

# (Missions Conference Shoals) - Part 5

by Paul Washer

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*This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding God's love and glory, and how it transforms us into beautiful children of God.*

**Duration:** 1:10:18

**Topics:** "God's Love"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the purpose of marriage as a revelation of God's goodness to His church. He emphasizes the importance of theology and doctrine in understanding God's passion for His people. The preacher shares a personal anecdote about his son's unwavering trust and expectation of love from his father. The sermon then delves into the Song of Solomon, specifically focusing on the imagery of a locked garden and a sealed spring, which the preacher interprets as symbols of holiness and belonging to one person.

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## Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to the Song of Solomon. The Song of Solomon, chapter four. Before we read our text, I'd like to go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I thank you for this day and special, wonderful sense, the presence of your son, special fellowship and special reality of him being God with us. I thank you so much for what you have done thus far, Lord, and getting glory for yourself. And oh, Lord, I would so wish tonight to speak in your power.

You would vindicate your truth. You would move in the hearts of men. But oh, God, if you would get greater glory for yourself by stepping back and turning me into nothing more than a babbling fool, if you would get glory for yourself, Lord, by destroying this building and removing this church, then, oh, Lord, get glory for yourself.

Oh, dear God, we acknowledge that apart from you, we are nothing. We have nothing. We acknowledge, Lord, that you rightfully take the center throne of the universe and you share that position with no one.

We rightfully, Lord, acknowledge your sovereignty, that you do whatever you desire in the heavens and the earth and under the earth, that if you raise your hand, no man can put it down. And if you put your hand down on the table, no man can pry it up. And you are God.

And oh, Lord, you know, this week I have plowed. But oh, Lord, I pray that your people tonight would rejoice, that they would rejoice in the God of their salvation. Oh, God.

Oh, God. Oh, Lord, you know, I am so afraid to open my eyes. I am so afraid to end this prayer.

I would rather stay with you, Lord, who is who is able to speak about your love toward your people. Lord, we've never seen anyone like you. We search as far back in our history as we can go.

We've never seen a love like yours. Oh, Lord, only by your spirit can these things be revealed to men. Be gracious to us, oh, Lord, do not give us what we deserve, but give us your greatest, Lord, a revelation of you and your glory.

Oh, God, help us, help us. And, Lord, I pray for wisdom, the power of the Holy Spirit, the filling of the Holy Spirit in Jesus name. Amen.

It might seem unusual that I'm actually going to begin a sermon with a smile, but I am so filled with joy. Over my God and his goodness, his love, I have plowed hard this week. I have preached hard against things that should be preached against superficial evangelism in the Southern Baptist Convention, the promotion of men, the counting of heads and the damnation of souls because we are building churches on the bones of unconverted church members.

I have preached hard against the manipulating use of the sinner's prayer, getting men and children to blindly and superstitiously repeat a prayer and then to popishly declare them to be born again. I have preached against the idea of a continuous carnal Christian, that a person can truly be a Christian and yet live in carnality the days of their lives without God's discipline. We have spoke about the need of repentance and faith.

We have spoke about something more than a romantic gospel that shares the physical sufferings about Christ and then manipulates men to come to him. Instead, we have preached a gospel of the Son of God bearing the sins of men and dying under the wrath of God to satisfy justice, to take away sin, to appease the wrath of God and to reconcile men to himself. I have plowed hard.

I have told many of you that you are not Christians, but some of you are. Some of you are. And last night we went through the test of 1 John, a book that was used throughout Baptist history to bring assurance to true believers.

Some of you were stricken in your heart and you began to see that it was not well with your soul. Others of you rejoiced because for once in your lifetime, your assurance rested upon something more than a prayer that you repeated, hopefully sincerely. Or some evangelist who told you the right to write the name and his name in the back of your Bible along with the date of your conversion and show it to the devil every time you doubt.

No, we went to the Bible and we found for you biblical assurance that he who began a good work and you will finish it. And tonight I am so weak, not with regard to strength and not even necessarily spiritually, but I'm so weak because I want to do, I want you to see so many things about you. Now the spiritual mind here tonight will hear these words and say, let us be holy.

Let us run to him. Let us obey. Let us seek him that we might find him.

The carnal mind will hear these same words and say, let us sin that grace may abound. Let us keep doing what we're doing because the love of God will permit it. But if you have been here all the nights, you will know that is not true.

That is not true. I am here to tell you tonight that if you are regenerate, if your conversion is true, if you were born in Zion, if you belong to him, that you can rejoice. You can rejoice more than you ever dreamed of rejoicing.

That God's love towards you is greater than anything you will ever begin to comprehend. You say, well, what about heaven? Won't we comprehend it there? Not even there will you comprehend the love of God, for it will be there that you will begin an eternity of chasing it down. What makes heaven something other than boring? Streets of gold, gates of pearl.

After a while, streets are just to walk on and gates. Well, I suppose if you're a child, you can swing on them for a long time and enjoy it. How can we spend an eternity in heaven and it not grow weary? Because every new dawn, if you could say such a thing, and as the pastor said this afternoon when we were speaking, every new dawn in eternity will just bring greater and greater measures of the glory of God, which will send you into greater and greater depths of ecstasy, of worship and of joy.

And that's why we're going to look at the song of Solomon. Now, some literalist, and I interpret the Bible literally where it should be interpreted, but there are places where it should not be interpreted literally. Let me give you an example.

Jesus said, I am the door. That doesn't mean he swings on hinges. Some would say that the song of Solomon was written only about a man and a woman, the love affair between a man and a woman.

But I would answer them this way. The story of the man and the woman was only written to give us an illustration of the glory of God. Some would say this is only about marriage between a man and a woman.

But why did God create marriage except for it to be a revelation in some way of his goodness to his church? So we're going to hear theology. Yes. Doctrine.

True. We're going to talk about passion tonight about God's passion for you that I hope will give birth to a passion in you for God. I start in chapter four, verse seven.

I want you to imagine this as it is. This is God speaking to you. If you are his child, if you belong to him, if you are part of his church, this is God speaking to you.

You are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you. We hear these preachers today who have bad ecclesiology. They don't understand the doctrine of the church nor the new covenants.

We hear these preachers today who say the church is just as full of pornography as the world. The church is just as full of immorality and carnality and worldliness and all sorts of things like that as the world. The church is going through a horrible period of time in this country.

Well, that's absolutely ridiculous. The church of Jesus Christ is altogether beautiful. The only problem is this.

What is being called the church today is not the church. And God's name is being blasphemed among the Gentiles because of preachers that don't know the difference between the church of God and

unregenerate carnal church members. But here he's speaking to those who truly know him, and he says this, you are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you.

But the most sincere among us, the Christian most devout among us would almost balk at this. They would step back and they would say, well, but what about my sin? What about my failure? What about my striving to be holy and looking in the mirror of God's Word and seeing that I just never seem to measure up? How can he say such things about me? He can say such things about you because of the work that he has done on your behalf. God made him who knew no sin to be sin on your behalf so that you might become the righteousness of God in Christ.

One of the things that's very important, as I've said over and over this week, if you only share half truths, it's better that you would keep your mouth shut or just out and out lie. And with the gospel, it's the same way. It's not enough to share part of the gospel, even if that part you share is true.

You have been told, and rightly so, that we are saved, that we are forgiven through the death of Christ on a cross, and that is true. But in order to get to heaven, you must be more than forgiven. Did you know that? In order to get to heaven, you must be more than forgiven.

You must be perfectly righteous. It's not enough that Christ simply carries your sin and takes them away, but Christ must give you his righteous life. And that is why we are saved not only by the death of Christ, and we are saved not only by the resurrection of Christ, but we are saved by the life that Christ lived on this earth under the law as a man.

That when he walked on this earth, I know you say he died for you, and he did. But I want you to know that he lived for you. All the days of his life, he lived for you.

He lived a perfect life before the Father. There was not a blemish in him. There was not a flaw.

He was always the darling son of God. And every time God looked down at his son, he said, this is my beloved son in whom I am always pleased. When you believed in Jesus Christ, when God through his sovereign grace regenerated your heart and gave you repentance and gave you faith, and you believed in Jesus Christ unto salvation, you were forgiven by virtue of the cross where he died, but you were declared perfectly righteous before God.

Not only forgiven, but declared perfectly righteous. That life that Jesus lived for 30 some odd years on this earth, that life of perfect obedience was placed on you so that when the Father looks at you, if you are a true believer, when the Father looks at you, he looks down at you and he forever and always says, this is my beloved son in whom I am well. You have heard that Jesus is a greater than Moses.

You have heard that he is a greater than Aaron. But did you know that he is a greater than Joseph, his father? No. The patriarch, Joseph.

Remember Joseph? What distinguished him from the rest? The love of his father. But what else distinguished him from the rest? That multicolored coat, that beautiful coat. And what did he do with that coat? He hoarded it, he held on to it, and he made it a thing of envy and strife between himself and his brothers.

But we have not been redeemed by a Joseph. We have been redeemed by someone greater than Joseph, who takes that coat of multicolored righteousness and he lay it upon your shoulders. He dressed you in

him.

Listen to me, believer, you know what the problem is? You do not believe me yet. I'm talking about a love so big, a righteousness so strong, something you have never seen before that it is so hard for you to believe it. Charismatics, love them.

I just, I have live friends that are charismatics and they'll always tell me the greatest act of faith is raising the dead. If you can raise the dead, you've got faith. And I always tell them, I go, raise the dead.

That's nothing for a Southern Baptist. Raising the dead, that's an everyday occurrence. And I look at them and I say, you want to know something that requires faith? And I'm going to tell you.

The thing that requires the greatest faith, my dear brother, my dear sister. Those of you who are beloved of God, the greatest demonstration of personal faith is when you and I look in the mirror of God's word and we see all our flaws and all our failures and all our sin and all our apathy and all our lack of devotion. And yet we believe that God loves us as he says he does.

That's the hardest thing to believe. And why is it so hard to believe? I'll tell you why it's so hard to believe. We've never seen a love like that anywhere.

No one. Go to the most devout spouse, the most devout father, the most devout child. You can search through the world with a lantern, but you will never find anyone who loves like God loves you.

Another thing that you need to see, and I'll just for a moment, husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the church, loved the church, not an institution, not a membership role, an organism, living, breathing members. Christ loved you. And how did he demonstrate that love for you? By giving himself up for you.

I want every believer in this audience tonight. I want every believer in this congregation to think this. I want you to repeat this in your heart.

Christ gave himself up for me, for me, for me. He bore the guilt, the sin for me. He died under the wrath of God for me, for me, for me.

And when did he do this? When you were a sinner, when you hated him with every ounce and fiber of your being. He loved you so much. He loved his elect people so much that he laid down his life for you.

When you would have been the one who nailed the nails and thrust the spear. So now tenderhearted believers who would never lift a hand against the Christ. How much does he love you now? How much does he love you now? And he says.

So that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word. That he might present to himself the church in all her glory. Now, when we say church in all her glory, we lose something.

Why? Because when we think about this big group of people, we think about something impersonal. Any believer I could pick out right now, I could tell you to stand and I can say to you that one day before all of creation, God will call your name and tell you to come front and center before every principality and power and might and dominion. He will tell you to come front and center and he will present you to all creation in all your glory.

All the glory that he has given you and he will present you there will not be a spot or a wrinkle or any such thing. The future that awaits you, believer, goes so far beyond the tongue of a preacher or the pen of a writer. So he says here, you are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you.

You say, but Lord, how can this be so? The Lord looks back at you and says, child, doubt not the power of that cross. My dear friend, sometimes there is a great deal of false humility among true believers, a great deal of false humility. Well, I just don't see how he could ever love someone like me.

Well, then you haven't seen the cross and you haven't understood the love of God. Doubting God's love is not a sign of humility. It is arguing against what he has declared about himself.

You're not proving yourself humble. You're saying you don't believe God. God has declared over and over and over, as I said in my preaching a few days ago, I said that the cross was a vindication of God, that it demonstrated that he is righteous.

And if you want to know how much God hates sin, look at the cross, because when his son bore our sin, God crushed him. But also, if you want to see how much God loves his people, look at the cross, because on that cross, his son bore our sins and was crushed. So many people think that somehow Jesus Christ came and saved us from the wrath of the father.

And what they don't understand, it was that very father who sent his son in love to die for you. He loves you. Sometimes when I'm preaching this, I just want to give up and I want to just look at the congregation and say over and over again, he loves you.

And to every objection you throw forth at me is to repeat again, he loves you. He loves you. He loves you.

And then he says in verse eight, come with me from Lebanon, my bride. May you come with me from Lebanon, journey down from the summit of Amana, from the summit of Senir and Hermon, from the dens of lions, from the mountains of leopards. Now, now, with the risk of being risque.

Have you ever thought about Adam and Eve? There they are in the garden, bare and yet without shame. Bare, yet without shame. I've often asked myself, why? Why were they without shame? Because there was no sin.

But it's more than that, you see. For the same reason there was shame after sin entered into the world. You see, when there's unconditional love, when you know the person you're standing before unconditionally loves you, no matter who you are, you can stand before them without shame.

You see, it's unconditional love that makes you strong. It's unconditional love that brings you out of that hole. It's unconditional love that sets you free and gives you peace.

And when sin entered into the world and Adam no longer unconditionally loved Eve and Eve no longer unconditionally loved Adam, then what happens? But look at me. I'm not perfect like a bride who fears her wedding night because she's afraid that she will appear unseemingly to the groom. And so she stands in the shadows, hoping not too much light, looking for a covering.

What if I'm distasteful to him? She thinks, what if he's sorry? What if I don't measure up? And so she hides in the darkness and desires no light. I see so many believers like that today. But he says, come here in verse eight, he says, come, but he doesn't tell you to come until first he says to you, you are beautiful, my

darling, and there is no blemish in you.

And you say, but Lord, I've got blemishes everywhere. And he says, but love covers a multitude of sins. I only see you with my eyes.

And my eyes see you as darling and beautiful and with no blemish whatsoever. I will guarantee you, sirs, that your wives can understand what I'm saying far better than you can. Oh, isn't it wonderful to finally walk through a door where we really are loved? Isn't it wonderful to finally walk through a door where now the blemishes and all those things just no longer matter because the only thing thundering in our ears is beloved, beloved, beloved, beloved.

And that's what you are. And so when he says, come, come. When he says, follow, follow.

When he says, draw near to me, draw near to him. You know, one of the things the devil uses more than anything else in the life of a believer, when a believer fails, when a believer falls, when a believer stumbles, Satan enters in, into their mind, making them think, you've done it now. Or after we have fallen, after we have sinned, after we have broken promises and everything else, then we spend three, four, five, six days, maybe weeks or months getting back in the good graces of God before we appear before him again.

Well, I've done that, but now there is a, well, probation period. I can't think about praising him now. I mean, after all, look at what I just did.

I can't think about coming into his presence. I can't think about telling him I love him. I mean, after all, look at me.

I mean, I should have to wait some amount of time, shouldn't I? And he's constantly looking at you saying, I love you. I love you. It's a whole nother sermon, but I just want to kind of throw this out tonight.

So many people have an Old Testament, Old Covenant idea of our relationship with God. Let me give you an example. Let's say that God wants me to read my Bible.

He's leading me to read my Bible, but I decide that I want to go out to my woodshop and work. Now, there are preachers, and you would expect me to say this because of the things you've heard me say this week. There are preachers who would say, well, you just go on out to that woodshop.

God's not going with you. That's not true. Not only is God going out to that woodshop, God's going to protect my fingers from the saw and he's going to hand me the boards.

And every time I look across that saw that I'm working on, he is going to pour forth love on me and say, Paul, I love you. I love you. Now, come.

I love you. You're not where you ought to be. Come.

I love you. I love you. I love you.

I love you. I love you. Paul, Paul, I love you.

I love you. There's a lot of legalistic people that love to hear me preach until they hear me preach this, but I'll not find myself in any man's camp. I'll preach the judgment of God.

But when we filtered through and we found the true believers, let's bring on grace. Let's bring on love. He goes, come down.

And that's what he's telling you tonight, church. Church at Muscle Shoals, that's what he's telling you to do. He's saying, come down, come down from where? Come down from those mountains.

Come down from haughtiness. Come down from pride. Come down from all these things that the world boasts in and get away from those high places because they're dangerous.

Come away from the world and those spiritual dangers. He tells you, he says there are leopards and lions up in those high places. Get away from there.

Come and follow me. Walk humbly before me. That's what God is telling you to do.

Now he's already satisfied your heart. He's already made you strong. He's called you darling.

He's found no flaw in you. He's taken care of that. And now that you're secure in his love, he says, come, come away with me.

Come down, come down. The most beautiful and the safest place to be on the face of the earth is humbly and in childlike way. Stumbling after your God and seeking to follow him.

That really only one thing is required of you. So many of you men that I have listened to. You are so busy.

You are so trying to catch his eye, to have him smile at you. You are so busy to have him just lay a hand on you and say, okay, you're okay. But he's already done that.

He's not wanting performance out of you. He's not wanting things out of you. He's just saying, come, come.

The greatest title that's ever been placed on a mortal man. I believe was given to Abraham, a friend of God, a friend of, I decided a long time ago, I wanted to concentrate on more on living the Christian life than preaching it. That you can get so caught up in preaching and teaching the Christian life that you're not living the Christian life.

I don't want to be a great preacher and I don't want to be big and I don't want to be important. I would rather go fishing with my God. I have nothing to prove.

I have no hoop to jump through. And why is that? Because I used to jump through all the hoops and I used to work 18 hours a day and I used to do everything other than just impale my body upon a cross in order to please my God. And why don't I do that anymore? Because I am loved.

It's over. I don't have to be anything. I don't have to prove anything, even to you, dear people.

I do not have the power to start a revival. I do not have the power to keep one. And if someone were to give it to me, I'd turn it down.

I have nothing to prove. Why? Because I'm loved. Are you loved? Do you know the love of God? And he goes on in verse 9. How does God respond to you? Look at verse 9. You have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride.

You have made my heart beat faster with a single glance from your eyes. Now, you want some theology? I've heard people say the whole week, all he's done is given us lectures on theology. Well, then let me give you some theology.

Every time, every time my eyes turn towards heaven, God's heart beats faster with anticipation. You say, well, brother Paul, I have trouble praying. I just don't think God hears me.

The only reason I would think God hasn't heard me is because his heart's beating so loud he can't hear my voice. You say, I like it better when you talked about God is holy, holy, holy. Well, I want to give you the full counsel of God.

And I want to tell you that my Christianity is not just theology, it's childlike faith. And when the Bible tells me that with the very glance of my eye upward towards the face of God, that his heart beats faster, that gives me such encouragement to pray. That gives me such encouragement to pray.

I hear people praying all the time. Oh, it's like there's a bronze ceiling over me. Oh, it's like God, you know, is not listening.

What do I do? I need to purify myself. I need to do this and I need to do that. No, you need to hear this word.

Every time you turn your eyes in an upward glance to the face of the father, his heart beats faster. Since you have made my heart beat faster, my sister, my bride, you have made my heart beat faster with a single glance of your eyes. And then look at this with a single strand of your necklace.

Now, why is that important? Why are you so beautiful? Why are you so beautiful? Is it because of yourself? No. It is because God has adorned your life with a necklace of grace. Do you know why you're so beautiful? Because he gave you the righteousness of Christ.

Every time he looks at you, it's a reflection of his greatness and his power. You see, when Christ said it is finished, he meant it. Would you grab a hold of that? Would you believe it when Christ said it is finished? He meant it.

It's finished. The enmity has been put away. Sin is gone.

And you're free. You're free. Where angels in the throne room of God bow their heads and cannot look him in the face.

And yet you, you run between the folds of his robe. Why? They have a righteousness of angels. You have the righteousness of God.

And that's why angels right now here tonight, angels are peering in. In your life, when you go home, angels will be straining to look in at the righteousness and the grace that has been granted unto you. He goes on to say now in verse 10, how beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride.

Now, in verse seven, in verse seven, he said that you were beautiful. Now he's saying that your love toward him is beautiful. How beautiful is your love, my sister, my bride.

How much better is your love than wine and the fragrance of your oils than all kinds of spices? Now, wine, oils and spices, they represent the finest things of this world, the finest things that God has made. Oh, and

he has made some fine things. I have seen sunsets that would take my heart away.

I have seen ocean waves beating down on the shore with a rhythm that seemed to capture a sonnet. And yet, God says of all the finest things I have made on the earth, I desire your love more. Your love is more beautiful to me.

You don't believe me, do you? You really don't believe me, because if you did, well, you'd be dancing on the top of these pews. You say, but my love is so feeble. Have you not read that he knows that you're just dust? And do you not know that every good and perfect gift comes from him? And if there is any love in you, it's love he gave you to love him back.

You think your love is so feeble. Stop. Stop thinking that way.

Yes, your love is feeble. Yes, your faith is feeble. But where we are feeble, his grace abounds, his love conquers, his love controls, his love takes it all.

And he goes on to say, how much better is your love than wine? And in verse 11, how does God respond to our praying? Your lips, my bride, drip honey. Honey and milk are under your tongue. And the fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

Here we go back to prayer again. So many believers today, I am convinced, do not have a healthy prayer life because they spend most of their time grumbling and groveling before God. And why are they doing that? Because they really are not convinced of what he says.

I think the greatest heartbreak I would ever know would be for my wife to doubt the love of her husband. What could be a greater reflection on a man than that? What would break my heart more than anything to believe that my wife was unsure about my love for her? Groveling, mumbling, praying for 15 minutes, just hoping to somehow crawl your way back to the good graces of God so that he might cast a glance your way. I don't know where you learn such things, but you did not learn them from God because to him, your lips drip honey, honey and milk are under your tongue, and the fragrance of your garment is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

Now, let's go back again. Here we go with garment again. Do you see that? Garment again.

Why are you so attractive to God? The garment he has given you, a garment of righteousness, a garment of holiness. My goodness, dear brother, my goodness, dear sister, God has done good things for you. Accept them.

Accept them. One of the hardest things for a man of God to do who's not securing himself is accept gifts from someone else. Let me give you a perfect example.

The apostle Peter. Jesus said, Peter, I'm going to wash your feet. Peter said, No, you're not.

Jesus said, OK, then go to hell. Because, Peter, if you can't receive from me, then there's only one other option. Damnation.

Well, then, Lord, wash my head, wash all of me. Can you not receive these things? And then again, that demon's head pops up in your heart and says, but I'm not good enough. I'm not right enough.

I'm not smart enough. Yes, we know. We've already got that behind us, haven't we? Like if the devil were to walk in here tonight, he might be here.

I don't know. If the devil were to walk in here tonight and take center stage and begin to rail on me, Paul Washer, you're not worthy to preach. Paul Washer, you're not worthy to pray.

Paul Washer, you're not worthy to be standing before these people. Paul, I would just have to literally sit here and just yawn. And when he got done, I would just have to say, you know, haven't we gone through this before? You're right, I'm not worthy of this and I'm not worthy of that and I'm not worthy of this and I'm not worthy of that.

But that's really not the issue. Have you seen my older brother standing over my shoulder, the one who's made all things new, the one who said it is finished? Oh, and when he said it is finished, that had something to do with you. So I would suggest you run out of here.

I don't know if you could have been beaten down in your heart any more than I was when I was a child. There were times I would take a knife and stick it into my stomach until it broke the skin, because the only thing I wanted to do was die. And I spent most of my life trying to get love I never got.

And then when I became a Christian, I spent a great part of my Christian life trying to win the love of a father until I literally drove myself almost insane to the point of the nervous breakdown as a very successful missionary. And when all the pieces were laying there on that stairwell in the third floor of that old rickety church in Barranco, Peru, and I had given up and I said, God, I'm afraid to go to hell and I don't want to go there, but I'm so ashamed of all my failures and everything. I don't want to go to heaven and see your face and be such a disappointment as I always have been all my life.

It was then. You don't have to preach another sermon because I didn't save you to serve, as those silly little preachers say, I saved you to love you. Now.

Rice, I command you, get your dog and go run on the beach for a week. That's exactly what I did. And I've been running and hopping and skipping ever since.

I had a man come to me one time, one of those movers and shakers, you know about them. They're men who can make you very important. And they said to me, you know, you could have a national ministry, international ministry.

You could do this and do that and be all these things. And I let him go on and on and on and on. And then when he finished, I looked at him and said, yes, I could.

But if I did that, I wouldn't have any time to go fishing. And they all looked at me like we thought you were spiritual. And then I got mad.

I said, look, and you listen well, I spent most of my Christian life trying to earn God's love. I've spent most of my life outside the inner circles of people, and I was convinced that it would be the same way in heaven, that God would have his children that he really loved. And I would just get in by the by the by the very scrape of my skin.

And I'll fight you tooth and nail, but I will not go back into that circus again. God loves me and I don't have to be anything. God loves me.

So I'll come down from that proud mountain and I'll walk humbly beside my God like a child and I will be happy. I see men that are exalted as great preachers, and I say, well, I feel sorry for them. They've got to do all that stuff, and yet I'm loved just as much as they are.

And here I sit fishing. Now, to a carnal mind, they will say, well, great, let's just we get away from obedience then. But to those of you who know the Lord, it is making you want to serve him more, isn't it? It is making you want to follow him more and pray more.

When Jesus said the first to be last and the last will be first, he drew a rabbinical circle when the first is last and last is first, there's no first and last. There isn't five men in the world who can say that that fast. Do you realize all of that first and last stuff is demonic, earthly and worldly? Most of you here tonight, you've never been in the inner circle either.

You've just been common people. There are places you can't go, places you can't afford. Most of you aren't the most beautiful.

You're not the smartest. You're not number one. You never have been, you never will be.

And so what does that mean? A lot of those fundamentalist preachers will tell us that that continues on into eternity. Yeah, who's going to have the biggest crown? To be honest with you, I don't want a crown. Can you imagine walking around with a 70 pound piece of gold on your head? You can take your crowns because that's not what Jesus is teaching when he's teaching that.

He's not teaching some sort of materialistic, demonic pecking order that the guys who do the best down there get closest to God. He's trying to tell you that you're just loved and it's because of him and that's it. Maybe we don't want that because of pride.

We want to earn something. But I'm too tired now after 22 years to earn anything. The only thing I want to do is receive.

And that's how God gets the greatest glory. Do you honestly think that we are going to glorify God in heaven one day? All of us are kind of just all grouped together. And I walk over to your pastor and throw my arm around him and call all you to attention and say, hey, everybody, I want to glorify God by telling you all the wonderful things that Jeff Knoblet did for him.

That's hellish. Earthly. You know what I can do, though? I can put my arm around him and say, hey, everybody, come here.

I want to glorify God by telling you everything God did for Jeff Knoblet. You see the difference? And then he says in verse 12, a locked garden is my sister, my bride, a locked, a rock garden locked, a spring sealed up. What is this talking about? Well, we have a garden locked and a rock garden locked and we have a spring sealed up.

What does that mean? Oh, it's there are five or six sermons in this passage, but I believe for us it is speaking about holiness. Holiness, not as rule keeping. I belong to one person.

I belong to my wife. I belong to her. I experienced things with her.

I don't experience with anybody else. She sees me in a way no one else should ever see me. I am my beloved.

My beloved is mine. No one else. No one else.

I'm hers. The true meaning of the word holy. I'm cut off from the rest and separated unto one woman.

For you young girls and you guys, that's a wonderful teaching. But for us and for a spiritual application tonight, I belong to Jesus. I belong to him.

I'm to be chased in a spiritual sense. I'm not to prostitute myself with the world. The one thing most beautiful to me about my wife when I met her, all the other girls and their flashy clothing and their everything else.

But it was the the chasteness of my wife. It was the hiddenness of my wife. When you looked at her, the only thing you saw was her face.

She was saving herself. She was covering herself. No one else was to touch her.

No one else was to see her. She was saving herself. She didn't know it at the time.

Neither did I. But for me. And that was most beautiful to me. Most beautiful.

And it still is most beautiful. Believer, listen to me. Do not marry the world.

Do not prostitute yourself to the world. Do not give yourself to other loves. And it is so hard.

I know it is so hard. I'm an outdoorsman. I would rather be waiting a swamp, hunting deer than just about anything on the face of the earth.

And I don't hunt with any of those sissy compound bows. I use a long bow. I said that for a few of the brothers here.

But you know what's amazing to me? I take a tree and I cut it down and I make a bow out of it. It's a piece of wood. That's all it is.

It's a piece of wood with a string on it. And yet I am so amazed how this one little piece of wood with a string on it can so captivate my attention that it can take me off the things of God. Now, I love to hunt.

I love to fish. I love to build things. I love to work on my farm.

I love all those things God has given them to me as gifts. But I always have to be careful. It is so amazing to me how I am able to take almost anything and turn it into an idol to prostitute myself.

We always need to be keenly aware when the Bible says, blessed are the pure in heart. The word there means literally an unalloyed heart, a heart without mixture, a heart that does not have several loyalties. And it's very, very hard to maintain the balance, Church.

It really, it really is. Because you're not a spiritual person just because you can lock yourself away in a cave and never receive a gift from God. You're a spiritual person when you can take the gifts that God has given you and use them for your delight and his glory.

We're to be shut up to him. I don't watch television. Why? Because, well, it has things that I'm not supposed to look at.

It says things I'm not supposed to hear. I guard my eyes. Why? I belong to only one, Jesus.

Constantly have to be in the word and survey my behavior. Why? Because if my right eye offend thee, pluck it out. If my right hand offend or cause me to stumble, cut it off.

Because he jealously and zealously loves me. He jealously and zealously loves you. Do not give yourself to the things of this world, but give yourself to him.

Why? I love it when I hear a girl say, I am the handmaiden of the Lord. I love it when I hear a man say, I am the bondservant of Jesus. I belong to him.

When you sing that song Adonai, that you sing so many times, Adonai, that word means so much more. It's almost like a contractual covenant relationship. When you say Adonai, you're saying that God is my Lord.

He's my owner. He's my master. And you're saying, I am his slave.

I am his servant. I am his property. I belong to him.

And you know what else you're saying? When you call God your Adonai, what does a servant or a slave have to worry about? Did you ever think about that? Do they have to worry about clothing? No, that's their master's problem. Do they have to worry about where they're going to live? No, that's their master's problem. Do they have to worry about protection? Who's going to protect them from the enemy? No, that's their master's problem.

Food, clothing, shelter, everything. It's the master's problem. The only thing that the slave has to concern himself about is the master's will.

He does the master's will and the master takes care of everything the slave needs. And I can tell you this, I have walked with him for nigh on 22 years and he has met all my needs according to his riches and glory. He has taken care of me every step of the way.

Not one word of all the good words he has spoken has ever failed. He is worthy of all trust, honor, glory and praise. He is.

Lock yourself up unto him. Oh, enjoy his goodness, enjoy his blessings, but lock yourself up unto him. Don't lock yourself up unto this church.

Don't lock yourself up unto this vision. Don't even lock yourself up into revival or feelings or anything else. As the pastor said, unto him, unto him.

Now, it goes on and he says in verse 13, Yeshutes are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruit, henna with nard plants, nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon with all the trees of frankincense, mirth and alloys along with all the finest spices. We have spoken much this week about the true believer will bear fruit. If there is no fruit of righteousness in your life, it's evidence that you're lost.

But at the same time, we had to keep coming back and we'll do this again. That fruit is not a work of your own power. That fruit is not a work of your flesh.

That fruit is not a work of motivation on your part. That fruit, you know, how many of you have ever seen an apple tree? How many of you have ever seen an apple tree? A few of you. OK.

Have you ever seen an apple tree in the spring about this time of year? Just twisting and crying and struggling and... You haven't, have you? They just kind of stand there. Because an apple tree doesn't have to really strive to bear fruit, does it? It just bears fruit. Some of you who have been converted and you have so much desire to bear fruit, you have so much desire to do things that you almost drive yourself crazy.

I've talked to some of you. You drive me crazy. Oh, Brother Paul, I just want to bear fruit.

I just want to bear fruit. I just want to bear fruit. Well, just shut your mouth for a moment.

You belong to him. You are his good tree that he has planted by rivers of water. You are his good tree.

He has planted you. He will nourish you. You will grow.

He will prune you. And it will hurt. But it will be done in love.

He will prune you. And you will bear fruit. And you will bear fruit that will remain.

You will. You have. And you're going to.

And it's not going to stop until the day you enter into glory. Because according to the book of Jude, he's already seen to it that you're going to stand before him with great joy. You need to spend more time in worship and less time striving.

You need to spend more time in childlike speaking with your father than groveling before him as though he were some cruel medieval lord. Then he says in verse 15, You are a garden spring, a well of fresh water, and streams flowing from Lebanon. From your innermost being will come rivers of living water.

We as Baptists, one thing about Baptist theology that you must understand is that Baptist theology, and I'm Baptist, and I hope I have a theology, but much of our theology is reactionary. It really is. And church, if you'll learn this one thing, if you'll believe it, you'll learn something.

Because of so many abuses with regard to the Holy Spirit, we are so afraid of the Holy Spirit. When was the last time you prayed the Holy Spirit would fill you? Just fill you? If you look in the book of Acts, every time something had to be done, it was preceded by the filling of the Holy Spirit. Church, if ever I could say this to you, and I love you, if ever I could say this to you, you have not because you ask not.

You have not because you ask not. And one of the reasons you ask not is because you've never understood your righteous place before God and Christ. And you spend most of your relationship, now listen to me, I love you, I want you to understand this, you spend so much of your relationship with God, wasting so much good spiritual energy, wasting so much emotional and physical energy, groveling before Him and trying to make yourself right, that you never get on to the good stuff.

Well, I don't know if I'm worthy. Well, we've already settled that, haven't we? Constantly be praying for the filling of the Holy Spirit. Constantly be praying for greater and greater measure of His manifestation in your life.

Constantly. Constantly. And I mean it should be an all-consuming passion with you, dear church.

Let's say that you work on a petroleum line, or you work in a factory, or in every task. You're a medical doctor, or an engineer, a lawyer, preacher, pastor. You've got to go out and mow the yard.

You should be crying out for a filling of the Holy Spirit. I used to tell young preachers, if you're going to preach, you've got to preach with the power of God on your life. Now I tell them, if you're going to tie your shoes, you need the power of God on your life.

There is so much more spiritual life available to you than what you would ever imagine. And you need to go. You need to stand on the righteousness of Christ and then go boldly into the throne of grace.

Is it not true? Would you not stand up right now in your heart and say, yes, yes, most of my prayer life is nothing more than groveling before God? One of the things that I was sharing at lunch today was one of the greatest gifts God gave me. The greatest gifts, my wife. After that, the little monsters that came after her.

And when my son was about a year and a half old, he was in our bedroom and he was up on the bed. And I came around the door. And the moment he saw me, his face lit up like a light.

And he threw his hands out like this. And there was not a doubt in his mind what his dad was going to do. He did not have a doubt.

He knew his dad was going to run across that room, pick him up and dance a jig. He knew his dad was going to kiss him. He knew his dad was going to hug him.

His dad was going to twirl around and tell him how much he loved him. There wasn't a doubt in his mind. But when I came across that threshold and I looked at him, I felt very impressed of the Lord.

It was almost like in my heart, Paul, you were like that once when you were a little boy. And it was stomped out of you. But I am your father.

And that's the way I want to see you every time I walk into the room. I teach theology. I travel all over theology.

Theology is extremely important. But true theology will always lead to a more and more childlike thing. This is what he said about me.

And this is what he said about you, church. Dear Christian, many of you have surveyed your heart. You've gone over all these passages and all the hard preaching that I've done.

You've been shocked. You've been offended. You've been worried.

I've said that men are wretched beasts, depraved. That if it were not for the common grace of God, the grace of God restraining men, we would all make Hitler look like a choir boy. And that is true.

But once you have become a child of God, do not, for the sake of grace, do not be running around, groveling like you were some wretched beast. You have been made a child of God. You have been redeemed.

Most Christians who really take the holiness of God seriously, I think their anthem would be something like this. You are God, holy and firm. Step on me and watch me squirm.

And they do not ever grasp the balance. And the balance is He is holy. And there are times when He manifests His holiness and it will cast us to the ground in awesome reverence.

And there are also times when He will so fill our hearts with joy that we'll dance a jig. We'll dance a jig. If you've never danced a jig, you're all too proper.

And you need to get right with God. Tomorrow night, you know, you say, well, where's the revival? Where's the weeping? There is no weeping for me. And do you want to know why? I told you exactly what the Lord wanted me to tell you tonight.

Some people, after they hear me preach several times, they'll come back and when they hear me preach like this, they get mad at me. They think I've compromised. They don't realize.

We have to proclaim the full counsel of God. And those of you who are God's lambs, oh, I would not lay a finger to strike you. Rejoice now.

Tomorrow night, I've talked about God's love for you. Tomorrow night, Lord willing, we're going to talk about you and your romance with God. I beg you not to come back because, oh, there's something going on here.

Because you need to come back even if there's nothing going on here. Because the Word of God is going to be open and the fellowship of the brothers and sisters are going to be here. I love you.

I love to say that that way. I really do. And God loves you.

God loves you. My little boy, I'll finish with this. My little boy, I don't know where he learned this.

I think my wife taught it to him, to be honest with you. I'll be laying there in bed after preaching all night and I'm dead. It's seven in the morning and he'll walk in the room and he'll get this close to my face.

This close. His nose is touching mine. Now, he doesn't let me know.

He just sneaks up on me, puts his nose right there and then he goes, Wake up! You know, that's why I have back problems. I almost go into a convulsion. But you know, I'd love to sneak up on you and get that close and go, Pastor?

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