

Genuine Regeneration

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer's sermon emphasizes the necessity of genuine regeneration and the transformative power of salvation through Christ alone.

Duration: 1:26:58

Scripture: Psalm 103:12, Ezekiel 36:24-27, John 9:39, Romans 8:15

Topics: "Regeneration"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of recognizing that lost men are spiritually blind. He uses the analogy of a curtain hiding Jesus behind it, explaining that even if the curtain is pulled back, the blind audience will not be able to see Him. The preacher encourages the audience not to be discouraged by the size of their congregation, as God is present wherever two or more gather. He also shares a personal anecdote about the World Cup in Peru to illustrate the depth of a father's love and discipline. Throughout the sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for true conversion, highlighting that salvation is a supernatural work of God that produces evidence in the form of repentance, faith, and fruit.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to the book of Ezekiel, chapter 36. The book of Ezekiel, chapter 36. Before we read our text, let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I praise you for your kindness, your loving kindness toward us. Your mercies are new every morning. You have taken all our sins and put them as far from you as the east is from the west.

You have done great things in your Son who died and rose again from the dead, through your Spirit who makes the dead alive and causes us to call out Abba Father to love you, to have a passion for the things that are important to you. Father, we need you, your strength, your grace, your power, your mercy. Apart from your Son, we can do nothing.

Father, I do not have a handle on you to coerce or manipulate you, but I would ask in the name of your Son and for his glory and honor that you would work among us, that you would instruct your people, that they might understand your works and see that they are perfect and in you there is no fault. That they would grow, they would be all that you would have them to be. Father, give us wisdom, for it is inherent in you.

But any wisdom that we have is derived from you. So with faith and hope, we ask for wisdom to know your scriptures, that your truth would be applied to our hearts. Father, help us and we will be helped.

Change us and we will be changed. In Jesus name, Amen. Amen.

Before we go to our text, I want to summarize a few of the things that we have gone through so far this week. First, we started out dealing with the evidences of true conversion. We live in a day and age in Christianity where everyone in America believes they're saved because one time in their life they prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to come into their heart.

We know that men are saved by repentance and faith. And whoever does call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. But salvation is a supernatural work of God that will always produce fruit.

And the evidence, not the cause, but the evidence of salvation is a changed life, a changing life. Jesus made this very clear in Matthew chapter 7 when he said, You shall know them by their fruits. Paul was clear when he said, test yourselves, examine yourselves to see whether or not you're in the faith.

There is no such thing. As a continuously carnal Christian, do Christians sin? Yes, absolutely. But can Christians live in a state of sin without discipline, without being brought back in obedience to their father? Absolutely not.

Are people saved by making a decision? Yes, we must make a decision of the will. We must repent. We must believe.

But how do we do that? We do that by the power of God and the work of the Holy Spirit that regenerates the heart and makes us able to repent and believe for even repentance and faith are gifts from God. There are works of his grace. But we have a problem today for decades in this country.

We've heard evangelists tell us about the hour of decision and the need to make our decision. And so most people today are trusting in a decision and the sincerity of their own heart when they made it. For example, if you ask someone, are you a Christian? Are you going to heaven? Most will say yes.

When you ask them why, they'll say something like, I made my decision. I prayed my prayer. They are hoping in a decision, the sincerity of a decision instead of looking unto Christ.

How are we saved? Not by simply making a decision or praying a prayer. We are saved by looking unto Christ. We have looked at ourself in the light of God's word, and we realize that we cannot save ourselves, nor can we help God save us.

We repent and we mourn because there is nothing in us of virtue and merit that would cause God to accept us before his throne. But we're not left in despair because the same Holy Spirit that convicts us of sin also reveals to us the glory of God in the face of Christ, the salvation of God in Christ. And so we look to Christ and we believe, we trust in Christ, as the old hymn writer said, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling.

And we come to make this foundational statement that I am saved for one reason and one reason alone, that Jesus Christ shed his blood for my soul. I hope not in works, I hope not in ethics, I hope not in baptisms or church membership. I hope in Christ alone.

And we went on last night and we spoke something of the gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ. In America today, the gospel of Jesus Christ, the gospel of our blessed God, as Paul said to Timothy, has been reduced down to nothing more than four spiritual laws or five things God wants you to know. We ask a person if they're set, if they're a sinner, if they know they're a sinner, if they say yes, we ask them if they want to go to heaven, if they say yes, we ask them if they would want to pray a prayer, they pray the prayer, we ask them of their sincerity.

They're not sure, but we assure them they're saved. But you see, the fact that you need to understand is you ask a man, do you know you're a sinner? If he says yes, it means absolutely nothing. The devil knows he's a sinner.

And the question is not, do you know you're a sinner? The question is this, since you've heard the preaching of the gospel as God so worked in your heart that the sin you once loved, you now hate. And the question is not, do you want to go to heaven? Everyone wants to go to heaven. They just don't want God to be there when they get there.

The question is the God that you have ignored. And lived without and been unconcerned toward and even the scriptural language is this, the God that you have hated, do you now esteem him, desire him? Want to seek him. Has God so worked in your heart that he has become of great worth to you? And then the question is not, do you want to pray a prayer and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart? Do you know there's nowhere in the New Testament where that language is used? Absolutely nowhere.

And people say, now, wait a minute, what about Revelation chapter three, verse 20? Well, what about it? He's not knocking on the door of a sinner's heart. He's knocking on the door of a church. And someone says, well, I told an evangelist that a long time ago and he said, I know that's not the context, but it works.

The thing is, we're not allowed to use scripture because it works, we're not called to be pragmatists, we're called to be theologians, we do something not because it works, but because it's true. Men are saved by repenting of their sins and believing the gospel. Can men are men saved by calling on the name of the Lord? Sure, but there's a great difference between someone calling on the name of the Lord with repentance and faith and someone simply repeating the prayer of an evangelist.

And although as preachers we have the authority to teach the gospel and we have the authority to tell men what the scriptures say about biblical assurance, we do not have the authority to tell men they are saved. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. And then we went on to talk a bit about the cross.

We began with the great declaration against men that all have sinned, of course, again, that means nothing in a culture that drinks down iniquity like it was water. And so one of the tasks of the preacher is not only to say that mankind has sinned, but explain to them the heinous nature of sin so that the Holy Spirit, using the word of God, will convict them of the heinous nature of sin and it will produce in them something that Joel Osteen would never want someone to feel self loathing. Part of repentance in the Old Testament and new is I hate myself.

Oh, wretched man, that I am who will save me from this body of death. It is coming to grips with the reality of the ugliness of sin. And the reality of that ugliness causing us to turn to Christ, you see, sometimes it's an illustration, I'll pull out a pair of keys and I'll jingle them in the pulpit and I ask people, does that bring you joy? And most say, well, of course not.

And I say, well, it doesn't bring you joy because you're not locked away in a prison. If you were locked away in a prison, the sound of keys jingling would bring you at least a spark of joy and hope. It's the same way.

One of the reasons why Christ is not truly precious to men is because preachers are not telling men about their sin, not telling them that they are condemned in it, not telling them that God is holy. God is righteous. In America, God looks more like Santa Claus than Yahweh of the Bible, than the God of Scripture.

One of the greatest statements that C.S. Lewis ever wrote down, it's found in the Chronicles of Narnia, and it's this he's not a tame lion, he's not a domesticated God, he's God. And he is both glorious and terrifying. And you can't have one without the other.

So all men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. It doesn't mean that God had a wonderful plan for your life and you failed it. It means this, you were created for one glorious purpose, and that is to glorify him.

But the Bible says, although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks. All have sinned, but men are justified. That is, they're declared legally right before God only one way, through faith in Jesus Christ.

But when we say that Jesus Christ saves men or that men can be justified, we're confronted with a terrible problem. It's the greatest problem in all the Scripture. And it's this, how can a just God forgive wicked men and still be just? You see, that is the greatest problem in Scripture.

If God is just, he cannot forgive you in the same way that if one of our judges on the earth simply pardoned and let murderers go in the name of love, we would have him all thrown off the bench. We would say he was a wicked man, that he was not just. See, the greatest problem in all of Scripture is if God is just and we are truly wicked, as Scripture says, that he cannot forgive us unless, of course, a sacrifice is made.

And not merely a sacrifice. But a sacrifice of infinite worth in order to be saved, God must become a man. And as a man walk upon this earth as a perfect man, and then according to the foreordained plan of God, he must go to a tree and on that tree he bears the sin of his people.

He carries the curse of them and on that tree he dies. And there's two important aspects of that death, he dies, abandoned and forsaken of God. You and I should die forsaken of God, abandoned because of our sin, his face of displeasure turned against us.

That's the way we should die. But in order to be saved from that death and that eternal death, the son of God died in our place, as John Gill used to say, died in our law place, stood in our law place, carrying our sin. And died forsaken of his own father, never buy into the romantic idea that the father turned away from his son on the cross because he simply saw the son suffering and couldn't bear to see it.

That's not what Jesus says. Jesus says, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? God is holy. His eyes are too pure to look upon sin, his holy son at that moment bore our sin and the father turned away from him.

But that's not all for for God's justice to be satisfied, his judgment had to be poured out, his wrath, his holy hatred against evil had to be exhausted. Extinguished, and there was only one way on that tree, Jesus Christ, the son of God, drank the cup of God's wrath, all the furious, holy, righteous anger, violent wrath of

a righteous God that should have fallen upon his people, fell upon his son. As Isaiah says, it pleased the Lord, it pleased Yahweh to crush him.

To crush his only son and in crushing him. In pouring out his wrath upon him, the justice of God was satisfied, the wrath of God was appeased, and now God. Can forgive the wicked and call them righteous because his son has died for them all, so many times we'll read the story of of Isaiah, of of Isaac and Abraham going up to the mount and Abraham is called upon to sacrifice his only son.

You all know the story, the man ties his son to a bundle of sticks. Makes an altar. He lays his hand upon the brow of his boy.

And comes down with the full force of his might, with that flint knife to slaughter him. But as the man's will gave way to the will of God, his hand was stayed by God. And you applaud what a beautiful ending to the story.

But you don't understand, it wasn't the ending of the story, it was the intermission. Hundreds of years later, God's son is on the altar and God takes the knife out of Abraham's hand and God lays his hand on his only begotten son and thrusts the knife down and slaughters him. It pleased the Lord to crush him.

That's why there's so much more meaning than what you think in John 3:16 when it says for God so loved the world. You see, someone had to die under the wrath of God. It was God's son who did it.

It was God's son. Who did it, having died, he made it possible for a just God to declare wicked men righteous and yet still be just. Now, God calls upon all men, he commands all men, all people of every place to repent and to believe the gospel.

Jesus said it himself, the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand. Now, repent and believe the gospel. But we have taken that repent and believe, as I have said, and we've turned it into a mere intellectual decision, a tiny little ritual that people participate in, and if they participate in it, we tell them popishly that they're saved.

And that's wrong. Very wrong. You need to understand the evangelical community in America is very wrong.

They say, no, brother Paul, how can you say that? I mean, what arrogance is in you that you would stand up there and say it's wrong? Well, again, let me refer back to a principle of hermeneutics, a principle of the science of studying the Bible. We are always to do our theology in the context of the church. That means that when we interpret the Bible, we should take our interpretation and walk through 2000 years of Christian history.

If nobody agrees with us, we're probably wrong. Well, if you take modern American Christianity and compare it to 2000 years of Christian history, you won't find much in agreement between the two. We have developed our own little instantaneous, easy, believism, American form of Christianity.

But brother Paul, you've said we're saved by faith. Yes, we are saved by faith and not of works. No man can boast.

But what you need to understand is that the person who is saved by faith is also the person who is born again. Now, herein lies the problem born again in America. Everybody's born again.

They give polls on are you born again? Sixty five percent of the people in America say they're born again. But explain to me what is born again? What does it mean? I'll tell you what it means. It's been reduced down to this.

I made a decision. I prayed a prayer. You know, I spent many years of my life in South America.

We're almost everyone in South America believes that they are saved and right with God, because when they were infants, they were baptized. They're safe. They can be a mafioso, a mafia person, they can be a thief, they can be absolutely anything, but they're saved because one time in their life when they were a child, they were baptized.

And so they're saying the priest says so now evangelicals in America mock that and laugh that and say that is so wrong, that is not right, just because someone is baptized as an infant doesn't make them saved. But we can't see that we do absolutely the same thing just because someone prayed a prayer one time for five minutes. We tell them they're saved.

And even if afterwards they live like the devil all the days of their life, we still assure them that they are saved because one time they prayed a prayer that's not found in Scripture, nor is it found in Christian history. Are we saved by faith? Yes. Does the God who saves us also keep us? Yes.

But what does it mean to be born again? Born again also can mean born from above and what it is referring to is this, that salvation is more than simply a human decision or an act of the human will. Salvation is a supernatural work of God whereby he regenerates or makes the heart alive. As we're going to see in a moment, he takes out a cold, dead heart of stone and replaces it with a living heart.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. That is not poetry. That beautiful statement wasn't made just so that we could write it on some Christian trinket hanging at our house.

It's a truth. If any man, not some men, but if any man truly be Christian, he is a new creature because God has radically changed his nature being born again. Or the idea of born again is a supernatural work of the spirit of God.

You understand that in Genesis chapter one, we see that in the creation, the spirit is hovering over. As some would say, I wouldn't much agree, but hovering over chaos. The spirit is an instrument there in the creation of the world with a spirit is also the instrument in the recreation of a man.

And I stand in line with many, many old dead theologians in the next statement I'm going to make, and it's this. The salvation of a man demonstrates more of the power of God than the very creation of the universe. You see, the universe was created, as the Latin scholars used to say, ex nihilo, which means out of nothing.

But when a man is saved, he is recreated out of a corrupt mass, it is easier to create out of nothing than it is to take something corrupt and transform it into something or someone that loves God. So you see, the lost doctrine in America in the 21st century is this, the doctrine of regeneration, of being born again, of the work of the spirit of God. Is it not true that if we were to dismiss this little flock here tonight? And we're to go to every place in this city and talk to everyone in this city, most people in this city, though, at the very moment that we speak to them are living as the devil would tell us that they are thoroughly Christian.

And when we begin to investigate the reason for the hope that is within them, they will tell us that one time in their life in a church or an evangelistic crusade, they prayed a prayer. Oh, my dear friend, the evidence that you're saved by faith. Is not that one time in your life you prayed a prayer, but that he who began a good work in you continues it, you know, the term justification, that means the moment a person believes they are declared righteous before God, it's a legal term.

But do you understand the term sanctification? It is a work of God making us more and more conformed to the image of his son. The evidence of justification. That God has declared us right with him is the continuing work of sanctification that God continues working in us all the days of our life to conform us to the image of Christ.

Now, that was our introduction, let's go to our text, verse 22 of chapter 36, therefore, say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God, it is not for your sake or house of Israel that I am about to act, but for my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you went. I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations which you have profaned in their midst. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord declares the Lord God.

When I prove myself holy among you in their sight. Now, in this first part of our text, we find something very, very important, the reason or the motivation behind God's saving work. Did God save Israel because of some worth or merit that he found in them? No, he specifically states with all clarity that Israel had profaned his name among the nations, there was no cause that he could find in Israel to save them.

But he does say this for my own name, I will save you for the sake of my own name. Why does God save men? That's a great question. And you say, well, it's because God is love.

But then you've just backed up the question, why does God love men? Because you see, men are not holy like God is holy, men are not righteous as God is righteous, men contradict God in every aspect of his nature. Why does God demonstrate love toward men? There are two reasons. One, God is love.

It's who he is. But secondly, he does so in order to demonstrate. Straight.

His glory, the world was created as a stage, a theater, and God has arranged everything in this world so that he alone takes center stage and everything that can be known about him is known through the works he does among men. And in the saving of men, something magnificent is made known. One.

Mercy and grace and loving kindness, men are saved not because of themselves, but in spite of themselves, you owe your salvation. If you are indeed saved, you owe your salvation to God. When this comes up in the book of Deuteronomy.

Why has God loved Israel? He answers with a tauntology, with a taunt. He says, I've loved you because I loved you. And what he is saying is this, Israel, my love for you had nothing to do with you.

It's the same. God did not set his love upon you because of some inherent worth he found in you or some virtue he loved you because he loved you. Not because of you, but in spite of you, now, do you see why the true gospel of Jesus Christ is so offensive to a humanistic culture? We are a culture that has sought to tear down every.

Alter to the one true God to set man on top of his own altar in America today, and in most of its Christianity or so-called Christianity, man is the center of all things. God does everything for man. We're humanistic

considering ourselves to be wise.

We became fools and changed the glory of the incorruptible God. Began to worship that which is corruptible, men and beasts and reptiles were humanistic, and therefore we hate it when someone starts talking about man as fallen, man as corrupt, man as sinful, man as having no worth, man as needing a savior, man, those who are saved are saved not because of them, but in spite of them. We hate it because it tears down man and we'll have no part of it.

He says, why have I saved you? He saved you for his own name, like what R.C. Sproul says. God saves us. From himself, for himself and by himself, he said, what do you mean, brother, just listen for a moment when someone says I've been saved, I always ask them from what? From what? Well, from sin, no sin is an inanimate thing.

What? From what are you saved? Do you know what the proper theological answer is? If you have been saved, you have been saved from God because God was the one coming after you. God was the one who had a problem with you. God was the one judging you.

God was the one, according to Jesus Christ, in chapter three of the book of John, God was the one who was pouring wrath down upon your head. So when we're saved, we're saved from God. And why are we saved for God? Not for 40 days of purpose, not for a purpose driven life, not for your best life.

Now, were you saved? You were saved for him, and if he wants to exalt you or tear you down, you were saved for him. If he wants to put you in a life of ease and comfort, it is for him. And if he wants to send you to the most vile place in the world to die there as a martyr, it's for him.

We don't like that. What about me? It's for him. He saved you for himself and he saved you by himself.

It's not one percent, one percent you and ninety nine percent God, it's 100 percent God. And if it'd been any other thing, you would not be saved. You and Jesus don't have your own thing going now.

Now, he says that he saves this nation. But now we've got to come to grips with some things, some things that are extremely important. Verse 24, what happens? What happens when someone is truly saved throughout Ezekiel, we have something magnificent in different parts of Ezekiel, we have these wonderful illustrations of the doctrine of regeneration.

What happens when the spirit of God hovers over a bunch of dry, dead bones and lifts them to life? The doctrine of regeneration, regenerate, reanimate, give life to. And that's what we have here in Ezekiel 36. What happens when someone has truly been made alive, truly been saved, truly been born again? What is the evidence? Well, first, in verse 24, I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands.

Now, here's something you don't hear of very often. When God saves a man or a woman or a child or a youth. You will begin to see a work of separation in their life.

God will begin to separate them from this world. Now, what I mean this world, I'm talking about everything, everything in our culture, everything in our society that contradicts the nature and will of God that stands in opposition to who God is and stands in opposition to his purposes. God begins to separate his newborn child from them.

He guards over that child zealously. One of the greatest honors in my life is to be a father. One of the greatest hardships in my life is having to leave my children at times.

Oh, I guard over my children. I'm careful to discipline them. I will protect them with my life.

I will lay it down. How is it that we think such mean and simple thoughts about God? What would you think about me if I let my children, from the moment they were born until they left the house at 18, I let them run wild and do absolutely anything they wanted to do? What would you say about me? That I was a derelict father? Yes, you would. That I was wrong? Yes.

That I was not just? Yes. That I did not love even. If you're biblical, that's what you would say about me.

Yet how is it that you say that God has a whole bunch of children in the United States of America and yet he lets them run wild and live in sin and follow the devil all the days of their life until he brings them home? The very things you demand from an earthly father, you don't even believe your heavenly father accomplishes. My dear friend, God zealously guards his children. And that's why it says in Hebrews chapter 12 that if you claim to be a child of God and yet you are without discipline, there is no reality of God disciplining you and training you and teaching you and leading you and guarding over you zealously, then you're an illegitimate child.

You're a false professor. You've never come to know him, he's never come to know you. You see, God will begin to separate us from the things he hates.

From the things that are wrong, he will begin, he doesn't drag us, but he so works in our heart to change us that he begins to cause a separation between us and that which is evil inwardly. The true Christian has a changed heart. So they begin to hate the things that God hates and to love the things that God loves.

A work of separation now, but notice here something very important for I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. Now, a relationship with God is not simply defined by the statement, thou shalt not. God does not separate us from the evil in this world in order just to separate us from the evil that is in this world.

That's a pretty pitiful existence. You're caught out there in limbo with nothing. You've been separated from this world, but that is all that's not what God does.

God begins to work in our heart to separate us from sin, to separate us from that which defiles in order to gather us to him. And to bring us into the land of his will. He brings us out of the world in order to bring us to him.

And someone who simply separates themselves from the world is basically a legalist. Taking pride in their moral purity and their separation, let me put it this way, as I said earlier, I think this week, when I married my wife, my relationship with my wife changed. But also my relationship with every other woman on the face of the earth changed the moment I said I do to her, I said I don't to every other woman on the face of the earth.

It's the same way with separation. We say I don't to the world in order to say I do to God, you see, very important, very important. Now, so when God saves a man or a woman or a child or a youth, one of the things that you're going to begin to see is that their life changes with regard to their relationship to the world.

Now, let me ask you a question, is that a reality in your life? I'm not talking about perfection. But since you have claimed to come to know Christ. Can you see God working in your life, in the attitudes of your heart, exposing sin, leading you farther and farther away from the things that displease him, bringing you to himself, to love him, to cherish him, to have a relationship with him? Can you see that in your life? Because my dear friend, if you claim to know Christ and that Christ knows you and you're still a lover of the world and there's no work of separation, no growth in godliness or as the author of Hebrew says, no holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

You've got a problem. Is there a reality of God working in your life? Sometimes I'll ask people this, do you feel sometimes like you're a prisoner? That everybody else is just running free and can do almost anything they want to do, and the moment you step out of the box, just God comes. I mean, it's like you're a prisoner, but you recognize it's good.

That's because you're a child. You're a child of God, and he zealously watches over his children. Let me share with you something.

It says, Jacob, I loved and Esau, I hated. Now, in Hebrew, hated there means hated. If it meant something else, they wrote something else in English.

It does. It means Jacob, I loved Esau, my wrath, my displeasure, my anger abided upon him. That's exactly what it means.

Now, if you sit under preaching that tries to take that term and make it say something other than hatred, you're sitting under a perfect example of watered down American preaching. But it says, Jacob, I loved Esau, I hated. But when you study both of their lives, you find something absolutely amazing.

God blessed Jacob. God blessed Esau. He fulfilled every promise he ever made Esau and to Abraham about Esau, he did.

As a matter of fact, when Jacob came back into the promised land, Esau was so blessed he didn't need anything that Jacob offered him. So how is it that God demonstrated his love toward Jacob and his hatred toward Esau? Well, there's only one difference between the two men. God let Esau do absolutely anything he wanted to do, and God beat the living daylights out of Jacob.

Look at it. Do we see one time where God is disciplining Esau? No. But we see in Jacob's life that God is literally every day.

Putting the rod upon him so that when he comes back into the land, he is limping, but he's God's man. He's God's child. Do you see God? Coming to you.

To keep you, to discipline you, to train you. Now, when I say discipline, realize this, that discipline in the believer's life is never punitive. Once a person is in Christ, God never again comes to them as a judge, even when he judges them, he does not come to them as a judge, but as a father, when he disciplines them, he comes to them as a father.

A human illustration would be this. At the moment I'm disciplining one of my boys, at that very moment, I still love them so much I would die a thousand deaths for them. I do not discipline them as a judge.

But as a father now. So he says, what's going to be one of the evidences when a person is truly born again, it's going to be this. God's going to do a work of separation in their life and a work of gathering them unto him.

Now, verse twenty five, he says, then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. My, my, look at that, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean so much for the thing of God really wants to work in your life, but he just can't do it because you won't cooperate. I remember when I was a little boy, I lived on the farm.

You can tell farm boys just get close to him. You know exactly if they're a farm boy or not because they've got dirt in every crevice of their body. And I would have dirt in my neck, dirt on elbows, behind the knees, everywhere, dirt, dirt, be playing out all day in the dirt farm boy.

And my mom, I'd come in, I'd say she'd say, take a bath. One day I realized I was about nine years old and I realized I'm a man, I don't need to take a bath. So mom said, take a bath.

I said, no, I don't think so. This was back when it was legal to kill your children. My mom looked at me and she said this, you will take a bath.

And that's all she had to say. That's all she had to say. Isn't it amazing my mother has more sovereign authority over me than your God? I am so tired of hearing evangelical Americans say God wants to do so much, but he just can't because you won't cooperate.

Just look at the text for a minute. Just look, verse twenty four, I will take you from the nations. Look at that.

He doesn't say I hope to. I want to. Gee, I hope everyone cooperates.

He says, I'm going to do a work of salvation and this is how it's going to happen. I will take you from the nations. I will bring you into your own land.

I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols. I will give you a new heart.

I will put a new spirit within you. I will remove your heart of stone. I will give you a heart of flesh.

I will put my spirit within you. I will cause you to walk in my statutes and you'll be careful to observe my ordinances. Now, what do you see there? Do you believe in the inspiration of Scripture? What do you see there? You see a God who says, for my own glory, I'm going to do a work of salvation with an impossible people and the work I begin, I will finish.

I'll do everything I plan on doing. And that's why they call him Lord. Of Lords, King of Kings, the absolute sovereign, that pagan King Nebuchadnezzar knows more than most preachers today in America.

Because he said he does whatever he wants to do in the heavens and on the earth, and he lifts up his hand and no man can hold it down. He holds his hand down on the desk and not one man can pry it up. He will do it.

And why will he do it? I'll tell you why. His reputation is riding upon it. Do you remember when he brought the Israelites out of Egypt? And he tested Moses on that fatal day when Israel committed its greatest crime against God, God tested Moses and said, Moses, get out of the way, I'm going to kill them all and I'll make

a people out of you.

And Moses said, no, Lord. Because your enemies will say that although you were strong enough to bring them out of the land of bondage, you were not able to bring them into their own land. And that's what most preachers are teaching today.

God is strong enough to save you and get you to heaven, but he isn't strong enough to change you. He can't finish the job. But the name of God, he is demonstrating his power every time he saves a man, he will finish or perfect the work that he begins.

That's why Paul said with such confidence, confident of this very thing, that he who begins a good work in you will finish it. So he says here in 36, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean going back to my mother. All right.

So I get in the bathtub, you know, farm boys can swim in ponds, they can play in the rain all day, but something happens when they get in the shower. Water is dangerous for some reason, I've never understood it, but I always felt that I was afraid of that stuff coming out of the shower. And so I would get a little bit of water and dab it on me, jump out, grab a white towel . And turn it into a black towel.

And everything was going just fine until my mother walked in the door. My mother worked on a farm, she had hands rougher than a man. She put a washcloth between her hand and our body because her hands were so calloused and rough.

When my mother got through cleaning me, it looked like the kind of glory of God was coming forth from my body. What did she say? I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. God says to his children, I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean.

I'll make sure. Isn't it amazing you have an average congregation on an average Sunday. And most of them live in sin without any thought of God.

God throughout the entire week. But a remnant of that group. It's as though God guards every moment of their life when they watch something off colored, God convicts them of sin.

When they say things they shouldn't say, God convicts them of sin when they walk in a way that they should not walk. God makes it known to them. He's before them and behind them and beside them and above them and below them.

Why does he treat one group of children one way and another group of children the other? It's because the one group doesn't belong to him and the other does. You say, well, I never heard of such a thing. Then you need to change churches.

And he says, I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols. Now, this is not a warning. This is a promise.

It's a wonderful promise. And before I go into the thing about regeneration, let me just say this to the Christian, some of you young guys. Sometimes we get to a point where there's a besetting sin in our life and we struggle with it and struggle with it, we come to believe, well, this is just the way it's going to be.

This is just one area in my life I'm never going to get victory over. That's not true. God says he's going to cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols.

It's not talking about perfection in the Christian life or a Christian is sinless, but what it's saying is he will work in such a way through the course of your life that you will gain greater and greater victory over the things that once beset you. Now, once say something here. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols.

I would have to say that if I were to take one verse out of Scripture that I think most describes my 25 year pilgrimage of walking with God, it would be this. One of the greatest evidences that gives me assurance that I have come to know him is I have seen this in my life, not that I stand before you without any idols or without any filthiness. No, but over 25 years, I can see God disciplining.

To work these things out of my life. I always kid people, I say, you know, there's more metal in me than a Tonka truck. Both my hips have been replaced, my wrist is all full of metal, I hurt right now, my wrist right now is broken.

The problem is my broken wrist doesn't feel any different than my one that's not broke. God has beaten my body and no TV preacher, it wasn't the devil. It was God being very faithful.

To do whatever must be done to conform a stubborn sheep to the image of a son, and I would kiss the rod. That worketh to change me more than the blessings of this world. That might cause my heart to betray my God.

When my little boys can't sleep. Sometimes I will sing them a song. From old Keith Green, my son, I am weak and I'm trembling for the Lord, I am always remembering, oh, what a strong shepherd holds you in his arms, he will break you and make you his own.

A few years ago, there was a song that was very popular. It was the song I've been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I, but Christ who lives within me.

I was preaching several years ago and. I happen to mention that I sang that song many times in moments of pain and distress when I was working in Peru during the war and working in the jungles and all alone and hurting, and I'd sing that song. And I said that that night, not knowing that the author of the song was sitting in the congregation and about ready to sing, you know what I noticed about that man, he looked like.

Stained glass window. Something about his character and his personality, you know, how stained glass window is made. You take all this glass and you lay it on a table, you get a hammer and you just beat it to pieces.

You've got all these fragmented pieces of glass. And then the master, the artist comes and begins to put them all back together and it creates the most beautiful, illuminating window. But the cracks remain.

The lines remain, and that's what he looked like. God had beaten him. And broken him.

But by doing that, he made something through which the glory of God would shine. Oh, my dear friend. You can have your prosperity and your TV preachers that promote it.

You can have your health, your wealth, your wisdom and everything else. Take it. The goal of Christianity is conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, to be like him, to be like him.

And God will use every manner of thing to do that thing with Samuel Chadwick. I'm not sure, but I think it was Samuel Chadwick. He was walking out one day down a country lane trying to think about what the Lord would want him to preach.

And he comes to a blacksmith shop and he sees this giant monster of a man with this huge mallet pounding upon an anvil, a piece of metal upon an anvil. And he sees standing right beside this monster of a man, this tiny framed man with a suit on, standing there pointing at different things. So he walks over and he says, you know, to the man dressed finally.

What are you even doing here? This monster of a man's doing all the work and the finally dressed man looked at Samuel Chadwick and said. I'm the blacksmith. I'm the artist.

This man beating with this mallet, this monster railing against this anvil knows nothing. He hits only where I tell him to hit. He hits only as hard or as soft as I tell him to hit.

He thinks he's destroying a piece of metal. I'm creating a work of art. Thus, you have the relationship between the devil and God in the believer's life.

The devil will stand there and beat thinking he's destroying you. But in the sovereignty, absolute sovereignty of God, he can only hit exactly where God says to hit and he can only hit as hard as God tells him. That's a wonderful thing.

That's a wonderful thing. So he says, I will cleanse you from your filthiness and all your idols. Is that a reality in your life? Can you see God doing that? Isn't it amazing if you ever said this, man, some people can just lie and cheat and commit murder, they can do anything and nothing happens to them.

I tell one white lie and the whole world falls apart on top of me. If that's true, you need to praise God. You need to praise God.

Now, how does he do this? How does he make us clean? How does he cause us to follow him? Does he wrap a leather whip around our necks and drag us? What does he do now? He changes us. And that's what we have here. It says, moreover, I will give you a new heart and a new spirit within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Now, the word flesh, especially in the Greek New Testament, always refers to that fallen or mostly refers to that fallen aspect of the Christian, that unredeemed part that we really can't put our finger on, but it's there. That's the flesh. But in this case, that's not what he's talking about.

He's talking about the difference between something inanimate and something animate. If I have if I have take the largest man in Las Vegas and make a stone statue out of him, I can prick him. I can prod him.

I can kick him. I can punch him. And he is not going to do anything.

Why? It's inanimate. It is not alive. It is stone.

But you take the largest man, strongest man in Las Vegas and put him up here on the platform. And if he will let me get him under the tender part of his arm with my two fingers and pinch and twist with all my might, I am surely going to evoke a response. It's the difference between animate living or an inanimate dead.

Now, understand this, if you can understand this, you'll solve a lot of problems for you. The Bible teaches that men are born spiritually dead. You understand that now dead is dead.

Dead, not mostly dead, dead, dead with a capital D dead. Now, that presents a problem if men are spiritually dead, how can they ever come to God? How can they ever come to Christ? How can they even hear his voice if they're dead? Let me give you an example. There's a dead man laying on this platform and I walk over to him and I said, look, there's a hospital quite near.

And if you'll just get up and follow me over there, they'll put these things on you, full electricity, and they'll hit your heart with them and you'll come back to life. Come on. He doesn't move.

I look at him, I say, what's the matter? You want to be dead for the rest of your life? Get up. Now I can stand there all day. What's going to happen? Absolutely nothing.

Why? He's dead. Dead. Now, let's use Lazarus as an example, very good example.

There's a problem there when Jesus tells Lazarus to come forth. What's that problem? He's dead. You say, yeah, but Jesus can make him a lot.

No, understand. He said, Lazarus, come forth. If Lazarus is dead, he can't hear him.

You ever think about that? If Lazarus is dead, when Jesus says, come forth, he's talking to a dead man. Dead men don't hear. So when Jesus said, Lazarus, come forth, he also at the same time had to impart life to Lazarus so he could hear and come forth.

And that's what we don't understand in evangelism today. We preach all day long. But unless the spirit of God gives them life, they're not going to hear and they're not going to come forth.

It is a supernatural work of God. And you can't manipulate it, even though you sing four hundred and thirty eight stanzas of just as I am. God must do something supernatural.

Let me give you another illustration. And I know it's late, but hey, you came to hear preaching, so let's just continue and don't worry about me, I'm not tired. I want you to think about something here, the way preachers preach.

Let's say that I had a curtain here and behind it was standing Jesus. There are preachers that say today, all we need to do is preach Jesus. Tell people about Jesus, and if people see Jesus when we're preaching, they're going to come to him.

Blind. Well, that would be true, except one problem, the audience you're preaching to is blind. Lost men are blind, but the Bible says spiritually blind, so we could pull back the curtain with our preaching and show the audience Jesus.

But if the audience is blind, they're not going to see anything no matter how far we pull back the curtain. You see that? And you say, you're right, Brother Paul, that was silly of me, I should not be so superficial in order for men to come to Christ, we need to preach Jesus, we need to reveal Jesus to them in our preaching, but the spirit of God must come and give them sight so that with that sight they can see Jesus. And if they see Jesus, they'll come to him.

No, they won't. Because there's a problem, an ontological problem, the problem of their nature. If you show this beautiful, righteous, holy Jesus.

And you open up the eyes of sinful, wicked men. When those sinful, wicked men look at the perfect, holy Christ, they will hate him. They will not come to him, they will run from him.

You see, you have to understand ontology, you have to understand the idea of nature. Wicked men hate righteousness. So if you have a bunch of lost people without Christ, born dead, born in sin, born in corruption, and you give them sight and you show them Jesus, the Jesus they see, they're going to hate him more than they ever have.

That's why Paul says in the book of Romans chapter seven, that the more you press the law upon an unconverted man, the more he kicks against it because he hates it. That is why Paul says in Romans that it's in ungodliness and unrighteousness that men suppress the truth they know about God. Men are evil.

God is holy. Evil men hate God. And the more they know about him, the more they hate.

So for a man to truly come to know Christ, what must happen? We must preach Christ. The spirit of God must give them sight. But not only that.

The spirit of God must take out their heart of stone. And put in its place a heart of flesh. He must take out that dead spiritual mass, that dead defiled nature, and replace it with a new heart, a new nature recreated in the image of God.

So what happens when someone's born again? This is what happens. Christ is presented, but that God hating Christ, hating sin, loving heart of theirs that would reject Christ by the work of the spirit of God, it is so called taken out and in its place is put a new heart, a new nature recreated in the image of God and true righteousness and true holiness. And with that new heart and that new sight, they look upon Christ.

They see him as altogether lovely and they are irresistibly drawn to him. You present a beautiful Christ to a wicked heart and they'll hate him. You present a beautiful Christ to a new heart recreated in the image of God through the work of the Holy Spirit.

And they can have nothing but Christ. They must have Christ. Now, let's go on.

I will put my spirit within you. Look at that, God comes to dwell. Within a man.

And yet he remains unchanged. The heavens themselves cannot contain him. That spirit hovered over chaos and created a universe, and yet he can dwell within the heart of a man and the man not be affected in the least.

No, that's not true. Then why do we say these things? It's the only way we can explain having large churches full of carnal, wicked people. That's why.

I'll put my spirit within you and cause you that word can be make you. No, God can't make you do anything. No, God can make you do absolutely anything he wants.

Well, God can't violate my will. God can do anything. God's going to violate a lot of people's will on the day he throws them in hell.

Don't you say God, he thwarts the wills of kings. He stops angels in their tracks. He's God, you see what we've done in America, we've created this God who is subservient to the wills of wicked men.

No, not at all. Not at all. He says, I will put my spirit within them and I will cause them to walk in my statutes.

But again, we must be careful here because he doesn't cause them by force. He causes them to walk because he's put his spirit within them and he's given them a new heart. Now, let me explain it to you this way.

Let me use an example may help you. Let's say that I become the pastor of a church. I'm brand new in town.

Someone tells me that there's this guy over there in the trailer right over there from the church and he hasn't been in church in five years and we need to go over and talk to him. So I go over and talk to him and we're in Alabama. OK, so where everybody's polite to the preacher.

So I go, I'm in Alabama and I walk up to the trailer. He sees me coming, throws that door open, says, well, come on in, preacher. So I go on in.

He said, you want some tea? I said, well, I would think I would love to have some tea. And then after we talk a little bit, it gets serious and I say, I'm the new preacher here and they tell me you haven't been in church in five years. You're right, preacher.

I haven't been in church in five years. I need to start going to church. I just need to do the right thing.

I need to start going to church. OK, they tell me you've been pretty much the wild man with the ladies. Yet you're you're right again, preacher.

You're right. I am and I just need to stop it. I just need to stop it and I need to do the right thing.

I just need to be faithful to my wife. I just need to do the right thing. And then I said, they tell me pretty much the drinker.

Oh, yeah, I drink, I drink, just I drink there. You look in the fridge, preacher, I won't lie to you. I need to stop it.

I just need to stop doing that stuff and I just need to do the right thing. So you think, wow, brought him back to Christ, praise God. No, you know what you have just seen? A lost man.

That's what you've seen. Because you know what he's saying? You're right, preacher, I need to stop doing all the wicked things I love and start doing all the righteous things I hate so that I can go to heaven. My dear friend, when God saves a man, he changes his nature.

He becomes a new creature. He wants to do righteousness. He hates wickedness.

And when he does fall into wickedness, it tears him apart because he's a new creature. A Christian is not somebody. Who stays away from all the wicked things he loves and clings to all the righteous things he hates so that he can go to heaven, the fear of the Christian is not going to hell, the fear of the Christian is being separated from Christ.

It's a new creature. We give an example from Charles Spurgeon. Let's say that we had a pig in the back there.

A hog, swine, whatever you want to call it, it's back there in the back doors. And then I put here the finest meal that can be bought in Las Vegas, and I put here over on the other side a barrel of slop and I tell you, loose him and let him go. Let the hog go.

Where's the hog going now? Most of you don't look like farm people, but you probably can figure out where the hog's going. It's going straight to the bucket of slop. Why? Because it's a pig.

That's what pigs do. He does what he is. He loves what he is by nature.

He has the nature of a pig and pig natures do pig things. But let's say he runs down here as he does, and what's he going to do? He's going to stick his head in that bucket. He's going to be eating slop.

He's going to be wiggling his tail. He's going to be so happy. But let's say in one moment I have the power to reach forth and change that pig into a man.

What's he going to do? He's going to throw his head back out of that bucket. The thing that he delighted in, he's going to be disgusted with. The thing that he was gobbling down and that felt whole in his belly is now going to nauseate him and he's going to throw it up.

He is going to writhe with disgust and then he's going to turn around and look at you and be ashamed. I just described your conversion. I just described you.

You didn't describe me, then you're not a Christian. Men. Are born in sin.

The Bible says men love sin, Job said, they drink down iniquity like it was water. But when God changes a man, when he saves a man, he changes his nature from a sin loving nature to a sin hating nature, from a God hating nature to a God loving nature. That's what happens in conversion.

Now you understand why I preach in a lot of churches once now, but here I want you to think of this. I'm not the prophet or the son of a prophet. Everything I say.

I must look into church history, does anyone else say the same thing? Just about everyone else. Until you get to America in the middle of the 20th century, where man all of a sudden started becoming better. And God started becoming smaller and salvation, not that big a deal.

Never forget, I was in Peru. I was missing worship in my own language and someone sent me a cassette and I looked on it, it said, amazing grace. And I thought, well, great.

I put it in my little cassette player. Turned it on, listen to the first verse, stop the cassette player, grab the tape, threw it in the trash can. Because this is what it said.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a man like me. I thought to myself, I think when it started out, it was a worm like me and then it went to a wretch like me, or maybe I have those two reversed. I don't know.

So we've gone from a worm to a wretch to a man. We've improved. There's only one problem.

Men don't need to be saved, wretches do. And if you're not a wretch, you have no need of grace. Oh, my dear friend.

It feels like an uphill battle sometimes. We live in a world where preachers smile. And have nice hair and talk to you about your best life now, who don't want you to be sad and want you to be filled with self-esteem and they're lying to you.

They're not going to talk about sin because they don't want anyone to feel bad. That's what Jesus talked about. They tell you that they don't preach on hell because they just want to preach the words of Jesus.

Do you know this? Any man who tells you that is either ignorant of Scripture or he's a liar. Do you want to know why? If it were not for the teachings of Jesus, we would know almost nothing about hell. You find almost nothing about hell in the Old Testament.

Just glimpses. You find almost nothing about hell in the writings of the apostles. Just glimpses.

Almost everything we know about hell comes from the teachings of Jesus who taught more about hell and sin than he did heaven. Be careful about the Christianity that you embrace, because it might not be Christianity at all. There will come a time, doesn't Scripture tell us, where they will amass teachers who will tickle their ears.

What does that mean to tickle someone's ears is to make someone feel good. And how do you make men feel good? You make them feel good about themselves, but not tell them the truth. Christianity is about life and death.

It's about heaven and hell. Salvation and damnation. Choose you this day whom you will serve.

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? You cannot be my disciple unless you hate your mother and your father. Lord, don't you know they were offended when you said that? That's why they're leaving. Do you want to go to? He said, oh, my dear friend, I have greater respect.

For an atheist or claims to be an atheist, because there's really no such thing, all men believe in God, they're just lying about it when they tell you they don't. But I have more respect for a man who disavows and disowns Christianity entirely. Then someone who will take Christianity and morph it into something useful for carnal men, if you disagree with me tonight, you have that right and I won't be angry with you, but I'll challenge you.

To come up with scripture. With scripture. And talk to me.

I'll talk to you all night. Tell me these things are not so. Tell me it's another way.

Show me. You know, preaching. We're going to end right here, preaching is dangerous.

You see, it's dangerous for me if I don't preach. According to scripture, then the book of James tells me that on the day of judgment, I will undergo greater condemnation for claiming for myself the title of teacher. So preaching is dangerous for me.

But preaching can be dangerous for you. How, if what I'm teaching is not true? Then the preaching is not dangerous, you're not bound by it. If what I say is not conformed to scripture, then you can walk out of here and you're totally free, don't think another moment about it.

But if what I say is true, then now the danger is on your side. Because you will be held accountable. For the truth, you have learned that's preaching.

That's preaching now, I've been given an invitation now for about an hour or more, so we don't need to give another one. I will tell you this, if you're concerned about your heart, your life, concerned about heaven and hell and you need to talk to someone, I'll talk to you all night, all night. So that's the invitation.

That's the invitation. And don't be discouraged, church. Whether we preach.

The 60 people. Or six thousand doesn't matter. And.

God, where two or more gathered. He's there. We give you just a word of encouragement.

Several years ago in Peru, many, many years ago, I was pastoring like Lacey Del Salvador in Barranco. The Church of the Savior in the district of Lima called Barranco. And it was the World Cup.

Now, for Americans, that doesn't mean a whole lot, but for everyone outside of America, that's the biggest deal going. The World Cup. I mean, life stops in Latin America when the World Cup is on.

Well, the World Cup was in full swing. And I was going up the stairs of the church to the roof. We do a lot on the roof in Peru because there's well, there's no air conditioning and the roof is a lot cooler.

And as I was going up there. On that roof to get something, because we were closing down the church, it was time to leave about nine o'clock at night, a little Indian woman, I mean, she's no more than five feet tall named Delia. Well, I was coming back down, actually, she started coming up the stairs and she had a bottle of a Coke bottle that was empty plastic one.

Well, it was empty of Coke, but it's full of water. She's going upstairs and I was coming down. I said, Delia, you know, vamos a cerrar la iglesia, we're going to shut the church.

We need to leave. She goes, oh, I'm staying. I said, what? So I'm staying.

God's told me to pray. She went up on that roof for seven days and she fasted and prayed. You know, it's amazing.

Literally billions of people. Are watching the World Cup, but God was watching one tiny. Uneducated Indian woman on the top of a roof.

Crying out to him all throughout this city right now, people are praising the gods of gold and silver and fame and lust and entertainment. That's a god in this country, maybe the biggest. As Leonard Ravenhill used to say, on the tombstone of this country, it'll be written they entertain themselves to death.

God doesn't care about any of that. His eyes are on a few people that belong to him. Gathered.

In his name. As he told the church, Asia Minor, I know where you dwell. The very throne of Satan.

But you have held on to the faith. You say. So as Jesus would say, little flock.

Don't be frightened and don't be dismayed. He said these things would happen, let's pray, father. Help us.

Strengthen us. Lead us. Father, if there's someone here that doesn't know you.

That they might know you is our prayer. In Jesus name, amen.

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