

I Am Under Obligation

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the urgency and obligation of preaching the gospel as a reflection of God's glory and the transformative power it holds for all people.

Duration: 1:05:15

Scripture: Genesis 6:13-14, Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:14-17, Hebrews 4:14-15

Topics: "Obligation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the eternal journey of discovering the beauties and excellencies of God in Jesus Christ. He explains that eternal life begins when one comes to know Jesus Christ and it never ends. The preacher highlights the Apostle Paul's sense of obligation to share the Gospel with all people, regardless of their background or status. He emphasizes that the Gospel contradicts everything in the world and challenges listeners to examine their own hearts and desire for heaven.

Transcript

Chapter 1. Beginning in verse 14, I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, but the righteous man shall live by faith.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I come before you in the name of your Son, and we would have no strength to stand, lift our voice to you, no confidence. We would be as shattered as glass.

We would be twisted like bark. We would be shaking like a leaf, consumed. But for that great mediator, the God-man, your Son, Jesus Christ, God, I praise you for him, a ladder that reaches to the bottom, and his humanity, a ladder that reaches to the top, and his deity.

Father, I pray that you would get glory for your Son through what is spoken here. Lord, knowing that the gospel is not so much words as power, through the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a man, Father, prove once again that you know how to get glory for yourself and speak through rocks and donkeys. In Jesus' name, amen.

Where do we begin in talking about the gospel of Jesus Christ? The first thing that we need to understand is that we do not live in America. We do not live in a place that is gospel hardened. That is one of the first things that we must understand.

The people basically in the United States of America are not hardened to the gospel. The problem is preachers are ignorant of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the gospel that for the most part is being preached out of most pulpits today is no gospel at all because it does not conform to the gospel as revealed in the New Testament.

When we speak about the gospel, we are speaking about exceedingly great news, good news, joyful news. But that joyful news is not found in anything the gospel may cause so much as it is found in the gospel itself. Marveling not in the benefits, although there are great benefits to the gospel, but marveling in the gospel itself because it tells a story and it reveals the glory of God in a way that no other thing can.

We rejoice in the gospel because of what it is. We look first of all at the holiness and the righteousness of God. And we ask ourselves who can approach him, who can come near his throne, who can ascend to that holy hill? We look at ourselves and we realize that we don't have clean hands and we don't have pure hearts.

We realize if we realize anything at all from Scripture that man is radically depraved, inclined towards him. He desires to disrobe God, to dethrone God, to knock God from his throne and place himself there. He wars against God, man does, and he also wars against other men.

So we know that men are not clean. We know that God is holy and God is just, and because of that, he must call all men to account. And if God were to call men to account in perfect justice, there would be no hope for any man.

But herein lies the love of God that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God became a man and walked on this earth and lived life as a perfect man, completely standing in our place and completely fulfilling the law of God. And then according to the predetermined plan of God, he went to that tree and on that tree he bore our sin.

And in bearing our sin, the Father forsook him and he was crushed under the wrath of Almighty God. And it was necessary to do so because God is a just God. He cannot simply pass over sin.

Justice must be satisfied. Wrath must be appeased. And so someone had to die on that tree.

Jesus Christ stood in your law place, in the law place of his people, and was crushed under the wrath of Almighty God. And the proof that his sacrifice was indeed a true sacrifice and an acceptable sacrifice is that he was raised on the third day. That is God's public declaration and vindication of his son, that his sacrifice was accepted and the sins of God's people have been atoned for.

That same Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven and there is no need to make him Lord of your life, but he is Lord of your life because God has made this Jesus whom we crucify, both Lord and Christ. And that same Christ for the last two thousand years through the power of the Holy Spirit has been calling a people for himself. He has been building, he has been forming, he has been shaping and orchestrating a bride.

And when the final member of that bride is gathered to him, he will return. He will return to call his people home and he will return to judge the living and the dead. And everyone not found gathered to Christ will be

scattered in judgment.

As it says in the book of Revelation, there was no place found for them. That's just a small version, a very weak outline of what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Now, I want us to look for a moment at verse 14.

Paul said, I am under obligation, both the Greeks and the barbarians, both to the wise and the foolish under obligation. Now, I want you to recognize something here that is very, very important. He was not under obligation to baptize people.

He was not under obligation to grow megachurches. He was not under obligation to make the gospel relevant. He was not under obligation to win friends.

He was under obligation to do one thing, to preach the message that mesmerized him. It was said of John Wesley that evangelism was his magnificent obsession. I can say of the apostle Paul that the gospel was his magnificent obsession.

You see, he had caught a heavenly vision. He had caught a glimpse of what God had done for his people in Christ, and it totally captured him. It imprisoned him.

It constrained him. It changed every fabric of his being, that cross of Christ. And so he was under obligation to preach it.

But I want you to see something. We skip over so much today. We try to put people under obligation to preach the gospel when as yet they do not understand it, do not know it.

It does not control their lives. They've not had an encounter with the gospel of Jesus Christ. One of the greatest needs today, not only to lost secular America, but to the very people who congregate themselves in the name of being a church, is to preach the gospel to them.

Because once they catch a glimpse of what God has done for them in Christ, nothing else will matter. Absolutely nothing. They will feel under obligation, but not according to the obligation of law, not according to the obligation of condemnation.

They will not be manipulated and coerced to share the gospel because it's something they ought to do. They will do it because the gospel has become the very treasure of their life and the only thing that they can think about at night, what God has done for them in the person of Jesus Christ. Several years ago, when I was in seminary, I was praying about should I go to Peru as a missionary? Should I go to Ph.D.? I wanted to get my Ph.D. I wanted to go off to Europe or somewhere and study.

It was all pride. It was all flesh. But I remember sitting down and talking to two professors and they said, well, what do you want to study? What do you want to do? What do you want to write about? And I said, I want to study the gospel.

I want to write about the gospel of Jesus Christ. And their reply was, that's already been done. I have spent the last 10 years of my life consumed with one thing.

Do not ask me to preach about eschatology because I understand nothing. And I'm convinced I'm in pretty good grounds. I don't think anyone else understands anything about it either.

I know little about eschatology. I know little about arguing apologetically with regard to creation and evolution. There's one thing that I've cast my eye upon and I can't pull my eye off of it.

It is what God has done for me in the cross of Jesus Christ. And it is that one message that I feel obligated to preach, the cross of Christ. Don't you understand? It hasn't already been done.

It hasn't been studied enough. The whole gist of everything that the cross is has not been captured and put down on paper. Don't you realize that the only thing you're going to be doing throughout all of eternity, which is quite a long time, is trying to trace out what God has done for you in Jesus Christ.

The only reason eternity is not going to be boring. It's not because there's gates of pearl and streets of gold and so on and so forth. I mean, you can only swing so much on a gate.

The only reason that heaven is not going to be a boorish hell is that you will spend all of eternity tracking down something you cannot comprehend. And every measure and every word that you understand will fill you with such ecstasy that if you are not supernaturally strengthened by the power of God, it would drive you mad. Your task in heaven will be like a hunter chasing a deer, tracking down a fleet-footed animal that is so fast and so great you'll never catch it.

But remember that eternal life does not start the day you die or the day trumpets blow. It starts the day that you come to know Jesus Christ. And so your journey of tracking out the beauties and the splendors and the excellencies of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ begins on the day of your conversion and never, never ends.

Paul was under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and the foolish. Every manner of man, he was under obligation to speak to that man. You know, when you're a missionary and most missionaries go and work with the poor.

And most people outside of this country are very poor compared to the people who live in this country. Missionaries don't work with the poor. But I remember one missionary, just a wonderful, wonderful missionary in Peru and his family, who went to work among the rich.

And a bit he was made fun of and a bit he was mocked to have a ministry among the wealthy. But what you need to understand is he took the hardest group, the most difficult people to work with, and he went for them. And it was more noble, his task, than those of us who went for the poor.

Because sometimes we go for the poor and the uneducated because it's a quite simple task. They don't make fun of you. They don't mock you.

You go there as an American, you feel somewhat superior. They listen to you. What am I trying to say? That we need to reach out to all categories of people with this gospel and we should not be intimidating.

Not because we have more power than they. Not because we want to subjugate them, for we're called on to serve them. It is not because we are more brilliant than they are and can argue our position.

It is simply because Jesus Christ has changed our lives and the gospel of Jesus Christ is continuing to permeate every aspect of our life. We're mesmerized by it. We want the world to know and we want the world to know, not just for the world's sake.

You see, that's where people go wrong. So we need to preach the gospel for the sake of people, that is true, but that's not the primary motivation for preaching the gospel. And if it is your primary motivation, you will not last in preaching the gospel.

You go out as a missionary and you walk out into a plaza and you've got your little Bibles in your portable pulpit and your little microphone or megaphone. And you think you're going to go out there and preach because your heart is so filled up with love and you preach about five or ten minutes and get a large crowd around you. And then someone screams out, demon or heretic.

And before you know it, they throw you your pulpits, your books, your tracks and your pulpit out in the street. It takes more than concern for the welfare of men to stand back up, collect all your material and walk back in that plaza again and preach. The primary reason we preach the gospel is the glory of God, because above all things, the gospel is more for God than it is for man.

Christ died for men. Do not let anyone steal that from you. But first of all, Christ died for God, for His glory, that His attributes might be manifest.

The thing that compels us to preach the gospel to all men is simply this. God is worthy and ought to be preached. He ought to be preached.

And we see this with Paul. I'm under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to foolish. So for my part, I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

Now, when Paul uses the word gospel, we can all say that, well, he defined the gospel for us conceivably in 1 Corinthians 15, that the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins. He was buried and he was raised on the third day, according to the scriptures. We know that he defined the gospel that way.

And we know that every time he uses the gospel, he doesn't mean that specific definition. Sometimes he goes wider than that, talking about the full course of everything God has done in Christ. But what you need to understand about this passage is that Paul spent a lifetime preaching the same message.

He spent a literal lifetime preaching the same message. Now, how can you do that? I've always been mesmerized by the preaching of Noah. You know, it's the only thing that came out of his mouth.

You know, after years and years of preaching, I can imagine, you know, his children coming around him for devotion. You know, Dad, what's the devotion for the day? It's going to rain. Dad, you've been saying that for a hundred years.

He goes out and preach in the street. Noah, what's the word for the day? It's going to rain. Now, he was faithful in that as one compelled by God.

But there isn't much magic in the message that it's going to rain. There isn't there much to draw you. But we have been called to preach a singular message, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I have heard young men say, I mean, I preach this and preach this until I'm tired of preaching it. And I tell them, then you do not know it. Because if you ever tire of this message, you do not understand this message.

You don't know the beauty of this message. But most importantly, you don't understand what God has done for you in Christ. A man who understands the gospel could get in a pulpit and preach the same

message five times a day for the rest of his life and never tire of it.

If Christ is at the center and the cross is foremost. One of the things I'm most amazed about Charles Spurgeon, I know why he was such a great preacher. He only had one message.

I mean, I have the 65 or so volumes of every sermon he's ever preached. And if you go to every one of his sermons, he will start out no matter where he starts out. He ends in the same place every time Jesus crucified and resurrected from the dead.

I mean, after all that practice, you've got to pump out some good messages. And that's what I so love about Spurgeon. He would say, let more brilliant men deal with the second coming.

Let more brilliant men deal with this idea and that thing and this new wind and that strange teaching. No, I will stick to one thing, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ and preaching it to all men. Now, if there are any budding missionaries in the congregation, let me share something with you.

Missions today, by and large, is a lot of people doing very little. Because missions by and large in America today has become all theological. Just go to mission websites and you will find the most general, impotent, anemic, doctrinal statement you can possibly find.

The widest, the widest extension of truth. They would be as common as they can possibly be in order to take in as many people for their purpose. Missions is not about sending missionaries.

Missions is about sending truth, gospel truth, biblical truth through missionaries. And one of the things I want you to see is Paul preached to all types of men. He preached to the intellectual.

He preached to the religion. He preached to the barbarian, the slave, the wealthy slave owner. He preached to them all and the message was the same.

He did not have to change it. He did not have to package it in a different way in order to make it relevant. It is relevant because it's God's message.

We have the loss of the gospel in America today and it has influenced the way we do church. It has influenced the way we do absolutely everything. And it has influenced the way we do missions.

Everything now is about strategy. Everything now is about cultural sensitivity. Well, let me tell you this.

You do not have to be culturally sensitive if you're biblically accurate. You should be more worried about being sensitive to God than carnal men. Now, he says, I am under obligation.

Verse 15, I am eager. Oh, so eager, eager. Oh, give me an opportunity.

I don't have much time for young men seeking pulpits. I don't have much time for them. I hear so many young men.

So if I just want a chance to preach, I said, well, there's a mini street corner in this city that has no preacher standing upon it. You want to preach, preach, go out and preach. I shared this back at my home church a while back, and a young man took off immediately for the campus, got there in the biggest intersection of the thing and just reared back and started to preach.

Now, he doesn't preach that well, but I'll take him over 10,000 budding Spurgeons because you can teach him how to use the right language. You can't put a fire in him. Only God can do that.

You preach. He said, I'm eager to preach. Give me a chance to preach.

Let me tell you something. If you've seen the gospel after preaching it for 25 years, you will still be saying, give me a chance to preach. All I want to do is preach.

Declare the message, declare the message. Now, he goes on and he says this, for I'm not ashamed of the gospel. Let me tell you something, the flesh of the Apostle Paul had every right to be ashamed of the gospel.

The flesh of the Apostle Paul had every right to be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Why? Because the gospel of Jesus Christ contradicted everything in the world, every culture. Every society, every people group, every status, every economic stage, everything that there is in politics and literature.

Take everything of man, heap it up in a bag, bring it forward. And the gospel contradicts it all. And what's being done today? We're trying to make a gospel that will not contradict culture.

We're trying to build bridges and they're all false. We're trying to repackage the gospel so that people don't even understand what they're getting. And in doing so, we are, well, we're committing the crime of gospel reductionism.

Today, I hear so many men in church growth say, well, we're not changing the message, we're repackaging it. They're liars. With the repackaging, they are changing.

And whoever told you that you had to make the gospel relevant and whoever told you that you had to present it in such a way that it would not be offensive, it is scandalous. And the gospel desires to make no truce whatsoever with the world. It is amazing.

You go to a university or something and you stand before all the people. I'll never forget, I was invited to the University of Universidad de Garcilaso in Lima, Peru. And and I was to speak to the faculty and all the students and everything else.

And I knew that they were influenced even back then by what we call today is postmodernism, because the number one philosopher in Spain is a man by the name of Uno Muno, who who literally just almost invented postmodernism. And I realized what was going to happen. And so I stood before that entire body and I said, soy buscador de la verdad.

I am a seeker of the truth. And they applauded me. They thought I was a noble man.

Oh, to be a seeker of the truth, what a wonderful idea, what a thing to do with your life. And then when the applause died down, I said. And I found it.

And that truth is in Jesus Christ. Immediately, I went from noble to brash, I went from brilliant to idiotic, because in the minds of men today, the greatest thing to do is to seek the truth. And the most arrogant, stupid thing you could ever say is that you found it.

But I tell men. It is more foolish to seek something that cannot be found, but it can be found because it finds you and it's found in the person of Jesus Christ. We do not come before the world, putting out before

them trinkets of ideas, hoping they will accept it.

We stand before the world with the authority of the word of God, make no apology about it, hope to be merciful, hope to be compassionate, hope to be loving. But at the same time, we stand there and we declare, thus saith the Lord, Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life. And no one comes to the Father except through him.

And we will probably, in the latter part of our years, be in prison for such a truth, so be it. Jesus is the only way and in loving service and sacrificial giving of self, we are to confront our culture with one message. Jesus Christ is Lord.

The only Lord, and he shares that title with no one. He is the only Savior and he shares that glory with no one. And everyone else in the world that contradicts this message is wrong.

I was outside of Truman University in Missouri a few years ago and a young man came up to me, a young Jewish fellow, and he was extremely angry with me. And he came up to the front and he goes, you're just arrogant. And I said, maybe so.

And he said, I think the Jews are right and I think the Muslims are right and I think the Christians are right. And I said, young man, obviously, you've never studied classical logic. He said, what do you mean? I said, there's a little principle in classical logic called the law of non-contradiction.

Young man, here are the logical possibilities. One, every one of us is wrong. Two, one of us is right, but all three of us can't be right because all three of us are saying three completely different things.

You see, that's what the world has to do. The world has to generalize. It has to change all the rules.

Why? The world does not want to be confronted with Jesus Christ. They can't deal with him. And so they make structures up in order to avoid the problem of who is this man? C.S. Lewis is famous, trilemma, liar, lunatic, our Lord.

But he is Lord. Now, Paul's culture of the day, just look at this for a moment to Greeks. His message was absolutely absurd, absurd.

It contradicted absolutely everything they believed that God would become flesh, that spirit and flesh would somehow unite was absolutely absurd. If you wanted to just literally get ridiculed out of a debate, bring something like that up. It was the one great truth of Greek philosophy that spirit and flesh don't mix.

Flesh is evil. Spirit is good. This and that and on and on.

And Paul comes and says God became man. And then to his own people, it was blasphemy, a terrible blasphemy to say that God would die accursed on a tree. That the one who said before Abraham was I am to say that he was God and not a blasphemer was the greatest of all religious crimes.

Now, I want you to think about something for a moment. Paul said he was not ashamed of this message, even though his message contradicted everything about the culture in which he lived. No matter where he went, his message was either blasphemy or absurd.

Now, notice Paul does not change it. He does not repackage it. As a matter of fact, where did all the great heresies of the early church in the second and third century come from? It came from men trying to make

the gospel message philosophically acceptable.

I want to stop and just say this very important, especially for you young men, you have to decide. Are you going to be a man of God and a preacher of the gospel? Are you going to be a little boy with a laptop who knows how enough about marketing in order to build a church that looks nothing more than a six flags over Jesus? What are you going to do with your life? Stay pure and clean and loyal to the gospel. Do one thing, preach the gospel.

Be like O.G. Campbell Morgan, who, when he walked up into the steps, the pulpit of Westminster, he would think to himself like a sheep before shears. He knew like a lamb led to slaughter. He knew that unless God moved through the preaching of God's truth, all his preaching would be in vain.

But he also knew from scripture and own experience that God blesses the preaching of the gospel. It is the power of God unto salvation and it is the only power. And that is why Paul could preach.

Now, I want you to think about something for a moment. I can't take you there. It's in my mind.

I've never been able to express it correctly, but just imagine for a moment. Here is a group of Greek philosophers, just absolutely the epitome of arrogance. Years and years of studying and everything they believe would see the gospel is absolutely absurd.

And they didn't like Jews either. And then here comes Paul, a man of no appearance, of no stature. Greeks prided themselves in eloquence.

Eloquence could beat out logic. And here comes Paul. Everything he says to them is illogical.

Everything he says to them is atheistic and blasphemy. Everything he says to them, he says basically in the wrong way. He was not a man of eloquence.

He had no personality, power, no leadership skills. He had nothing. And he comes in there, this ragged, tagged tip maker, and he preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And men follow him out. That's only explained by this. God saves men through the preaching of the gospel.

Now, just think for a moment, like my wife's always saying, think, Pooh, think. Just think for a moment. It's impossible for them to believe that.

It is impossible. It wouldn't matter. It wouldn't matter how you package the gospel.

It would be absolutely impossible for those Greeks to believe what Paul is saying. But how come they left and followed him? How come they were willing to die for the message that should have been absurd to them? I'll tell you what, because when Paul preached the gospel, God regenerated their hearts. That's how and that's how all men get saved.

There's a lot of apologetic out there today that's just pretty much worthless. It's really fancy, but it's not worth much. Presenting evidence after evidence and then thinking to convince men through the evidence.

Let's go for a moment to the Aguaduna tribe in Condorcanqui in the dark jungles of Peru. Let's go for a minute to the mountain men of northern Ayabaca who suffer for the cause of Christ. Most of them have

less than a second grade education, can barely read.

Yet they are willing to suffer. Humiliation, canings, urine poured on their head publicly in the plaza. They are willing to suffer every manner of thing.

Right now, two of our men are over in Asia in the 1040 window checking on missionaries. A few months ago, one missionary was poisoned to death. He could not give you one bit of evidence that demands a verdict.

So why are these guys believing this? Men become converted and believe the gospel, not because you can present clever arguments to them. They are converted and believe the gospel and are willing to die for it. Because when you're preaching this message that is a scandal and absolutely absurd, it pleases God to work in the hearts of some men, regenerating their hearts, taking out their heart of stone that cannot respond to Him and replacing it with a heart of flesh which responds.

He opens their eyes and they see Christ. He opens their ears and they hear Him and they follow Him. Their faith is not built on 10 reasons, historical reasons of why we believe Jesus resurrected from the dead.

Their faith is built on the fact that God supernaturally showed up and revealed Himself to them. And told them His truth, His truth. Cut yourself off from the arm of the flesh.

Don't hope in arguments, don't hope in relevant packaging. Don't hope in new facilities. Don't hope in turning your church into a coffeehouse.

Hope in the preaching of the gospel and the exposition of the scripture. Because men will be converted through that, through that. Now, he says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God.

And in seminary Greek, the word is dynamis. I prefer to use the modern pronunciation in Greek. It seems to go better.

It's easier to read it that way. Dynamis, from which we get the word dynamite. An explosive, powerful thing.

And it has to be why men's hearts are hardened against God. Men have built fortresses to keep every ounce of truth out. And the truth that has gotten in, they suppress it and make it as though it did not come to them.

In order for men to be saved, something on par, in my opinion, a greater manifestation of the power of God is displayed when God converts a man than when He created the universe. Because He created the universe ex nihilo, out of nothing. But to create something good out of corruption is a greater demonstration of power, on par with the very resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, so says Ephesians.

You see, nothing can save a man but the power of God. And the power of God is manifested when we cut ourselves off from the arm of the flesh, trust not in our own ways and understanding and preach the gospel. The weapons of our warfare are three, the preaching of truth, expository preaching of truth, number one, two, intercessory prayer, three, sacrificial love.

Those are your weapons, that's your church growth plan if you want to be biblical. Now, he goes on and he says it is the power of God. Now, I want to show you how men, preachers, conservative preachers, Bible believing preachers, commit the greatest of crimes, the greatest of crimes.

Several years ago, and I was telling the pastor this, several years ago, I was in Peru and I really did not get much out of seminary. In seminary, they taught me all the theology that closed every church in Germany. So it wasn't very helpful.

It wasn't until Peru that I began to study the word. And then an uncle of mine who was very sound, slipped in some good books into a suitcase one day. And I remember coming across a book by Ernie Rossinger called Today's Evangelism.

And I began to read it. I got halfway through that book. And this is no exaggeration.

I'm not speaking evangelistically. This is true. I fell out of that chair with such the fear of God upon my life, and I pressed my face into those old boards of that room in the city of Lima, third floor of an old building we were using for a church.

I pressed my face as far into those boards as they could get in fear as I could get and cried out to God. God, if you promise not to kill me for the way I've preached your gospel, I promise from here on out, I'll never preach it that way again. We have taken the gospel as the power of God and turned it into nothing.

And it's done every day. Even, I'm not talking about liberal preachers. I'm talking about conservative preachers.

And I'm not talking about conservative preachers outside of our denomination. I tell you, the Southern Baptists and other Baptists are probably the worst. And this is what we've done.

Let me come down here. I have a little bit of movement. We address a man, sir, do you know you're a sinner? But mainly we do it this way.

Now, sir, you know, we're all sinners, don't you? We want to be careful to put we in there so we don't feel like we're he doesn't feel like we're isolating him. Sir, you know, you know, we're all sinners, don't you? If he says yes, OK, do you want to go to heaven? And if he says yes, we say, would you like to pray this prayer and ask Jesus to come into your heart? He says, well, I don't know, sir, it only takes a few minutes, just a few minutes, just a few minutes. Famous evangelist is known for saying that won't take five minutes of your time.

And then they repeat that prayer. And then we say, well, did God save you? And they say, well, I don't know. I don't know.

I think so. Well, of course he did, because if he didn't, he's a liar because he promised to save you because he said, behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens that door, he'll enter in.

Did you open that door? Well, yes. Well, then he entered in. Oh, OK.

So you're saved. Oh, good. What's for supper? That happens every day in the Southern Baptist Convention, every other Baptist convention and the greater evangelical community.

Every day, something in that form. Now, let's look at this for a moment. Sir, do you know you're a sinner? First of all, I have a mother right now that's dying of cancer.

What kind of doctor would it be who came to her and says, you know, Barb, you're dying of cancer, don't you? That'd be horrible, unethical. Folks, we deal with people and we deal with them compassionately. We deal with them with mercy.

But when we begin to talk about things like sin, there ought to be something solemn and real and serious. We're dealing with something far worse than any disease that's ever plagued the people. Now, we go, now, you know, you're a sinner, don't you? Well, yes.

You think it's time to move on? He doesn't even know what that means. We live in a culture that laughs at sin. We live in a culture that drinks down iniquity as though it were water.

Ask the devil if he's a sinner and what will he tell you? Well, yes, I am. And a mighty good one at that. It means nothing, absolutely nothing for a man to say he knows he's a sinner.

Nothing has been accomplished when he says that, nothing. The question is not, does he know he's a sinner? The question is, as he has sat under the preaching of the gospel, has God done such a work in his heart that the sin he once loved he now hates? Therein lies the difference, a supernatural change wrought in the heart of a man by the Holy Spirit of God. Do we not look for fruit? Do we not know how to deal with souls? We get them to say they're a sinner and we hop them through the next loop.

It's not that way. You take them through Scripture. You know, Paul, in the first three chapters of the Book of Romans, what a master.

And he's led, he's inspired by the Holy Spirit. It's the infallible word of God. But at the same time, you can see Paul, the man with every fiber of his intellect, three chapters seeking to do only one thing, to condemn absolutely every human on the face of the earth.

To build a cage they cannot break out of, to show them the very depth of sin, depravity and wickedness that should be done in soul winning. Sir, you know what a sinner is. Do you know what you are? Let me open up the Scriptures.

Most sin open up the Scriptures with only one intention, to get them to say that they know they're sinners, but they don't know what it means. And the Scriptures have not been preached enough so that the spirit of God would work in their hearts. And so you say, sir.

Do you have more than five minutes? This may take hours. Your life depends upon it after sharing the gospel, after sharing about sin, after planting the seeds of Scripture with regard to what sin is and how it is offensive to God because you shared with him something of who God is. Sir, has God so worked in your heart that you can now see your sin in a different light? Has God worked in your heart that the sin you cherished, you now hate? The sin you embrace, you're trying to kick it away from you as something disgusting and frightening.

And then the next question, sir, do you want to go to heaven? Have you ever heard anyone say, why no, I would rather go to hell? The fact of the matter is, church, everyone wants to go to heaven. It's just no one wants God to be there when they get there. Everyone wants to go to heaven.

Don't you understand that? Every religion on the face of the earth, every person on the face there, if there is a heaven, they want to go there. Now, every once in a while, I will look at a film or something, a cinema, something of cinema, if I feel like it will help me understand my culture and it will not take me into places I should not go. Several years ago, there's a film out called What Dreams May Come by Robin Williams.

He plays a doctor. He's an agnostic. He dies and he goes to heaven because, of course, in Hollywood, everyone goes to heaven except Christians.

He goes to heaven. He's met by an angel and he goes, there's a heaven. The angel goes, yeah, there's a heaven.

Well, if there's a heaven, is there a God? And the angel goes, well, yeah, there's a God. Now, listen to what happens in this interchange. Well, where is he? He's up there.

Now, look at what they've done, removed God from the practical workings of life on this planet. We want nothing to do with him. That's the advantage of postmodernism.

There is no truth. Well, there is truth. We just can't know it.

There is a God. He just has not spoken. He's somewhere way out there.

So we don't have to deal with him. But now we get to heaven and he's not there anymore either, because, of course, he would cramp our style, wouldn't he? And so it's to move him to another place further up. You see, my dear friend, everyone wants to go to heaven.

I would have to know a church very well before I allowed my children to attend their children's Sunday school. I would have to know a church very well before I ever let my child go to a vacation Bible school. And I would tell you this, in probably 95 percent of the Southern Baptist churches, I wouldn't let my child get near their children's program.

Because they're full of a bunch of good intentioned people who say, how many of you little children want to go to heaven? And they raise their hand and then they say, how many of you little children love Jesus? And they raise their hand. And how many little children want to pray and ask Jesus to come into their heart? And they all pray and then they become two full sons of hell because they've never truly been converted. And some of them, through the sovereign working of God, when they're around 30 years old, after living a life of just hell raising lifestyle, they rededicate their life.

And then if they're under a good preacher, they find out what really happened is they got saved. You don't ask little children, do you want to go to heaven? Because that's not the question. You don't ask adults, do you want to go to heaven? Listen, most people want to go to heaven just because they don't want to go to hell.

In the Philippines, when I was there many, many years ago, they used to set the rice fields on fire. Oh, it was like being in the middle of hell. And when they set those fields on fire, every viper in the grass comes running out of there.

But it's still a viper. The question is not, do you not want to go to hell? That's self-preservation, which is idolatry. The question is not, do you want to go to heaven? That's trying to get your best life now.

It's your old self-esteem. The question is this, not do you want to go to heaven? The question is, do you want God? Has God so worked in your heart that the God you once hated, ignored and sought to push out and fabricate and manipulate and coerce and avoid and everything else that God has now become real to you and you desire Him? That's the question. Not do you want to go to heaven, but do you want God? And most people don't.

If anyone ever calls me and says, Brother Paul, we want you to come, you know, for about six days and just teach on the attributes of God. I'll have to say, well, let me talk to you a little bit because I'm not sure I need to do that. Well, why? Well, I don't want to split your church.

What? It's about God. I mean, we're Christians. I mean, what do you mean you're going to come in and preach on God? It's going to split the church.

We love God. The greatest hour of idolatry throughout the week of Sunday morning, because the people who are worshipping God, if you were to hand out a sheet of paper and say, describe the attributes of that God and back it up with scriptural text, they would not be able to do it. Most people's God in America looks something like a cross between Santa Claus and a dumb grandfather.

Most people worship on Sunday morning. They do not worship the true God. They worship a God they made in their own image.

Now, let me scare you, because this is not for people outside these walls. This is for you. Do you know God? I'm not talking about a sympathetic, emotional relationship.

Can you tell me who God is biblically? Can you talk to me about his holiness? Can you tell me about his justice? Can you teach me about his sovereignty? Can you explain to me his wrath? Can you open up scripture and tell me who God is? Do you know him? You know, rich men shouldn't boast in their wealth and wise men shouldn't boast in their wisdom and strong men shouldn't boast in their strength. But the one who boasts ought to boast in this, that they know God. One of the greatest needs other than preaching the gospel and true conversion is to teach on the attributes of God, because people basically don't know it.

If I were to go into most churches and preach on the attributes of God, what would happen about midway through that week is you would have faithful church members who have been there for 40 years who would stand up and say, that's not my God. I could never love a God like that, even though I'm just preaching the historical, the historical Christian view of God. So the question is not, do you know your sinner? The question is, has God so worked in your heart that the sin you once loved you now hate? The question is not, do you want to go to heaven? The question is, do you want God? Is he precious to you? Do you desire him? Do you esteem his worth? Have you seen him? Have you seen him? Has he revealed himself to you so that you're drawn to him, the God of scripture? But if they say they know they're a sinner and if they say they want to go to heaven, then we do the greatest of all travesties.

Would you like to open up the door and ask Jesus to come into your heart? Because you know, the handle is on the inside and only you're the only one who can open up the door. Listen, it's Christ's door and if he wants to come in, he'll kick the sink and door down. Now, you know why I preach in a lot of Baptist churches once.

The door doesn't have a handle on it to begin with. The door of your heart, there is no door. It's just a wall stronger than 25 feet of concrete poured sideways.

I mean, it's more than anything anyone can bust. It is impossible for men to do anything with their heart, but their heart does much with them. Only God can open up a person's heart as he opened up Lydia's heart.

And when Jesus in the book of Revelation, chapter three, verse 20, is knocking on the door, he is not knocking on the door of a lost man's heart. He's knocking on the door of the church. And every time I teach that, an evangelist will say, I know, but it works.

Pragmatism over biblical truth. That's a Southern Baptist right there. If it works, do it.

Won't matter a hill of beans for eternity, but if it keeps the machine going, keep doing it. You see, folks, we don't do something because it works. We do something because it's true.

We're not supposed to follow Benjamin Franklin, the inventor, but Jonathan Edwards, the theologian. Franklin was all about pragmatism. Edwards was all about truth.

And if you're a Christian, that's what you're supposed to be all about. And you don't lead men into things that aren't biblical, because nowhere, nowhere does Jesus Christ or any of the apostles preach the gospel and then afterwards cry out, who wants to receive Jesus? Lift up their hand and pray this prayer. But they command all men everywhere to repent, to turn from their sin and believe the gospel, to cast themselves upon the gospel, to cut away themselves from every hope in any good work and throw themselves only upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.

Decisionism, the hour of decision is wrong. It's wrong. You go to most Southern Baptists today who aren't in church or other Baptists.

You talk to them about their souls and this is what they'll do. They'll go back to a decision they made with some preacher years ago. They will go back to an event.

Now, look at me. They will go back to a decision as the basis of their salvation. Do you know what that is? Idolatry.

If the foundation and the basis of the assurance of your salvation is a decision and not the person of Jesus Christ. You see how dangerous that is? People trusting a decision. I lived for years in a country where everyone believed themselves Christian because they were baptized as infants.

You say, oh, that's how could anybody believe anything like that? The Baptists have done the very same thing. Only we've substituted infant baptism with praying a prayer and making your decision. You see, folks, the Great Awakening in Wales, Hal Harris, Daniel Rowlands, the Calvinistic Methodist, Whitfield, even John and Charles Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, the great preachers of the Great Awakening in New England.

All of them. Do you know what it was all about? The whole thing, the conversion of church people, because what had happened was the doctrine of regeneration had been lost. Regeneration was lost.

The fact that when God saves a man, he literally, supernaturally changes his heart and makes him into a new creature. It was lost. It was substituted for credalism and ritual.

We've done the same thing today. That's why the greatest mission field on the face of the earth is Southern Baptist churches, because so many of the people in there have no godliness about them, no passion for Christ, no desire to know His Word and so on and so forth. But they are secure because one time they prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to come into their life.

And not only that, they stay in church not because of Christ, but because of the entertainment. Because there they can learn how to balance their checkbook and, as I said, get their best life now. They can learn how to be good people and appropriate people.

And if you're further enough in the South, they learn how to be part of that culture. But it has nothing to do with God. Nothing.

So what must be rediscovered in our day? I'll tell you what must be rediscovered. That salvation is not merely or principally a human decision. It is a supernatural work of God.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things pass away. Behold, all things are new again.

And there is no such thing in scripture as a carnal Christian. Mark it down. The worst teaching on the face of the earth, or at least in America, is not the doctrine of the Jehovah Witnesses, but the doctrine of us.

When we tell carnal men that they can be secure because one time they made a decision. Christians sin. Christians cannot continue in open sin and open rebellion against their master.

They will be brought to repentance. They will be brought to confession. They will be disciplined by God.

He who began a good work in them will finish it. There is no such thing as a continuously carnal Christian, because salvation is the power of God to everyone who believes. Who believes? You go to men and you say, begin to witness to them.

They say, oh, don't worry about me, preacher. Why? I done did that. You done did what? I done did that.

Jesus came to Israel. He said the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel to present tense imperatives and grief.

What Jesus is basically saying is the time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand. Now spend the rest of your life repenting and believing.

You see the evidence that a long time ago you did that. The evidence that a long time ago you believed under salvation is that you're still believing today. The evidence that a long time ago you repented of your sins, you are still repenting today and in a greater degree than ever because of the work of sanctification that God does in the heart of every one of his children.

He says to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. The gospel invitation door is very, very wide, very wide. Whosoever will may come.

Whosoever will may come. What will it cost you to be a Christian? Absolutely everything. Absolutely everything.

What does God promise you? Eternal life and a cross. What is it worth? All the value that is God. All the value that is God.

Now, I'm not a very proper person. I blame that on the state of Texas. I say things the way I've said them tonight so that they will have a rusty edge on them so that they will cut you.

I say things purposely. I use satire with purpose. I use anger because I am angry.

I use passion because I am passionate and I want to cut you because that's what swords are all about. Anyways, never realized this. The danger of sleeping, the danger of sleeping under the gospel, the danger of sleeping under sound doctrine, the danger.

Peace, peace when there is no peace, the danger. And in proper preaching, it will be teaching, but it will be prophetic. If that poet once said, I am a prophet and I smolder and burn, I scream and cry and wonder why you never seem to learn to hear with your own ears and with your own eyes to see and the prophet, won't you listen to me? And then it goes on.

The poet says, I am the sword who cut his people apart. And I speak the word to heal their faithless heart. Now, I'm not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but the word of God is prophetic.

And it is designed to cut and to heal, to awaken and to smash, to tear down, to build up and most importantly, to give life. If you have questions after what's been done here tonight, feel free to come to the pastor. If he's acceptable to it, I'll help too or anyone else.

But don't leave this building with a disturbed heart, because as Shin was crouching at the door for Cain and his desire was to have him, so the devil is crouching at the door to pluck the seed from your heart to make it null effect. Let's pray. Father, I pray that you would use your word.

Your blessing would be upon it. Jesus name. Amen.

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