

Develop Your Full Potential in Christ: Full Potential of Grace

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead emphasizes the importance of understanding our union with Christ to develop our full potential and experience victory over sin and temptation.

Topics: "Union With Christ", "Gods Grace"

Description

Paris Reidhead preaches about the importance of developing our full potential in Christ by understanding our union with Him. He emphasizes the significance of realizing that Christ not only died for us but also died as us, leading to victory over our own struggles and temptations. Reidhead highlights the need to grasp the concept of being crucified, buried, quickened, and raised with Christ to experience the fullness of God's grace and power in our lives. He urges believers to embrace God's tailor-made plan for their lives, provided with the necessary grace to fulfill it, and to make an unreserved commitment to follow His will.

Transcript

Develop Your Full Potential in Christ: Full Potential of Grace By Paris Reidhead* This morning we are in the second chapter we're dealing with Ephesians as we've seen it a manual of developing our full potential in Christ. I will not cover the ground that we've been over other than to ask you to notice again verses 5 and 6. Yesterday we look at the people who are the partakers of God's grace. The kind of people God draws to Himself, such as us. But that 4th verse: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:" (Eph. 2:4-6) We need to go back to Romans the sixth chapter in order to adequately understand and these few verses.

In the sixth chapter of Romans, we find the apostle is presenting for the first time at least in the cannon in terms of time necessarily, but in terms of the arrangement of the epistles, for the first time he is presenting the fact of our union with Christ. We see it in the sixth verse: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with..." You see the 'him' is interpolated, but "crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."

Now, it's important to understand the relationship between the fifth chapter of Romans, the sixth and seventh chapters and the eighth chapter. Romans 5 presents to us the testimony that Christ died for us. In verse 6 of the Romans 5th chapter: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." And in the 8th verse: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That's the key word, the death of Christ for you.

He died for you. Now the 6th chapter presents it in just a little shade of difference. In Romans 5, "Christ died for us," in Romans 6 we are introduced to the fact that "Christ died as you." Now there is a difference between the two. He was your representative, your substitute He was there in your place doing what God's law required that you do. And because He was the infinitely holy Son of God no limit to His character and His righteousness. He could not only die for me, but He could die for you.

He could die for all men. Because since He is without limit in His character there would be no limit to the number of people for which His death was adequate. But if God saw Him, since God saw Him as you, saw Him as me then, in a sense, as He hung on the cross He was there not just as the Son of God dying for sinners, He was there as the sinner for whom He died. He was there as me, as you. This means that looking down at the cross in order to help us visualize it, we could say that there were in a sense just to help us, two people on the cross.

Christ was on the front of it dying for you. But since He was not only there for you, but as you. To help you grasp this, can you visualize yourself as it were on the backside of the cross bound by the same nails crucified with Him. The day that Christ died the Father saw you die. That was the day. Now, I want you to come to grips with this because it's the argument of the apostle and the bases of this life of victory that He has in developing our full potential for Christ. We are not going to ever attain to that potential until we realize that not only did Christ die for us, but He died as us.

We were there in Him, and thus with Him when He died and that that you that you are by nature the source of all your problems and difficulties. That I that I am was crucified with Christ. Now, that's the testimony. The fourth verse of the sixth chapter of Romans tells us that we are buried with Him by baptism unto death. Crucified with Him, buried with Him. Now this is the terminology that is selected by the Holy Spirit given to Paul. Paul repeats this in Colossians "buried with Him." (Col. 2:12a) Here he says baptism is a picture of that union with Christ in His burial.

Therefore, He not only saw us on the backside of the cross with Christ, He saw us in the tomb with Christ "buried with Him." He was there for you from the Father's eyes, you were there with Him, you were in Him and there, in a sense, with Him. He was crucified for us that He might deliver us from the penalty of what we had done. We were crucified with Him we are told that we might be released from the tyranny of our own personalities, our own habits and attitudes and dispositions and traits and so on. Now you have two items of this series, crucified with Him and buried with Him.

Now let's go back to Ephesians chapter 2 and we add to it: "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath." What? "quickened us together with Christ." Where were we? We're buried with Him. Christ was crucified and He was buried and He was quicken. But since He was doing all of this for you and as you, the apostle tells us that you were crucified with Him that you might be released from the tyranny of yourself. And you were buried with Him that you might be released from the pull and hold of the world.

We have three enemies, you know, the flesh, the world, and the devil. And the flesh is what I am by nature. And the world is that system that the god of this world controls the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. And of course then the devil is the personality himself, who in so many ways would seek to snare and entrap us and keep us from being effective for Christ. So we see that we were quickened with Christ, the day that life returned through that bruised body, the body of our Lord Jesus.

In the Father's eyes that was the day when you were quickened. You were quickened. You were quickened with Him. Now maybe it was 2,000 years before you experiential received that quickening life. But from the eyes of God that was the day you were quickened the life you received was the life that began then. We were quickened together with Christ. Now He wasn't just made alive just to remain in the tomb, but we are told He was raised from the died. And so you'll notice we were raised up together with Him.

Raised up together. In the Father's eyes when He saw His Son raised up from the dead He saw you raised from the dead. Now, apparently, it is important that these believers at Ephesus should know this. This is no little light thing they can as just some little clever tricky thing the evangelist or Bible teacher gives to fill out an hour of service. This is something that's going to make a tremendous difference in their prayer life and in their witnessing life and their walk with the Lord.

And they better jolly well understand it or their going to be just as crippled as someone who decides that aren't going to eat properly or they won't learn how to read or any other evidence dereliction of responsibility. To know the truth and not to do, it is sin. And the know from the Word of God that you were crucified with Christ and not to care enough to find out what this means to you in your day by day walk with Christ, is to tread under our feet "the blood of the everlasting covenant." (Heb. 13:20b) And to count this benefit of His death as having no meaning to us.

It can't be lightly taken. If God when to such great lengths as to put it into Romans, and put it in Colossians, and put it in Ephesians, He wanted us to know about it. We'll never develop our full potential in Christ until we understand our union with Christ and the purpose for that union. He died for us, oh that's clear, to pay the penalty of our sin, to remove the weight of the mountain of guilt and to give us a clear standing before God. Justification by faith on the bases of the finished work of Christ at Calvary.

Everyone one like Romans 5, because that gives them the assurance that if they get run over by the truck they are going to end up in heaven, instead of in hell. But I don't find nearly as much eagerness to understand Romans 6 on the part of the children of God. Because the basic benefit that for us, but for God. We're always much more eager, it seems, for what is going to insure our happiness than what's going to ensure His glory. But we don't want to miss Romans 5, but we could take or leave Romans 6 and Ephesians 2 their not that important.

To anybody but God and the developing our potential for Christ and coming to that measure stature of the fullness of Christ unto a mature man and full person. But if we are ever become that mature Christian, then we are going to have to understand why when God saw His Son on the cross He saw you there with Him. You were crucified with Him. What we discover is that is how we have victory. That is the source of victory. Some years ago, this auditorium was wired for electric lights.

They didn't have to rewire this morning or last night. It was wired at a given point, then it was pronounced wired. It was connected to the wires that took it out to the high line that went to the generator. And all we had to this morning to get lights, to dispel the gloom was put a switch on. You were wired for victory at Calvary, but if you don't know where that switch is you're going to grope in shameful failure and cry out to

God, "Oh God, delivery me from my temper, delivery from my imagination, delivery from my sarcasm, and delivery from my criticism."

You're going to go beat heaven and storm heaven and God's given the way of deliverance and if you don't care to find out what it is, you just aren't going to be delivered from those things which are delivered by understanding our union with Christ. So it is extremely important for us to distinguish between things that differ. We eat with a knife, fork, and spoon, don't we. Those are the tools of our trade. Those are the tools that we use in the task of eating. But you don't use...you distinguish between things that differ. There are certain things you do with a fork you don't do with a knife. Certain things you do with a spoon you don't

do it with a fork or a knife. And if you can't tell the difference between them. You say, "Well, I eat with a knife and fork and spoon, so I can do anything I want to any of them they are all the same." You just haven't learn how to eat property yet in good company. And so you say, "Well, this is all salvation." Yes, but we must distinguish between things that differ. Romans 5 said, "Christ died for us." Now that's not the same as Romans 6 which says He died as us. He died for us to delivery us from the penalty of what we have done.

He died as us to deliver us from the power of our own disposition and our habits and our traits and our attitudes. And we can have deliverance from the penalty of past sins and not have deliverance from the tyranny of our own disposition. Whereas it is all accomplished by the death of Christ at Calvary, we must understand and appropriate in terms of the particular intension of God and the particular need of our heart at the time. So if we are to developing our full potential in Christ, we must understand that at Calvary we were wired for victory and we must know that when we are tempted that God has made a way of escape, so that we need not be victimized by that which tempts us.

I remember years ago, I was invited to speak to a retreat of college graduates at of the Boston area. A lot of them from Harvard, Radcliffe, Lawrence, and other schools in the area of Boston University. There must have been 100 to 150 young people there. And a year later I was back at the same occasion with some of the same group. And one young fellow that was there a little early when I arrived said, "Hello, Mr. Reidhead. I am glad you are back, but just hope you're not going to give us anymore of this victory stuff."

"Well," I said, "what's on your mind? Why do you say that?" "Well, you gave it last year. Boy, I was excited about it and I just hope you don't pay any of that off on us. You see it doesn't work." "Well," I said, "I will tell you this, if it doesn't work, I'm sure not going to give it any longer. Well, tell me your experience." "Well," he said, "I listen to you and I tried to understand everything you said. I got back, boy I had some areas of temptation and so I did just what you told me to do.

And it doesn't work." I said, "What was it that you recall that I told you to do?" He said, "Well, you gave us that verse that says, 'There is no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.'" (I Cor. 10:13) I said, "That's a great verse." "Yeah." I said, "How did you use it?" "Well," he said, "every time I was tempted, I would quote that verse and believe it!

And quote it and believe it! But it didn't work. I didn't have any release from temptation. I fail just like I had before." I said, "Let's go to it." We turned to it. "Now," I said, "read it carefully." I came to that part that says the verse that says, "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape." I said, "What's the way of escape?" His eyes opens, "Why, this verse." I said, "No, this verse tells you that there is a way of escape, but it doesn't tell what the

way of escape is.

This verse doesn't tell you what it is, just tells you that there is one. You miss understood me. I signally failed. I'll have to correct that, because maybe somebody else miss understood. I didn't say the way of escape was the verse it. It says there is a way of escape. I didn't say you escape from temptation by quoting the verse that says the way of escape from temptation. Boy, I did fail. It didn't fail, I did. I take all the blame." He says, "What is the way of escape?"

I said, "Do you remembered my talking to you about the fact that the day Jesus Christ died you died? There were two people on the cross." "Yah, I wondered how that applied," he said. "Well," I said, "Let's go back to Romans 6, shall we?" So we turned to Romans 6 and I took him through that portion. "Now," I said, "look at this verse look carefully at it. Just take a good look at it. Verse 11." I said, "It says: 'likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin,'" "Now," I said, "what does that mean?"

What does reckon mean?" "Well," he said, "I am a math major and accounting is one of my subjects." He said, "To reckon means to calculate. Base your facts upon. Move ahead on the bases that something has happened." I said, "Alright. This verse says, that the day Jesus Christ died, you died." We went back to verse 6. Now it says when you are tempted reckon or count or calculate or consider that the day Christ died, you died. "Now," I said, "look this build is wired for electric and it is going to get dark in a little while.

Do we have to rewire the building?" "No, no." He said, "It's done." "And what do we do?" He said, "All we have to do is go over and put that switch on." I said, "But why would you put the switch on? You can't see electricity. Why do you put it on?" "Well," he said, "past experience has shown me that if I put that switch on it makes a contact and energy begins to flow." "Now," I said, "you're getting the message. Now you're getting the message. That when you meet the temptation on the bases of the facts that when you died Jesus Christ died and therefore you don't have to be victimized by your attitudes and by your habits and by these temptations.

And you face that temptation. Something like this, 'Father, the part of me that wants this and could do this even though I know it's not Your will that's the part that died the day Christ died. Just now I reckon myself to be died. You know what happens?'" He said, "What?" I said, "It makes a contacted and it releases the resurrection life of Christ to flow into your heart at that moment to give you victory over that temptation." He said, "No wonder I missed it. I thought it was just quoting a verse."

No, it's not just quoting a verse and it's not self-hypnosis and it's not anything of the kind. It is the means by which we release the flow of the resurrection life of Christ into our personalities at the moment of temptation. Now, we have been singing it for years. And I'm just not to sure that we often really understanding what we are singing. It's like saying the blessing at supper, you know. You say it and it little later saying we can't you don't want to eat without saying the blessing do you?

You've said it. Oh no you didn't. They have been there when it was said, but they were thinking about something else. I'm sure it has happen at your house. Don't look so sour at me. You know that. You just weren't paying any attention. So it is we sing, Dying with Jesus, by death reckoned mine; Living with Jesus new life divine; Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine, Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine. Moment by moment I'm kept in His love, Moment by moment I've life from above;¹ 1 "Moment By Moment" Words by Daniel W. Whittle, 1893 and music by May W. Moody.

What are we talking about? We're talking about the fact that the day Christ died we died with Him. Moment by moment in the moment of temptation, "Father, the part of me that thinks this, feels this, wants this, could do it, that's the part that died the day Christ died. Just now I reckon myself died." Well its some Christmas' ago, some friend gave one of my children one of these iron filings thing you know where they put iron filings under plastic and then they had a pencil like thing with a magnet.

And the idea was that you could draw these filings out and you could make a Santy Claus or make a fussy old burro. You could make things with your imagination with these filings that were in there. And I was clever and I was sitting around pulling them and someone spoke to me and I flipped it. And I used the other end. And you know what happen, instead of pulling the filings it pushed them. It pushed them. The polarity had changed and the concept...I guess that is what it is.

Charles Misner will correct me on that's his field. I get all my science from the Reader's Digest. I don't know what I am talking about, you know. But at any rate, I do know this, that when I turn that over to the other end the filings didn't follow, they went. And I sat there with tears forming in my eyes and I thought isn't that just like the Lord to give me an illustration here of something that is very real. When you reckon yourself, you see, there is a gravitation pull, there is a magnetism.

We have appetites and urges and drives we're tempted. Temptation is the proposition, presented to your intellect, to satisfy a good appetite in a bad way. And so there is a gravitation pull. But when you say, "Father, the part of me that thinks this and feels this wants this, that's the part that died the day You died. And just now I reckon myself to be died." What's it do? It reverses it. And it changes the polarity. And the resurrection life comes in and pushes it away. Pushes it away.

Now if you don't know that, you don't know how to have victory when you're tempted. Someone says, "That's too easy." No, it's not all that easy. Because maybe your problem is like mine like sarcasm, biting speak, criticism, and finding fault with folks. And you don't know how to have victory over it, then you are victimized by your own tongue. That's not so good. But there may come a time when you know you have to have victory and deep within you say he needs a good telling off.

So then it's not a question of not knowing how to have victory, the question is do you want to put the switch on? That's where the battle comes. You wanted to put it on. Oh, you can have some real things there, because you know that if you put it on you're going to be released there. So you have a little bit of difficulty there. I remember one time coming into the Steven DeVilla home up in Boston there in Lexington, Massachusetts. I had come in quite late and the family had retired.

I didn't want to put the hall light on, because if I did it might awaken them. I went into my room. I had come in the afternoon and I had put my case down and hung my suit bag up. I saw where the switch was, just saw and then I went out and came back. Oh it was 12:30am or so, I had come in and been with friends. Came in I didn't want to wake them, because I knew this fellow had to get up 3:30 and so I didn't want to disturb him. So I wanted to be very quiet. When I came in I put the switch on and nothing happened.

Now, I knew there was a light because I had seen the light, but that room was as dark as the inside of my pocket. I couldn't see anything. And I went around the wall and tried to touch gently so it didn't fall on the floor. And I groped. Finally, I decided to find the bed. I neatly hung my suit up on the floor and got into bed. And the next day when I got up, I want you to know I raised that shade and I found out. I shut my eyes as I walked in I put the switch on, because I didn't know when I would be in the next night.

But I wasn't going to get caught like that again. Oh how many of God's dear child there are victimized by their habits and their attitudes and their dispositions and their traits. They grope in the Bible trying to find the switch. Where is the power I hear about? Where is the victory I know about? Where is it? Then they find out. Just once, just once dear friend that you're tempted to say something, think something, do something, that you know grieves God and you use--find the switch.

"Father, the part of me that thinks this, want this, say this, do this, that's the part that died the day Christ died!" And you feel that anti-magnetism pushing it away the release then remember where that switch was, because moment by moment you can go back to and put it on when you need it. Now that gives you an illustration of the practical application. And if you're to develop your full potential in Christ, then we must know the truth and we must obey the truth. Because if we know these things, happy are we if we do them.

We just fill our minds with ideas and we never practice it. Never becomes experiential real, then what help is it going to be. So he said, I want you to know you are crucified with Christ and that you are buried with Christ. And so he begins in Ephesians 2 by saying, "You have been quickened together with Christ and raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenly." Why? Because he has talk to them about the fact that religion of which they have been a part was Satanically controlled. It was the

worship of Diana. But in Ephesus, it was that Satan used this demoniacal worship this vial, immortal, drunken debauched worship to hold the people. And now they are coming in to stand for Christ in the midst of this and they must develop their full potential. Their full potential includes knowing that when Christ was quickened, they were quickened. When Christ was raised, they were raised. When Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father, they were seated at the right hand of the Father, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because you see we've talked about two of these enemies, the flesh 'I', and the world, but there is also the third one the devil. And so we found him saying that he has seated us above "principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age." (Eph. 6:12) And how are they going to be able to stand? What is it the effectiveness of being a part of His body putting all things under His feet? And they just know that one time, they were among that number that walked according to the prince and the power of the air.

Now what power? What effectiveness? How can they stand against such forces as they've known existed and they have themselves been victimized by? Because they were quickened with Christ and raised with Christ and seated with Christ in the heavenlies. I said yesterday in closing every home represented in this auditorium has a tragedy in it so enormous that only the risen Christ is enough to meet it, but the matter of which he will meet it is when you discover the fact you have been raised up and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ.

Because it is from that point that our ministry both in prayer and in witness has its strength and has its authority. So it was imperative if they were to ever full have develop their full potential in Christ that they should know and understand this relationship. This plan that God had for them of their union with His Son. But notice that he then begins to say that the purpose for this in the 7th verse is: "That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:7) We are going to see that in the 4th chapter.

I'm not sure we will get there, but we are going to discover that His grace was that "He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Eph. 4:8) We are not only joined with Christ in the crucifixion to have victory over ourselves, His burial to victory of the world, quicken and raised and seated with Him to have

victory over principalities and powers what He has done this in order that "He might show the exceeding riches of His grace" that we who were the victims of Satanic pressure and power now should be brought into the place that where we are not only released from that power, but we are also to enforce Christ victory.

"Exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us." Then you know that marvelous testimony by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God "not by works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:9) Don't for a moment said he to these Ephesian believers that you have earned your salvation. That you bought it, that you merited it. By the same token, do not limit by saying well that maybe alright for preacher and evangelist, but it won't work for me.

If by grace you are saved, through faith then God has the perfect right to give you as much grace as He wants to give you. And you have no right to set an upper limit to what God will do for you and through you. And yet as I talk with God's dear children I find them saying something like this "What are you by the way? What is your work?" "I'm just a housewife." Or "I just work in a factory." Or "I'm just a teacher." "I'm just a laymen." God help us from setting a limit on the grace of God.

You are "His workmanship." Do you see where it leads? "CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS unto goods work, which God hath before ordained that you should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10) What's he trying to do? He is trying to release these dear people from all the inhibitions that were placed upon them because of their tendency to compare themselves with say, the Jews or others. The tendency to measure themselves by others. I'm not as smart as others. I can't sing like others. I can't teach like others.

I can't do this. I can't do that. All of the limitations and inhibitions and restrictions that we voluntary impose upon ourselves. Look what the Ephesians could have done. How they could have had such deep inferiority feelings as they related to the Jews. All well you know, look we groveled before Diana look at the horrible things we did. Oh God can't use us. But that isn't what he says at all he says listen, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast."

Now God wants to bring you into that place where His full plan for your life is being realized in you. Not your works! Not your ideas! But His! "For you are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

What a wonderful thing! What a marvelous thing it is to realize that God made a plan for your life before He made the world. You're important to God. You are. Yes, you are indeed important to Him. You know there are two things that are problems to us. One is that we become terribly critical of others and the second is we become terribly critical and censorious about ourselves. You don't have any right to be critical of others. But you don't have too much right to be critical and censorious of yourselves either, because you're not your own, you're bought with a price.

And you're to glorify God in your body and your spirit which are His. How many times I've gone to people, "Would you be willing to take this Bible class? Or teach this group? Or have this ministry?" And have them say, "Oh, I couldn't do that. I've never done that." Well you know everything you have learned since you lay in your mother's arms and squalled, has been learned. It's all be acquired. You've learned a lot of these things since then don't you think it is very important that you should stay alive all your life.

And don't die until you're dead. That's one of things that thrills me about fellowship with brother Jones. He's ALIVE in Christ and he is going to stay alive till the last breath the Lord lets him have! And oh how I covet that for you, for each of us that we're going to just live in the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ and realize that God has a plan. A plan for your life. You say, "Well, look you don't what or how I sinned and how late in life I was saved." Well that doesn't make any difference.

You know, this God of the Bible is not the great I might have been or I could have been. He is the great I am. And "we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." And that plan begins now. You say, "I've wasted so many years." Sure you have and you might jolly well go on wasting them too. I hope you don't. I hope you don't. But there is a possibility of it, unless you do something about it. You see, today you're just as holy as you want to be.

Did you know that? You're just as spiritual as you want to be. You're just as effective for Christ as you want to be. You're just as useful to God and to His church as you want to be. You are the sum of all of your desires up until today. I'm so glad we've got some new psychology coming on "reality therapy" from William Glasser transactional analyzes, where we are coming back to responsibility. What the Scriptures have been teaching all the time. But the fact of the matter is, you are what you want to be.

Now it is the function of preaching to show you what you can be. To show you what God may want you to be and then to show you what you're going gain if you are what God wants you to be and then to scare the living daylights out of you if you're not will to pay the price to be what God wants you to be. You see the Scripture is quite clear it says our job is to comfort the afflicted. And we do that, but it also says we are to afflict the comfortable. And we ought to do that. And when you become comfortable and less than what God wants you to be somebody ought to afflict you a little and stir you up.

And that's what the apostle is doing for the church in Ephesus. He is stirring them up, because they could have sat right down there on the welcome mat inside into the house. Praise God we are saved. Paul says, he thanks God for our faith and our love isn't that wonderful. We've arrived. The apostle says you haven't arrived. You've barely started. You've got a long way to go. And so he gets to this point now where he says before God made the world He made a plan for your life.

That plan is today, now. Now if you're prepared to meet God today then God's prepared for that plan. Plan a to come into operation now. Maybe it is. Oh for many of you, I know it is. For all of us it ought to be. It must be. Let's look at it for a moment. What did he say about it here? "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained." That word 'ordained' a little bit frightening when we see it there, but if you realize what it really is and where it comes from, it won't scare you so much.

It comes from the market place. And really what the word means the word that tailors use and it means 'tailor made to fit or cut to your size.' Now does that frighten you? Into goods works which God has before tailor made to fit you. Some people think that if they are filled with the Spirit of God they are going to turn out to be D.L. Moody² or Charles Finney³ or Billy Graham or someone. No. No, you know what you will be? You, filled with the Spirit. That's all. You aren't going to be anybody else.

You're just going to be you glorifying God using the unique characteristics that He has built into you as individual never created before and never to come again. So you can bring 2 Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899) An American evangelist and publisher who founded Moody Church. 3 Charles Grandison

Finney (1792-1875) An American Presbyterian minister and leader in the Second Great Awakening in the United States.

out of your life the greatest possible glory to the name of the Lord Jesus. So here it is then His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has tailor made to fit you so that you'll be comfortable and at ease in doing them. I had a pleasant time at Houghton College recently. They had an alumni weekend there talking about international relations and they asked me to speak on the economic implications of our international witness for Christ or our activities.

And I was there and one of the men that was there was a man by the name of Congressman John Conlan from Arizona. A freshman congressman who was elected the president of the group of freshman congressmen on the Republican side of the aisle. And John Conlan had been at Northeastern University in Boston and through InterVarsity Fellowship some of the witness of the students, he had come to know the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a committed Socialist and total prepared he said, "We loved people so much if they don't take our love we will stand them up against the wall and make their brains rattle.

We are just going to make them take our love." And this was his opinion. Well, then he came to know and love Christ. He went on in government service and then end up in law practice out in Arizona. Recently, there was a redistricting in Arizona, because it had grown so much, which was entitled to another congressman. And he went to the Republican headquarters he said, "Look, I want to run for this new seat." And they said, "Get in line. There is forty ahead of you." And so he said, "Well, I can't wait that long in line."

He went out and found 25 people who shared his commitment to Christ and believe there was a place for Christians in Congress. And so he had a series of meeting with these 25 and explained how the precinct works, how you get nominated, and how you get elected and so he just took them through this process. None of them knew about the electoral process in the United States. I guess very few here. Is there anybody here who is active in their local precinct? Or in their party? Anyone in this room?

Anyone who knows any member in the local precinct? You see how unscriptural we are. The Scripture says, "Obey them that have the rule over you." (Heb. 13:17) We don't have kings. We have a constitution. But most of us are utterly disdainful of the electoral process. The mafia in New York says, "We don't care who they vote for, as long as you let us nominate them." And because we don't know the nominating process, we deserve what we get our indifference. Well, John Conlan got 25 people committed to Christ not all from one church, just there in the area.

And each one of those 25 went out and got 6 more and passed on what he had learned. And with a very small budget they elected him with a whopping big majority to Congress. And when he got there, as I said, he was elect the president of the freshman Republican congressmen. One of the first things he did was to start a Bible class in his home. He met a widow woman from down in Virginia Beach, who had a Bible class ministry. She had begun this when, her husband had died. She was left and she said Lord what would you have me to do?

She just began bringing in some neighbors and teaching. And God increased the gift and the ability and the enabling. And so Congressman Conlan met her and ask her if she would come and have a Bible class in his home. And all of this has already been publicized, so it won't make a difference if I tell you. And it may encourage your heart a little bit. But at Christmas time Billy Graham was at the White House for the church service and he was standing and talking to Congressman and Mrs.

Conlan. And Julie Nixon Eisenhower was there and he said, "You know, Julie the Conlans have a very important Bible class in their home. They just live a few blocks from you and I think it would be very helpful. You might enjoy it if you just begin going." So she did. And a few months later a terrific pressure and burden upon her heart crowded her to Christ. She opened her heart to receive the Lord Jesus Christ and is witnessing for Him and fellowshiping with believers. And the whole focus of interest for her life has changed as of several months ago.

What I am saying is here is a man who had a vision and a burden of something of what it meant to serve the Lord as a Christian. He didn't know anything about it, but he learned. He didn't know how the Lord wanted to use him, but he was available And I am submitting to you this morning that when we talk about His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto to good works we are talking about developing your full potential in Christ. And I can't tell you what it is, but He knows. And He is asking you to realize that He has provided everything necessary for you to become everything God wants you to be.

Now I saw that and I close with this, back in 1935, my father told me in mid-summer that he couldn't send me to high school. There weren't school busing in those days. I had to board in town in Anoka, Minnesota. We had the fourth year of drought on our sand farm in Anoka County. And dad said, "I can't send you to school this year." He said, "If you want to stay and work and

maybe I can next year. But" he said, "You have been saying that," (And I was going into my junior year. I had just turned sixteen in May 30th) and he said, "Maybe you should go to Bible school. I know you're too young, but you know Dr. Riley.⁴" So I wrote a letter to Dr. W. B. Riley who had founded the Northwestern Bible school in Minneapolis. He use to come to our farm and hunt pheasants. He use to kid me and say I was his bird dog and I would go out and scare up the pheasants for him.

And he recognized the name and I wrote and reminded him of this in a sentence. I told him my father couldn't afford to send me to high school and I wanted to train for the Lord's work and for the ministry. And I didn't have any money, but if he would let me come I would work hard and I promised to pay my bills. He wrote a sweet letter back and he said, "Son, we don't have much money either and come on up and join us. You work hard and pray and we'll just trust God together."

And so that's what I did. I walked the streets of Minneapolis for six weeks and finally got a job at Langford's Restaurant working three hours a day for three meals. That's what they paid me was in sandwiches. It was a sandwich shop. If I don't go into ecstasy over sandwiches it maybe I am getting a hot and cold flash coming back having to go month after month having sandwiches for breakfast and sandwiches for lunch and sandwiches for supper. It gets old, you know. Even Elijah found it was getting a little old having hamburger sandwiches twice a day you know.

And God had to change the diet for him. At any rate, I got another job a little later with the Luke Pharmacy at 11th and Market. I worked six hours on Monday and nine hours on Tuesday and six hours on Wednesday and nine hours on Thursday and six hours on Friday and nine hours on Saturday and I got 3 meals and \$6.00 a week and I carried a full school load. And I was rich, expect at the end of that time, seventeen years of age, carrying a load like that, well I got sick. That's what I did, I got sick.

And I had to quit school. My friends were...I had always been blessed with friends. I had the kind of friends where I'd never needed enemies because my friends were so faithful to me. They did everything they could do that enemies would do. They did it in love I hope. At any rate, my friends said to me, "If you quit school you're finished. Everybody who drops out of Bible school is finished. You never hear from them it's

over it's done." And so here I was, I had to quit. Seventeen years old and totally washed up and finished!

My life was over. I was a castaway at seventeen years old. I also worked at Mrs. C.J. Martin's for my room. I was night watchman. When I went there they had a 45 and belt of bullets hanging over the edge of my bed. Boy, was I scared of that thing. I was afraid it would go off at night. One day the man in charge of the place said, "Let's go down and see how good you are with this thing." We went down and put up a barrel and filled up it up with sand. He said, "Aim at that barrel."

Well, I did and that thing was going like this way out there at the end, it was too heavy. And I pulled the trigger and it went off and it threw me and we couldn't never find where that bullet went. It didn't go into the ceiling. It didn't go into the wall. It didn't go into the barrel. It was just gone. And he said, "I don't think you're ready for this yet." Oh, I was sure of that. So he got me a broom stick and he said, "If anybody comes around hit him." I didn't figure that was going to go off in the middle of the night, so that was better.

You see this was the student's job, so because I drop out of school I had to give up my room. So here I was seventeen years old, washed up, finished, and done. I knelt down on the floor and put myself across the bed and I reached up and got a Bible and flipped it open and it landed I Timothy. I read and there wasn't a thing in there for me just sawdust I was blowing. And then I got to II Timothy and I came to verse 8 and it look to me like the verse began to pulse with neon, go on, lights went on, bells rang and this is what I read, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (II Tim. 1:8,9) Before God made the world, He made a plan for my life.

I am so glad I am still on that beam now. And I don't know where He is going to lead me from here on out, I am committed to one thing that I made that day. I put my hands over that book I said, "Oh, Father, You don't even need to tell me what Your plan is, because I know enough about You to know I'm not going to change it. And all I would do would be to initial it, say okay. And so Father sight unseen I want your plan for my life. I don't care what people think. I don't care what others do.

I want Your plan for my life. And I commit to You myself to take Your plan and settle on Your plan. And as best I know how by Your grace to obey Your plan. I want it!" Now there wasn't anything unique with me. It is something that's the birth right of every believer. Today, I want you to do just that same thing. To take God's plan for your life. You're "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God 4 Rev. Dr. William Bell Riley (1861-1947) Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN. and educator.

hath before ordained." If you are to ever develop your full potential in Christ, then you must, YOU MUST make it absolute unreserved commitment to all you are and have to the plan of God even though you don't know what it is. And in every decision that you face, every decision you have to make your one frame of reference, Oh God, I want this made in terms of Your plan for my life. That plan that You made before You made the world. I'm Yours. And that can be yours today. I don't care how old you are.

Brother Jones, it is yours today for the balance of the hours God gives you. Wherever the youngest one here, YOURS! You can say Father I want Thy will, Thy plan. This that You tailor made to fit me. This for which you provided grace. You see my dear, if you make the plan you've got to come up with the grace to make it work. That's right. Because He has reserved His grace for His plan. But if you take His plan then He provides grace. Isn't that marvelous to be able to say to develop your full potential of Christ means that

I can take God's plan, for which God has provided grace.

Well that's pretty good. That's great. And that's what God wants. I wish it were true of everybody here. Let's bow our heads and close our eyes. Just have a moment, which we ask ourselves is this true of me? Have I really said Oh God I want Thy plan for my life whatever it means, whatever it costs, where ever it will take me? Your plan I'm not going to tell You how or what, I'm just committed to Thy Lord Jesus. Have you done that? If you haven't, will you? And maybe you would like to just seal it, by getting up and coming and kneeling here and having a little time while others slip away get ready for their lunch.

You come and tell Him today you're going to take His plan for your life. We are not going to sing. Just giving you now this word of exaltation and invitation. This isn't a settle matter, settle before you eat or do anything else. Get up from where you are your friends will let you out, slip down and just stay until you are satisfied that you've said Lord I want Thy plan, Thy will for my life. Father of Jesus, how we thank Thy that you saved us and called us not according to works, but Your purpose for which you provided grace, in Christ Jesus.

Before the world began, "for we are Your workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that You before ordained that we should walk in them." And Thou canst take this company of people and enlarge our hearts and enlarge our expectancy and enlarge our faith and enlarge our ministry even though it might not be in terms of that which is going to be written up in the journals and the digest. If it is going to mean greater glory coming to Christ than there was before from our blood ransomed lives, that's the enlargement we seek.

So Father to that end we ask Thee to bless these Thy dear children. And should there be some that haven't said that full and complete eternal yes to Thy, might they be discontent until they have. Might it be therefore, Father, everyone present numbered among that group that have embraced Your plan and Your will settled on it no further questions about, Thy will be done in earth in my life even as it is in Heaven. Let this be the rule of our lives to the glory honor and praise of the Lamb that was slain in His name and for His sake we ask it, Amen. * Reference such as: Delivered at Summit Grove, New Freedom, PA on Tuesday, August 6, 1974 by Paris W. Reidhead, Pastor. ©PRBTMI 1974

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