of His strength and light. Do you see this? This is the one thing we are to offer our God, the only thing we can contribute to Him, the only thing He does not have, that we have and we can give it to Him. Not what these hands have done can save my guilty soul.

My dear sinner friend, I think this is exactly where you are. You know the truth. You've heard the gospel but yet you resist.

You have not responded yet. Why? Because you're trying to. You're trying to please God by your performance.

You're trying to do all the right things. You're going to change your life around and then maybe God might save you if He sees you're trying to do it wholeheartedly. No, absolutely wrong.

False. That's not the gospel. The gospel says come ye needy sinners.

Come one and all. The Bible promises grace to the humble. Come.

Yes, come just as you are without one plea that Jesus' blood was shed for thee. God's not looking for you to become religious. As we see, religion without this heart of desperate dependency sickens Him.

It grieves Him. It insults Him. He's not after your religiosity.

He's not after your goodness. God's not about making good people out of you. No, He's about making you like His Son through the power of His Spirit.

That you could not do, only He can. And He offers it to you this morning. Not what these hands have done can save my guilty soul.

Not what my tolling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole. Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God. Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear my awful heart.

Then what's the answer? Thy work alone, O Christ. Jesus has the sufficiency. He had the ability.

He has the strength. And only His work alone can ease the weight of sin. Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.

How many of you want peace this morning? You want peace with God. You've never had peace with God. There was never a moment when in your abject poverty of heart, your bankruptcy before God, that God came to you and you knew He had forgiven you of your sins and He put His Spirit within you.

You've yet to experience that. Call upon Me in the day of trouble and I will deliver you. If there's anyone in this room that's in trouble, it is you.

You stand in jeopardy of the judgment of God. O faith, Christ can save you. And dear saint, dear child of God, no other work save thine, God.

No other blood will do, no strength save that which is divine can bear me safely through. Only God can get you to heaven safely. And He will do that for those who are broken and poor in spirit.

What has God said to you? God has spoken to you. Consider yourself privileged and greatly blessed. But unto everyone to whom God speaks, there is responsibility to honor the word of the Lord, to conform to it, and to bear your emptiness to God that He might fill it.

How many Christians here today would say, in honesty, you know I'm completely empty, I'm drained. I have no strength. My joy has been stripped of me.

I've just been going through the motions. I've been playing the role and I want to be refilled. I want the joy of the Lord and the joy of my salvation renewed.

To me, I want to experience the love of God afresh and anew. Well, what must you do? It's simple. The same thing you did the day you were converted.

Humble yourself, confess your need, embrace His abilities, His power. Do it right now and He will deliver you and you will glorify Him. Thank you.

Father, we know that you work through your word, not because it's properly preached or dynamically shared, but simply because in weakness you are made, your strength is made perfect. Here we are. Look at us, Lord, we're messed up, we're broken.

Lord, what a wonderful opportunity, Father, for you to glorify yourself in our emptiness today. Please, Lord, we're obeying you with sincere hearts. We're calling upon you to deliver us in the day of our trouble.

We've been trying to fix it, Lord. We're trying to solve it. All of our other resources have been our first resort, but even though, Lord, now you're our last resort, we still come and we acknowledge our sin even in that.

You are gracious and you are good. You will turn none away and minister to your people here today. Please, Lord, thank you so much.

And I ask one more thing. Father, save someone. Break through the pride, the exterior of goodness.

Tear down, Lord, all that they have constructed in the name of self-righteousness and let them see they have nothing to give you but their sin, their brokenness. Oh, God, meet them in their sin. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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