

Living for Ourselves

by Paris Reidhead

Paris Reidhead's sermon emphasizes the transformative power of understanding our identity in Christ and living for Him rather than ourselves.

Duration: 42:16

Scripture: John 10:7, John 10:9-11, Romans 6:23, 2 Corinthians 5:14, Ephesians 2:5-6

Topics: "Selfishness"

Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker recounts a personal experience of spending a day with people and documenting their language. The speaker mentions a woman named Mrs. Corder Camp who selflessly helps those in need by providing clothes, food, and sharing the message of Jesus. The speaker also shares a story of a missionary who received a generous donation from Mrs. Corder Camp to spread the gospel to tribes who had never heard of Christ. The sermon concludes with the speaker encountering a man in need and feeling a deep desire to help him, prompting a heartfelt prayer for guidance.

Transcript

We've been talking from John 10, 7 through 11, and the portion has to do, of course, with the words of Christ, when he said, I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved. He shall go in and out and find pasture.

I am come that you might have life, and that you might have it more abundantly. And then again he said, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

And we've understood, we've studied the word life, what it means in contrast to death. We've seen that Jesus Christ himself is our life. We've studied salvation, the various tenses of salvation.

I have been saved. I was saved. I am being saved.

I shall be saved. I have been saved from the pleasure of sin and the purpose of sinning. I was saved from the penalty of sin.

I am being saved from the power of sin, and one day shall be saved from the presence of sin. And then we've talked about going in, in worship, and in abiding union with Christ. He said, abide in me.

Go into his presence, in union with him. Crucified with him, buried with him, quickened with him, raised with him, and seated with him. Abide in Christ, crucified with him, to have victory over yourself, and the tyranny of your own disposition, and traits, and tendencies, and oh how desperately we need that victory day by day, and moment by moment.

And then abide in him, buried with him, to have victory over the world, which is constantly putting pressure on us. And then to abide in him, crucified, or I mean to seated with him, to have victory over principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this age. But he also said that we were to present our bodies living sacrifices.

And he said, you abide in me, and I in you. So we go in in union, and then we go out in indwelling. F. called Perfect Love.

And one of the chapters was on reciprocal indwelling. You dwell in me, and I'll dwell in you. And he said, he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.

Then we saw something of going into this pasture of truth, and experience, and opportunity for service. We studied some of the principles of success in the Christian life. And tonight I'd like to conclude our thinking in this pilgrimage with our Lord, in and out, by exploring with you those last words in this text, I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Now we understand that this means that the Lord Jesus Christ did die for you in your place, in your stead, to die your death, to satisfy the law in your behalf, that he might provide you this full, free, glorious, eternal salvation. But the Apostle Paul, in his second letter, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, had something to say about this.

And so we'll look at this just from a little different angle. I suggest if you have a Bible, you turn to 2 Corinthians, the 5th chapter, and I'd like to read, beginning with the 14th verse. You see, no scripture is a private interpretation.

You don't understand it just from one. Someone said the context of any verse in the Bible is everything that went before and everything that follows after. And in a sense, that's correct, that's true.

So, I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. What are the implications of this to you? Listen to the Apostle Paul, beginning with verse 14, For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead. Now, I'm going to put this the way, or paraphrase it the way I think it should be understood by us, that since one died for all, then we're all, for whom he died, dead with him.

Remember what we talked about? Crucified with him, and buried with him, and quickened with him, and raised with him, and seated with him. If one died for all, then we're all, for whom he died, dead with him, crucified with him, and seated with him in the heavenly. Now, within the light of that, And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Do you understand this? I'm trying to. I think I've understood something of it for some years, but I believe like all truth, it's a living experience, and it becomes more meaningful day by day as the truth unfolds in the light of our experience. And here I believe he is saying this, that when Christ died for you, you were with him indeed.

You were crucified with him, as though there were two people on the cross, Christ on the front of it dying for you, and you on the back of it, dying with him. You see, he didn't just want to save us from what we have done. He wanted to save us from ourselves, from our traits, and habits, and attitudes, and all these other things that are really our world, our own worst enemy.

You are your worst enemy, and I am mine. And he wanted to save us from ourselves. Now we may or we may not understand this.

And if we don't understand the day that when Christ died, we died, then I think we have difficulty in understanding where and how we have victory when we're tempted. I think this is the way of escape, that when you are in temptation situation, that you respond to it by some prayer device or technique as this, that when you sense the fact that you are under temptation, Father, the part of me that thinks this way, feels this way, reacts this way, would say this, or would do this, is the part that died the day Christ died. That's the me that died with him.

And just now, I consider, I reckon myself to be dead, indeed, unto sin, in respect to this. Now I pointed out that we sing this. We don't have any trouble singing it.

Dying with Jesus by death reckoned mine. Now did you know what you were singing when you sang that? Dying with Jesus by death reckoned mine, looking to Jesus till glory does shine. So what are you doing? The day he died for you, you died with him, and so in this moment of temptation, you have to respond to it.

Now this isn't a once-for-all sort of a thing. This is like the switch in the light in your living room. You don't just put it on and leave it on.

You put it on when the room gets dark. And so here is a switch. You were wired for victory at Calvary.

Did you know that? Yeah, you were. You were linked up to the high line of his omnipotence. There's a direct connection with the resurrection life of Jesus Christ.

And when in the moment of your temptation, you don't want to yield to temptation, then at that moment you put the switch on. Father, have pardon me that would say this, or do this, or think this. That's the part that died.

And when you put the switch on, you release the very resurrection life of Christ to flow into your personality. And you do that just once, and then you'll know that you do have victory. And this is what he wants us to understand, that if one died for all, then we're all dead, and we can go on and say all were crucified, and all were buried, and all were quickened, and all were raised, and all were seated.

You say, I don't see that in the Scripture. Oh, wait a minute. You do, yes you do.

Because in Ephesians chapter 2 and verses 5 and 6, we are quickened together with Christ. By grace you are saved, and raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. Now it's there.

You are with him in all of these phases of what he was doing for you. Now, the Scripture, then our text here, as we relate to it, says that since one died for all, since Christ died for you, then you died with him. And he died for you, that you henceforth, after you understand this, should not any longer live unto yourself.

Live unto yourself, but unto him who died for them, and who rose again. Do you see what he's saying? You're not your own. Now, I suppose the best in the Bible of sin is that of the leper.

Leprosy is not a type of sin as much as the leper is the picture of the sinner. It doesn't follow as a carefully worked out type, but the leper is God's of you and me. I went to Africa in 1945 as a missionary, and I had seen pictures of lepers and leprosy.

I'd read books about it. I talked with missionaries that had worked with lepers. Only thing is, I'd never seen one myself.

And in the Sudan there wasn't a great deal of leprosy. There were some. Not like the Cameroons, for instance, where one person out of twelve has leprosy.

Wasn't nearly as high an incidence as that. Well, we'd gone out to a station right alongside the Sudan-Ethiopian border, and I was doing work among the Ngasena tribe, a tribe of cattle herding people that lived up on a mountain and was in an area that was closed to us. But they would come down into our area.

And so in order to establish contact with them, I was getting a sample of their language. That was my work, to work for the education department as well as for the mission in making samples of several of these languages. And I was working with the Ngasena people.

I never knew where they'd be. I'd go to where the camp was yesterday when I was there, and they would have moved the cattle in the night somewhere else for grass and water. And so it would be a lot of walking.

Well, this particular day, I started out, I guess, about 630 in the morning. The sun was already bright. I had my helmet down over my eyes, a pack on my back over my shoulder with notebooks, with lunch, canteens of water.

And I was going to spend the day with the people, picking the language off of their teeth and writing it down. As I went across this rather wide open field with dry brown grass, the sun's reflection on it was bright. And so I dropped my head and pulled my helmet down and just kept my eyes on the path.

It was going to be a long day. And up ahead, I looked up and saw a shadow. Occasionally, the women would be out getting the grass to patch the thatched roof, and they'd just leave a bundle, got too heavy, and they'd leave it, sit overnight, come back the next day.

So I saw the shadow and just assumed it was a bundle of grass. But as I came nearer, I smelled a strange odor. Oh, it was very unpleasant.

And still nearer, I heard a sound, and I looked up, and there, no more than 15, 20 feet in front of me, was the most awful, the most pitiful human spectacle I had ever seen. There sat a leper. Now, I'd heard about him, but I'd never encountered him.

And here he was in my path. I can see it now as vividly as then. His eyes had lids that were turned down, filled with mucus.

His nose had been pretty well eaten away, more or less the hole in his face. His lips were enlarged with pocking ulcers. I saw only one tooth.

Around his neck was a leather thong. Attached to the thong was a half of a gourd someone had given him. In the gourd, I later saw as I came nearer, was dirt and grain.

He moved, I could tell from the heavy calluses on his elbows, on his elbows and his knees. His feet had been eaten away, and through the rotting flesh, protruded bones. And when he saw a bit of grain in the path, on his knees, he would pick it up with the pads of his hands.

He had no fingers. They had been consumed and atrophied and eaten away. And he put the dirt and the grain into the gourd.

And then he would sway it back and forth until the lighter grain would come to the top of the dirt. And then he would lay his tongue down and lift the grain, sticking to his moist tongue, hold it in his toothless jaws and swallow it. And that's how he would get food.

And there he sat. And there I was. And he looked at me.

And he held out those hands. And he started to speak. And he cried, put yourself in my place.

That was all. Put yourself in my place. Put yourself in my place.

What if I were you and you were me? What would you want me to do? Well, I'd started the day to go for the gas and the people. But I was undergoing a terrific experience. I wasn't trained in medicine.

I came over with just a few feet from him and stood there. And then I got down on my knees. I couldn't talk to him.

I didn't know his language. I looked at him. My heart was moved with revulsion at the smell and the sight and with pity.

And I said, oh God, I'll do anything to help him. What can I do? When I said that, before I said that, I was looking at a stranger. But when I said, I'll do anything to help him, for the first time I understood what the Bible means when it uses the leper as the picture of the sinner.

This, this is what God chose as his picture of me. That was the divine picture of a sinner. His face was corrupted.

His eyes, he'd looked at what he shouldn't. His ears were atrophied. He'd heard what he shouldn't.

His lips, just follow it through. His hands, his feet, corrupted the disease had gotten through him. And so God says, the leper is my picture of you.

My picture of you. This is what I saw when I saw you. Now I had said to myself in prayer, I'll do anything to help him.

Anything. And I meant it, and best I knew. But as I looked at him in this tremendous experience that was going on inside of me, I realized that this is what Jesus Christ had said when he saw me.

The good shepherd gave his life for the sheep. That doesn't mean much on the surface, does it? Well, it means more when you discover that in God's eyes we weren't sheep, we were lepers. And leprosy is a picture of sin.

And we were sinners. Now the Lord Jesus had looked at me and had said, Father, I'll do anything to help him. He looked at you and he saw you.

I'll do anything to help her, to help him. I had seen Christ go into Gethsemane and lean over that boulder and pray, and perspiration like clots of blood fall from his brow and hit the rock. I had seen him on the cross when the very membrane of his heart just tore with the agony and the grief.

But you see, I thought it was the number of my sins that had broken his heart. I thought that it was God's justice that had pressed the, as it were, great drops of blood from him. But that day I realized it wasn't the penalty of sin or the number of my sins.

It was when the infinitely holy Son of God had to come into contact with sin. You see, he didn't just die for us. The Scripture says here he was made to be sin for us.

The only way he could die for you was to become what you were, to be made what you were, so that you could be made what he is. And so, all of a sudden I saw what it had meant for Christ, the Good Shepherd, to give his life for me, if I had done for that leper what Christ did do for me. And I didn't do this, but if I had done what Christ did do, this is what it would have meant.

I would have had to have stood in front of that leper and known all about the contagion and the infectiousness of the disease, its loathsome, hideous qualities, and yet still I would have had to have, can you imagine my stooping down and putting my arms under his arm, hands under his arm, lifting it up, and then somehow taking my clean face and bringing it in against his foul face and his rotting hands in my clean hands, until somehow in the alchemy of love I would have been able to have pressed my health out on him and taken his sickness in on me. This is what Christ did for you. He was made to be sin for you, he who knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him.

That's what it means when it says the Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep. He became what you were. And when the infinitely holy soul of the Son of God had to reach out and touch me, that's what caused the perspiration to burst from him and his heart to break.

Now do you understand what the Apostle meant when he said, the love of Christ constrains us to judge, that if one died for all, then they which live ought not live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again. If you say you're redeemed, if you say you're bought with a price, you've been purchased by the poured out life of God's Son, you have no rights. Thereafter, when you receive him, when you say, my Lord, you never can really say my about anything again.

You can't say my talent, my life, my time, my money, my skill, my business. You have abandoned the right to ever use my in a proprietary sense again. When you say, my Jesus, because the Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep, and you're not your own, and you are to glorify God in your body and in your spirits, which are God's.

And the love of Christ constrains us to judge, that since one died for all, then we're all dead, that they which live ought not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again. I was down in Cordele, Georgia, back in 1950 in a missionary conference. The first missionary that I ever helped get support for was a good man by the name of George Birch, from Georgia, the younger brother of John Birch, who was a missionary in China.

And George Birch and I had come to the First Baptist Church of Cordele, Georgia, for a Sunday. I spoke from this text that morning, and when I finished in exhorting the people to live not for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again, congregation had thinned out, but there were two people in the back. It was a church where the pews were set on an angle, wide on this side and narrowed on the sides and wide in the middle.

Way back on the right, I saw two people seated. I thought it was that little two persons short pew. When I got there, I found one of them was in a stainless steel wheelchair, and the lady was seated beside him on a straight chair.

I came over and he held out his hand, and I walked over and took his hand, and he took both of mine and his. He said, Brother Reedhead, I want to tell you something. Have you a moment? Of course I did.

He said, I was born in Cordele. This was my church. When I was 14, I met Jesus Christ here, and shortly I felt he'd led me to be a missionary.

And still when I finished high school, I had good grades, and I decided that I was going to be an engineer instead of be a missionary. I was up at Georgia Tech when I was drafted and ended up out in Italy as a soldier, an officer. One day some Nazi bombers flew over and dropped their load.

Three days later, I regained consciousness in a field hospital. It took me some time to realize what had happened, and then I realized that my hips had been pretty well blown away. One day I was talking to the doctor, and I said, Doctor, am I going to live? And he said, Son, you're going to live.

And I said, Doctor, am I going to walk? He said, Son, you're never going to walk again. And then I didn't want to live. And he took his wife's hand and said, but she prayed me.

She loved Jesus Christ. When I'd been unconscious, I talked about him, and she'd prayed for me, and she prayed that I'd--prayed me to live. And then she married me.

And he said, Brother, he'd had--God didn't want me to carry a gun in Italy. He wanted me to carry the gospel in Africa, and I'll never do that. But George Birch is going.

The government promised me that as long as I live, they'll give me a full disability allowance. That's \$220 a month, it was then. He said, I've already pledged one tithe of it to the church.

And he said--he reached over and he took George's hand. And he said, George, as long as I live and the government sends that check, I'm going to send the second tithe to keep you in the Africa in my place. I asked the S.I.M. officials if they were still getting Powell's check.

They said, oh, we're getting his tithe, but he's gone into the jewelry business and he's giving the profit from that to send--to help send another missionary. That's what I mean. He'd come to the realization that they which live ought not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and who rose again.

Now, have you realized that? That if the Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep and it cost him this much, then you don't have a right to live for yourself. You're not your own. You belong to him.

And all you are and all you have are his, and you're just in custody of it for a time, to look into his face and say, Lord, my time is not mine. My talent is not mine. My knowledge, my experience is not mine.

I'm thine. I am thine, O Lord. I've given everything to thee because you gave everything to me.

Now, I don't know what God has for you. That's not my--I don't need to be God in your life and tell you what he wants you to do. All I need to do is tell you what his word says, and his word says that the love of Christ constrains us to judge, that we're not our own, and that we ought to live not to ourselves, but unto him who died for us and who rose again, whose we are and whom we serve.

You say, well, how will that affect me? I don't know how it'll affect you. That's not my business. I know how it affected Mrs. Kordekamp.

Perhaps you'd be helped if you knew how it affected her. She and her husband were farmers out in Iowa, out near George, Iowa, way out in the West, and right near Okoboji, where I had the privilege of being this last summer in a conference. And Mrs. Kordekamp and her husband had a good farm, good Iowa land, and they sold it, moved to town, bought a nice house on an elm-shaded street, and were going to retire.

When they brought the money in from the sale of their farm as a cash sale, they went to their banker and said, what should we do with it? Oh, he said, there's just one thing to do with it. I'll do that for you. And so they went to bed at night, resting, and they were secure for the rest of their lives.

The next morning when they got up, well, the Samuel Insull Insured Stocks and Bonds had lost all their value, and everything that Kordekamp's had was in Samuel Insull Bonds, and they had nothing, except the house was paid for, \$1,500 in a checking account. That was it. And Mr. Kordekamp got sick that day.

In fact, six weeks later, he died. He just died of a broken heart. He didn't have anything to live for.

Right near there, the S.I.M. was having a conference a few summers later. Mrs. Kordekamp took in teachers and gave them board and room to take care of herself. And she went over to Spirit Lake to this conference and my friend Hal Street of the S.I.M. was having the conference, and on Friday she came and said, Mr. Street, the Spirit of God has spoken to my heart, and he's told me that I should sell my house and build a mission station in Africa to give the gospel to 500,000 people who've never had it.

Now, Mrs. Kordekamp said, Mr. Street, you can't do that. She said, I'd like to know why not. It's my house.

Well, I don't want... He said, you're a widow. She said, I know that, and God is God, and I'll obey God, and if God tells me to send the money to you to build a station, you see that the station is built. That's all I'm asking of you, sir.

Months or so later, she wrote back and said, the house is sold, and with a check for then about \$4,000 to build a station. And the station was built. And she said, isn't it wonderful? It was later built.

Isn't it wonderful, Mr. Street? Not only have I sold my house and the money for the station, but I've just had an invitation from Oak Hills Fellowship up in Bemidji, Minnesota, and they've asked me to come up and be the laundress. Now I can serve the Lord. And so she went up there and was laundress.

But this was her home community, so a few years later, three years later, she came back for another S.I.M. conference. At the end of the week, she said, you know, Mr. Street, I guess I'm like Sapphira. I kept back part of the price.

There was \$1,700 left over. Will you pray that somebody will give me \$300 so I can build a half a station in some tribe? He said, no, I'm not. I'm not going to pray about it.

Well, she said, I'll do it anyway. I was out in the sedan and went into the Koma tribe and the Gonza tribe, and right between them was a place to build a station. And I wrote, and the mission approved, and by return mail we got a check for \$2,000 from Mrs. Kortekamp to give the gospel to those two tribes that had never heard the name of Christ.

And I wondered, who's this Mrs. Kortekamp? And when I got back, I found out. And then I told just what I've told you, and afterwards a man came up to me, his eyes were red and wet. He said, you don't know the rest of it, do you? I said, no, I don't.

What is it? He said, well, I'm from Oak Hills Fellowship. I'm one of the missionaries up there. He said, Mrs. Kortekamp not only did that, but she's just been making that verse, ought not live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them have entirely new meaning.

And he controlled himself and said, every once in a while somebody will stop by the fellowship and say that out in the jack pine there's a family, the father's gone to town to get a job, and the family's sick, no job down there, no money here. And we'll always say, how many children and what are their ages? And we then tell Mrs. Kortekamp. And she goes down, she's gathered up all the clothes from the people, and sewed them, and mended them, and stacked them according to size.

And when she gets the ages of children, she puts the clothes in a box, and puts in clean bedding, and takes her mop and her pail, and then she gets her hot dishes full of food, and then we'll take her out. She'll say, will you come for me sometime tomorrow afternoon? And she'll get in there, mop the floor, and change the beds, and bathe all the children, and put on the clean clothes, and do the laundry, and fix the meal. And then she'll sit down with him and say, now I'm not the missionary, and I don't know how to do this, but I'd just like to tell you who Jesus is, and what he's done for me.

And this missionary, a great big strong fellow, tears running down his cheeks, said, Mr. Redick, she's won more people to Christ than all the rest of us put together. Well, what had happened? Well, she lived most of her life for herself. And then, at the end of it, when all was gone, she understood that the love of Christ constrains us to judge, that if one died for all, then we're all for whom he died, dead with him.

That we henceforth ought not live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and who rose again. Now that's what's meant by that verse. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

Then what the sheep give to the good shepherd? Everything. All they are, and all they have, and all by God's grace they ever can have or be. Now, as I look at you tonight, again I say, I'm not God.

I don't want you to do what Mr. Powell did, and I don't want you to do what Mrs. Kortekamp did. You understand that, don't you? You know what I want you to do? I want you to look at the cross and see Christ dying for you. And then, like Thomas, I'd like to have you fall at his feet and kiss the nail wounds and somehow cry out and say, my Lord and my God.

And then whisper, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Remember what a mother of our Lord said to the servants? Whatever he saith unto thee, do it. Do it. What's the secret of a happy Christian life? They which live ought not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again.

Shall we pray? Just a moment, just a brief moment, gazing at the Son of God, the good shepherd who gave his life for the sheep, made to be sin for you, he who knew no sin, that you might be made the righteousness of God in him. Oh, does not the love of Christ constrain you to say, Lord, I cannot, I dare

not, I will not live unto myself, but unto him who died for me and who rose again. Father of Jesus, the possibilities in this company tonight for the eternal glory of Christ are so enormous.

The knowledge, the skill, the talent, the resources, the life that's here could change the world for thy dear Son. Oh, Father of Jesus, that we might each of us live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us and who rose again. Every day we're tired and every night we go to bed weary.

This is the order of life. If we do nothing, we still go to bed weary. Oh, that we might make our days filled to the glory and praise of thy dear Son.

So breathe upon us breath of God and find us where we are and move us to the nail-pierced feet of the one whom thou hast given name above every name that at his name we bow. And might we again covenant with him that whatever he says unto us we will do and permit him to rule and control and govern our lives. We plead again for the release of everything that's his in us.

We stand against a defeated foe who'd bind us with purposes other than his and claim the victory of Calvary, the release of the life stuff that's here, that belongs to the Lord Jesus that he purchased with his blood. And so we ask thee to seal now this week of conference, this week of considering thy secrets for our lives to be happy and fruitful and blessed. May it be that the impressions made, the decisions made, the commitments made tonight will be to the eternal glory of the Lamb that was slain.

And oh, might it be that he shall see in us of the travel of his soul and shall be satisfied. May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering. This is the cry of our hearts tonight.

Have you answered, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? If you haven't, I urge you to do it just now as we wait a moment. Amen.

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