

Peachtree Baptist Church - Part 4

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer emphasizes the necessity of true regeneration and the importance of distinguishing between the security and assurance of the believer in his sermon at Peachtree Baptist Church.

Duration: 1:28:06

Scripture: Matthew 7:20-21, Matthew 7:23, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:12, 1 John 2:3-4

Topics: "Following Jesus", "Eternal Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of walking in the footsteps of Jesus. He uses the analogy of a little boy trying to imitate his father's walk to illustrate the desire to live like Jesus. The preacher also highlights the role of the world and its father, the slanderer and accuser, in discouraging believers from following Jesus. He warns against superficial interpretations of biblical texts and emphasizes the need to truly understand and live out the gospel. The sermon concludes with a reminder that having a personal relationship with Jesus is the key to eternal life.

Transcript

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I come before you in the name of your Son, and apart from Him I know that I have no part with you, that He is our righteousness, our wisdom, our justification, our hope, our life, that apart from Him there is nothing. A Father who is sufficient for these things, to preach, Father, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

All flesh is grass, all preaching pathetic, in light of that one tree where Christ died. Father, I am speechless before the truth that I heard in that song. I don't know what to think, nor where to go.

Oh, that Christ might be highly esteemed and understood and revered. Father, help us. Help us.

Amen. Let's open up our Bibles to Romans chapter 3. I'm going to preach on a text that no matter where I preach, unless forbidden by the Holy Spirit to do so, I will preach on this text. And I have preached on it many times.

On Sunday, we studied the doctrine of regeneration, because among Baptists of all sorts, whether they be Calvinistic, Arminian, Southern, fundamental, matters not. The doctrine of regeneration has basically been thrown out the window and replaced by human decisionism. We have taken the Gospel and reduced it down to a few superstitious hoops, evangelical hoops, that if the preacher can make someone jump

through them, he then declares them popishly to be saved.

And it is committed by every sort of Baptist on the face of the earth, because as time progresses, we are losing what was known as the Baptist church. There are no longer any Baptist distinctives among us. It is a shame.

It is a shame. Before I go on to this text, before I even read my text, I want to just state a few things. I want to iterate some of the things that have been said.

First of all, again, I repeat this. Our evangelism is not biblical in its presentation. Our calling men to Christ is not biblical in its presentation.

And there is a great need to return to Scripture. That if in modern day evangelism, you come up to a man, you ask him, Sir, do you know if you are a sinner or not? If he says yes, you automatically jump to the next question, because that is what those silly little tracks tell you to do. The fact of the matter is, it does not matter a hill of beans if the man considers himself a sinner or not.

The question is not, Sir, do you know you are a sinner? The question is, has God done such a supernatural work in your heart after hearing the gospel that you now hate the sin you once loved? And then we go on to the question, Sir, do you want to go to heaven? It matters not if a man responds yes, because all men want to go to heaven. As the old preachers used to say, catch a field on fire, the serpents will run from the fire, but they're still serpents as they're running. Every man wants to go to heaven, it's just that most men don't want God to be there when they get there.

So the question is not, do you want to go to heaven? The question is, do you now desire the Christ that you have hated and spurned? And if they cry out yes, yes, a thousand times yes, it is not, do you want to open the door of your heart and let Jesus come in? I am so sick and tired of men who declare themselves to believe the Bible using that verse totally out of context. It's not what that text teaches. And every time I've confronted a man, he said, I know it's not what the text teaches, but it's a great illustration.

You have no right to do that. Because it's not a great illustration. Because nowhere in Scripture does it say that a man opened up his heart to receive God, but it does say that God opened up Lydia's heart that she might receive Christ.

And the call of the gospel is never, do you want to pray a prayer and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart? Because that's a perversion of Romans chapter 10. But the call is this, repent of your sins and believe the gospel. And when I say that, I hear people come to me, well, then how are we going to know whether they're saved or not? Well, the way they used to know, their life changes.

Because the assurance of salvation does not come from the fact that someone prayed a prayer at the end of your presentation. The evidence that someone is saved and the assurance that they must muster, a biblical assurance, does not come from the fact that they wrote their silly name in the back of their Bible. Assurance according to the New Testament comes from a changed life.

But if your life is not changed, you can have no assurance whatsoever. I see that God is upon this part, so I'm going to change tonight. I'm going to go to another section of Scripture.

On Thursday night, Lord willing, I will present the gospel of Jesus Christ. Tonight I want to deal, I see a need to deal with another. And it is this, the idea of security of the believer and the idea of assurance of

the believer.

Now, my history is a Southern Baptist history. I am in a Southern Baptist church, but I am not like modern-day Southern Baptists. I am like the old men in our school.

I go back to the Boices, to the B.H. Carrolls, and them. And not with the modern thought that has been induced by liberalism and German theology. Why the Southern Baptist embraced the very theology from Germany that closed every church in Germany, I will never know.

But if you consider yourself fundamentalist, biblical, conservative, or Calvinistic, I care not because the same blight that lays on us is found in you. It's all over. So that a Baptist of 150 years ago would be hard-pressed to find another Baptist on the face of the earth.

And so we're all guilty. But there is a way back. A returning to the old path.

There is a way back. And what we need to understand, and we're going to address the doctrine of assurance tonight. And the doctrine of the security of the believer.

Now, probably one of the greatest losses with regard to understanding Christianity and the gospel deals with the security of the believer and the assurance of the believer. When you take two doctrines and merge them into one, you lose both of them. And that is what has happened.

You always hear about the doctrine of security. But very rarely in American Baptists do you hear the doctrine of assurance. They're two different things.

And they are extremely important. Now, what is the doctrine of security? I don't like that terminology, but I'll use it because it's used today. It is simply this.

That the one who has truly believed in Jesus Christ, the same power that brought that person to repentance and faith, will keep that person in repentance and faith and will keep them saved. But now notice my terminology. How does God keep them saved? By keeping them, by His power in repentance and faith.

It's not like modern day preachers say today, basically you get saved as though it was some vaccination you received. And once you've got that out of the way, you can live like hell and you're still saved. That is not what the doctrine teaches.

But it is this. That every believer, true believer, is saved by the power of Almighty God through a work of regeneration. And that same power that saves, keeps.

Keeps. That's the doctrine of security. And so the doctrine of security is, every true believer is secure by the power of God.

The doctrine of assurance is this. But how do you know you're a true believer? It is true. Every true believer is kept by the power of God.

But how do you know you're a true believer? And especially in the South, where everyone in this county believes themselves saved, because some preacher who should have spent less time preaching and more time studying his Bible, told them they were saved. And so there is a doctrine of security, but there is a doctrine of assurance. How can you know? We all agree that the man who truly believes is saved.

But how can we know we truly believe? The question is usually something like this. Well, were you sincere when you prayed the prayer? My goodness. How we have fallen.

That's pathetic. It's nothing more than Roman superstition. I lived for many years in a country where Rome ruled.

And you would all just scoff at the fact that most Peruvians believed themselves saved because when they were infants, they were baptized into the church. You'd scoff at that. But Baptists of all types do the very same thing.

Except it's not infant baptism, it's prayer, superstitious prayer. It's the exact same thing. And especially when like wolves, teachers in Sunday school and teachers in vacation Bible school who do not understand the Gospel every summer pronounce salvation on a multitude of children and lead them straight into a path of hell.

Do you want to go to Jesus? How many little children stand up and go, Why no, I'd rather go to hell. How many of you want to go to Jesus? How many of you love Jesus? All of them, of course, in a frenzy. I do, I do.

Well then, pray this prayer. Now, pastor, 15 children prayed the prayer. Well, wonderful.

Wonderful. I wouldn't entrust my son to you. Oh, my dear friend.

How can we know that we're saved? I want us just for a moment, quickly, to go to 2 Corinthians. We're going to look at a few passages before we settle on our text. 2 Corinthians, chapter 13.

Now, the church in Corinth, from which we get the false idea of the carnal Christian, because there is no such thing. There is no such thing as a carnal Christian. A Christian can fall into carnality, a Christian can sin, but a Christian cannot live continuously in carnality.

It's impossible. When you've got all these silly little thrones, and you show it to some unconverted church member, and ask them, Who's on the throne? Jesus or you? And if Jesus is not, well, they're still saved, but they're not spiritual. All that is just the makeshift work of man.

You see, when you no longer have the power of God, and when the Scripture is no longer the thing that you live in and study, then you have to replace everything with quaint little superstitions and clichés, and booklets. It goes on. Now, the church in Corinth was not, some of them, of course, were not living as Christians when the letter is written to them.

Now, be careful though, because it was not always that way. Some died, and some got right, but none of them stayed carnal. Now, in 2 Corinthians, Paul comes to them, and he's dealing with whether or not these people are even saved.

And he doesn't come to them and say, Well, tell me, was there a point in time when you prayed and asked Jesus to come into your heart? But what does he do? In 2 Corinthians 13, verse 5, he says this, Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith. Prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? Now, what is he saying? He's looking at a group of people who are not walking in conformity to the way the New Testament describes a believer, and he comes to them and he says, Test yourself.

Prove yourself. Examine yourself. Open up your life in light of Scripture, because that is where true biblical assurance comes from.

The testimony of the Holy Spirit. Now, let me stop here. I hear so many people saying, Well, the Spirit bears witness that I am saved.

No, the Spirit bears witness through the Word whether or not you're saved. Because there's no way to validate that it's a true work or impression of the Spirit except it be conformed to the Word. Because what we have is a bunch of carnal, wicked people who are being impressed by the Holy Spirit that they're genuinely saved when they're not.

The Spirit uses the sword, the Word of God to testify. Now, he says, And in true Hebrew form, when emphasis is being made, there is an iteration or a repetition. Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith.

Prove yourselves or test yourselves. In light of what? In light of Scripture. Now, I sometimes teach in pastors' conferences and missionaries' conferences, and I ask them, I simply ask them, When was the last time you told somebody this? And for the most part, they say, Well, never.

Well, why? What are you doing? How are you giving people assurance? How is false assurance being destroyed? How is every thought being taken captive to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? How are speculations being destroyed in your church if you're not using the Word of God? You see, we treat the conversion of a man as though it was the most minuscule, unimportant event in their life. And I can prove it. When somebody makes a profession of faith in the church, let's say I'm preaching, or let's say in a normal, typical Baptist church, someone is preaching, someone comes forward, the preacher receives them, and then introduces them to the congregation and says, So-and-so got saved tonight.

Let me ask you a question. When did the Pope die and when did you get appointed? How do you know? Based on what? The profession of faith of a man that you don't even know? What is the Word to say? If you genuinely care and you genuinely understand the Scripture, it is this. This gentleman, this lady has come forward and professed faith in Jesus Christ tonight, and in that we rejoice, and for the next several weeks, maybe even months, we will be examining and counseling and caring for this person to make sure that they are sure, biblically, that Christ has done a work of salvation here tonight.

But no, we've got to go to Denny's. No, we've got to write on some paper and send it off to some denominational headquarters how many people got saved, but we never happen to mention how many don't come on Sunday morning. Now, if you think I'm being satirical, if you think I'm being... I am.

I am. That has a place in preaching. If you study the prophets and use them as an example in your preaching, satire has a place.

It is to anger people. It is to go against the grain in their lives to show how foolish, how far we have fallen, and not just in simple matters. I mean, we'll argue all day over the book of Revelation, and yet the very foundations of the gospel no longer stand.

He says, test yourself. Examine yourself. Now, before we go to our main text, I want us to look over at another place.

Let's go to 2 Peter 1, verse 10. Now listen to what Peter says. And I wish, because this is a primary text that needs to be preached with regard to assurance, but I just have time to do verse 10.

He says, Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things, ye shall never fall. What is he saying? Now listen to this. There are certain texts in the Bible in Hebrews, here, and what it is calling for diligence.

Now, is this not foreign to the Baptist church in America? That a preacher would spend much time so that his ministry would be marked in his congregation by constantly encouraging and pleading with his congregation to do what? To give diligence to make their calling and election sure. Be diligent, examining your life, pressing forward into the kingdom of God, making sure that you really come to Him. No! Why? Because we have such a superstitious view of the Gospel.

The Catholic church never tells anybody to check and make sure that they're really saved. And neither do the Baptists anymore. Why? Because the Catholic church has a ritual and so do we.

Two rituals, but they do the same thing. They damn souls to hell. They baptize infants and we get them to repeat a prayer.

It is the truth! And I'll stand not only in Scripture. Yes, I am a doctor of interpretation. I know what I'm talking about.

I know that one of the main principles of hermeneutics is this, that you always do your theology in the context of the church. That means if I interpret a passage, I must go back through 2,000 years of Christian history, 2,000 years of theology, 2,000 years of hermeneutics, and if everyone disagrees with me, I'm probably wrong. But I tell you, every ancient Baptist that ever walked on the face of the earth would have preached this sermon I'm preaching tonight.

It's the truth. It's just the truth. That's all it is.

It's the truth. Don't you know in the Great Awakening, you know, some people tell me I preach this and they go, oh, that's Calvinism. No, John and Charles Wesley preached this.

And they were more Baptists than Baptists today. So don't be talking about them in my presence. Everybody preached this.

The Congregational preached this. The Presbyterian preached this. The Methodist.

The Arminian Methodist and the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist. They all preached this. And these were the things that brought about the Great Awakening and revival.

Because the average pastor in the pulpit had died to theology and not being given to study, but being given to busyness and having his throat clogged by all the programs that come down from denominational headquarters. He no longer studies Scripture and he can't preach it except clichés or something he read in some book written by a guy who shouldn't write books. But it's true.

It's just true. It's just true. That's why I say, young men, be afraid of any book that isn't at least 100 years old.

Now, there is a need. Now, another thing I want you to understand. Assurance is a grace.

Assurance is a grace. In order to discipline a true believer, God might remove assurance from them so that they might seek Him again. Now, this is old Baptist theology.

But more important, it's biblical. Assurance is a grace. Now, I want us to go to 1 John and that's where we're going to take our text.

1 John. And go to chapter 5. Verse 13. The wonderful thing about John is that he gives us the reason for his writing.

And that's quite an amazing thing. He does that in the Gospel. The Gospel was written so that we would believe in Christ.

1 John is written so that we would know whether or not we believe unto salvation. And listen to me. I mean, I graduated from no small seminary.

I never heard these things in seminary. And yet, when you start digging back in history, 1 John was the book. It was the pastoral book to affirm the salvation of someone.

And now it's not even used anymore. And sometimes when I speak about it in pastor's conferences, they say, I've never even heard that before in my life. But just 70 years ago, it was the book.

Someone came to a pastor and they said, Pastor, I'm just scared. I don't have much assurance. I don't feel strong.

Break out 1 John. Now, it says in 5.13, These things I have written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God that you may know that ye have eternal life and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. Now, go back to 13.

These things. What are these things? The book. The book of 1 John.

Better to say the letter of 1 John. These things I have written unto you. To whom is he writing? To those who believe.

Now, what is this referring to? John was a man. He looked at men. Men who professed faith in Christ were declared by and large in the New Testament men who believed with the understanding that no man can look into the heart of a man to discern whether he truly believes.

What is John referring to? Those of you who have professed faith in Christ. Those of you who have made yourself members of this body. Those of you who have taken on baptism.

I am writing these things so that through reading these things and the working of the Holy Spirit in your heart, you will have assurance, biblical assurance, that you are truly saved or have no assurance whatsoever. Now, what are these things? If you look through the structure of 1 John, it is set out for us a series of tests. 1 John is a series of tests that if one goes through these tests, not mechanically, but through the working of the Holy Spirit, prayerfully, it is revealed to the heart of a man either the truth or the falsehood of the salvation he professes.

Now, what is amazing, I was preaching this in St. Louis several years ago and the pastor came up to me after the sermon and he goes, Paul, when you went to that text, I was terrified. And I said, why? He said, well, I have so many women in this church that are so fragile in their assurance and I thought you were,

you know, when you went through those tests, they were just going to drive them into the grave. And he goes, I have to just stand here and repent before you because these weakest saints in my church who have always wondered about their assurance, they are back there right now weeping tears of joy.

I said, yes, of course. Truth will do that. It will give you something more than, yes, I think I was sincere when I prayed that prayer.

Now, let's look at the tests. And I want everyone to take this test. We should all be taking this test.

Always. There is so much about salvation. So much meat about salvation and the working of God in salvation that is so not even considered anymore.

You know, a man, just as a side note, a man could appear to walk with God for 25 years and serve the Lord heartily, mightily, and then fall into a state of disillusion, fall into a state of doubt, to believe themselves lost. And how should they be treated? Some well-meaning souls should not come up to them, rub them on the back and say this is all nonsense and an attack from the devil. Because you have no right to say that.

But to go to Scripture and say, brother, whatever you are, let's go to Scripture and discover. Let's either seal this casket once and for all that you might repent and believe unto salvation, or brother, let's find assurance in God's Word. I hear so many preachers that someone will come to them and go, you know, I don't know if I'm saved.

And they'll say, well, that's just the devil. No, it just might be the Holy Spirit. You might just be getting very close to blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Oh, the workings of salvation. It's nothing. Go to a Christian bookstore.

How many books are written about on us being filled or us being empty or our psychosis or our psychology or this or that or our felt needs or your best life now or healthy, wealthy, and wise or something. And how many books are written on discerning whether or not you're going to hell. Why? Because we've given that segment of theology over to superstition.

Just like the Catholic Church. Except they did it from the beginning. Because they never were a church to start off with.

Now, first test. Chapter 1, verse 5. This is the message which we have heard from Him. And declare unto you that God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.

Now, be careful here with John. Be very careful. Most people take a look at this passage and say there's no darkness in Him.

It means that God is morally pure. That God is holy. God is light.

And that's true. But, in John's writing, we find this also in the Gospel. He seems to write using terminology at times so frequently that terminology that can be given to more than one interpretation.

It seems like he's trying to say more than even language permits. And if you look at the context of this book, the problems that were going on with the roots of Gnosticism and everything else, what is he saying? Well, yes, there's a sense in which he's saying, by saying God is light, that God is holy and God is

pure. But I believe the stronger sense here is this.

That God is light in the sense that God has revealed Himself. He has made Himself known and He has made His will known. Because the cult or the group, the roots of Gnosticism that was attacking this church, they believed that the knowledge of God was esoteric.

That it was dark. That it was hidden. That no one could really know who God was and no one could really know what His will truly was.

And John is coming and he's saying, no, God is light. He is holy. He is all those things.

But also, God has shown us who He is and He has shown us what His will requireth of thee. He has made Himself known and it is clear. Now, looking at that, we're going to see some things.

Now, here's the test. If we say that we have fellowship with Him. Now, old interpretation of this.

Or let me give you the new interpretation of this. If we say that we're Christians walking in communion with God. The old way of looking at this.

And the way I accept. If we say that we're Christians. Period.

People take this text that was started in no small seminary out west. The idea of carnal Christianity. But it's taken to mean, well, He that is a Christian and walking with God or He that is a Christian and not walking with God.

But that is not what John's talking about. John, when he says, have fellowship. He is talking about whether you are a believer or not.

And he says this. If we say that we have fellowship with Him. If we say we're a Christian.

If we say we're a child of God. If we say we're born again. And walk in darkness.

We lie and do not the truth. Now, what is John saying? He's saying this. If you make the profession of faith.

If you declare yourself to be a Christian. But, you walk in a way that contradicts what God has revealed about Himself and contradicts what God has revealed to be His will. You lie when you say you're a Christian.

Now, here John is not talking about perfectionism and a very important word here that he's using. Walk. Peripateo.

To walk around. Referring to a style of life and not Christian perfectionism. And what he's talking about is this.

If you say you are a Christian and yet your style of life, the way you generally live before men, your practical evident life, if it contradicts what we know about the character and attributes of God, if it contradicts what we know to be God's will, you're a liar when you say you're a Christian. It's that simple. It's just that simple.

That's what he's saying. Now, I often use this illustration. And when I take a person doubting their assurance through this book, I do not take them through as violently as I am you.

But I'll take them through and I'll say, now I want you to understand this. If you were to follow me around with a snapshot camera, just click, and it took one photo. If you followed me around long enough, you would be able to pinpoint a moment when I was sinning, whether in attitude, my facial expression, whatever.

You'd be able to pinpoint a time when I was sinning. And if you went click and took that picture, you could say, you could blow the picture up, you could put it in front of the church and say, see, I didn't like that preacher and I had reason. Look at him.

He's a sinner. He's not even saved. Alright? That's a distortion of my life.

That's just one moment of my life. But if you followed me around with a video camera 24 hours a day, now that would not be a distortion. And that's what John's talking about here when he says peripateo, when he talks about walking in the light.

The true Christian, although not perfect by any means, although growing, although changing, although at times stumbling, if you were to take a holistic look at their life, you would see that the general style of life that they live conforms to what Scripture says about the attributes and character of God and conforms to the will of God that has been revealed. And if that doesn't happen, be afraid. I warn congregations, I say now, and this is a word that really changed my preaching, and it's this, reality.

Let me ask you a question. Is this a reality in your life? If someone were to study your life, the general whole of it, would they say that that life that you live has something to do with or has some agreement with what we know about God and the way He is and what we know about the will of God that He has revealed to us? Or does it contradict what we know about God and what we know about His will as a style of life? Now, that's my question for you. Again, remember, in Matthew 7 we learned what's your profession of faith in Jesus Christ were? Absolutely nothing.

Because many will come before Him on that day and say, Lord, Lord, and He'll say, depart from me. He says, He who does the will of my Father. Again, doing the will of the Father is not the means by which we are saved.

It is the evidence that we have been saved by faith. Now, He says, if we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.

So the first test, the first question, do you walk in the light as a style of life? Because if you don't, I declare to you with all the authority of God's Word that you need to be afraid. I cannot tell you you are lost at this moment, but I can tell you that whatever assurance that you have, it's on shaky ground. And there is enough here to encourage you to put aside absolutely everything in your life to discern this one question.

Is it well with my soul? Now, the second test. Verse 8. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His Word is not in us. This is the Holy Spirit. I mean, I don't see how anyone can read.

Well, I do, but it's foolish to be able to read this and not see how it has to be inspired. The Holy Spirit is just so wise. I mean, right here, when He comes at us with this text which some would falsely interpret to mean that you have to be sinless or perfect or sinless to have assurance, He comes back and says something completely almost the contrary, and really it's not.

It compliments. And what is He saying? First of all, the first test. A true Christian will walk in the light as a style of life, and even though they may get off the light, they may be off the narrow path, the discipline of the Father will bring them back and their general style of life will be one of walking in the light.

Now, the second one is this. The evidence that a person is truly Christian is not that they are sinless, but that they have such a new relationship with sin that when they sin, they must and will be led to final repentance and confession. That is the truth.

Now, I want to tell you something that when I say this to pastors, sometimes pastors and preachers, we just have to laugh, because if we didn't laugh, we'd cry. And most preachers, when they hear this, they just laugh, because it's true. Is it not true, pastor, that when you have preached from the pulpit, you know, there are those rare times, and I wish they were more frequent in all of our lives, but there are those rare times when we preach when there is a special sense of God.

And God will start dealing with people in their sin. Have you experienced that? I mean, regardless of what all these charismatic TV evangelists... I mean, they can't steal our heritage. It is true.

The Holy Spirit can begin to move and deal with people. But pastor, isn't it amazing that it is always the case that the most godly, most devoted, most loving, and most Christ-like members in the church are the ones who come forward weeping and broken and rending their garments, and the coldest, meanest, carnal church members sit back there as though nothing was going on. And what are we seeing? The wheat and the tares being divided.

Because the true evidence of Christianity is not that you are sinless, but that sin will break your heart because it's a new heart made in the image of God and true righteousness and true holiness, and it can no longer deal with such sin. It must vomit it out. It must run away from it.

It must go to the Savior. Now, it may take time. It may take discipline.

It may take a rebuke. It may take something. But they will be brought to confession.

Oh, my dearest friend, the greatest sign that you're a true believer is that you're broken. And the greatest sign that God, in a sense, even esteems you, He says, upon this one I will look. One who's broken, the one who's contrite, the one who trembles at My Word.

It's unbelievable. Some people who profess faith in Christ, their heart is like an autumn leaf blown by the wind. If you even hint to them some indiscretion, their heart will break in two and they'll want to get right with God.

You have to calm them a bit. And yet there are others that in the face of being convicted, demonstrated publicly that they are full of sin and rebellion, they will harden their hearts, stiffen their chin, and walk out

the door with self-righteousness. And they'll go to the very next Baptist church and join.

And the pastor will take them in because membership's important. You've got to pay for that building somehow. My dear friend, as I said last night, when someone comes to me and says, I've got a new relationship with God, I always ask them, do you have a new relationship with God's Word? Because if you don't, you don't have a new relationship with Him.

I say, do you have a new relationship with sin? Because if you don't have a new relationship with sin, you don't have a new relationship with God. And it's so easy to illustrate this. The radically depraved, unregenerated heart will walk with sin, will have no problem with sin.

They walk together because they're in agreement. They are friends. They are partners in this rebellion against God.

They love one another. They are of common mind and common confession and common deed. But when a man is saved, his relationship with sin changes so that as he was walking with sin, he now turns.

And although he may still lock arms with sin, sin is wanting to go that way and he is desiring to go this way. And it will be a struggle and there will be victory. Now, I need to preface this.

We need to be careful. Sometimes before that victory becomes evident, it will be three steps backward and one step forward. Four steps backward and one step forward.

But eventually, by the power of God, there will be victory. Because the God who saved you from Egypt has the power to bring you into Emmanuel's land. Sin.

Now, the reality. Does sin break your heart? The most impressive thing I ever heard about a man. And I don't know him.

I've never even heard him preach. But I was hearing one of the older men who mentors me talk about a fellow named B.B. Caldwell. And he said one time, B.B. Caldwell, he said he saw him just over by himself.

He was crying. And he was going, I hate sin! I hate sin! Oh, I would give up every other gift, every other privilege, if I could just come to that point in my life as an old man where I hate sin as much as God hates sin. And love righteousness as much as God loves righteousness.

To hate sin. To hate it. You see, here's kind of how it works.

A man is regenerated. He's granted repentance. He's granted faith.

With that, he believes unto salvation. I love that. Now, what happens? This is what happens.

In that repentance and faith, how does he repent? Well, we know it's the work of the Spirit, work of the heart being regenerated and all that. But there's also the idea of God has revealed Himself. Albeit a small way, but God has revealed Himself to that man.

And that man, seeing something of God, now sees something of himself. He is brought down into repentance, brokenness, but it is not a repentance unto death because in that same revelation that showed him his sin also appears the grace of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and he's lifted up and filled with joy. And then what happens? That man continues walking.

And as he continues walking, there comes throughout his lifetime greater and greater revelations of God, which brings that man to greater and greater degrees of repentance and brokenness and everything, but it is not a repentance unto death. And why is that? Because there is greater revelation of the grace of God which lifts that man up to greater joy. So in the end, what you see is this.

And young preacher, listen to me on this. This is how it works. When you start off preaching, you start off walking with God as a young man, your joy comes from your performance.

It basically does. It comes from your performance. I did well today.

I did this today. I preached well. Or if you didn't preach well, you're just thrown down in the dust.

Alright, now as you grow, here's what's going to happen. Your joy has been boistered at the beginning by your performance, which is your pride. As you walk with God, you are going to be driven further and further down in brokenness and repentance.

And yet, your joy is going to increase and increase and increase, because now when you reach the end of your life, you are more broken than you could have ever imagined possible. And at the same time, you are more joyful than you could have ever imagined possible, because you've cast off this foolish idea that standing with God through your performance, and now your eyes are only set upon Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. And that's why trials and everything else come into your life.

The purpose is to kill you that He might give you life, to destroy you that He might give you joy, to break you. And the preaching today, because we love people so much, we don't want them to be hurt. And so we protect that concrete casing around their heart and around their life so that they never experience the joy of God.

I'll never forget. I was preaching in Tennessee and somewhat of a revival broke out. And there was a lady.

She was in charge of the counseling and she had all these people prepared and she did not like me at all. And a move of God began and I was supposed to nod at her and tell her when she was supposed to send in her army of counselors. And people started coming down and people were weeping.

I'll never forget a little girl to my left was almost convulsing in pain over her sin. Oh, is there mercy for me? Is there mercy for me? And I was watching that lady and she was looking at me like, we need to go. And I went... And I knew that woman was going to bolt on me.

And so I went down and I stood beside her and I said, no. No counselors. And finally she looked at me and she just went and stepped out and I put my hand on her shoulder.

I said, sister, no. What was I doing? What was I doing? She was trying to comfort people that God was wounding. Because she cares more for humanistic humanity than the glory of God.

That is just the truth. I remember Duncan Campbell speaking about an old woman coming to get him when the great revival broke out in the great Hebrides. And she came and she goes, oh, Mr. Duncan, Mr. Duncan, come.

Her husband was a notorious sinner, a notorious drunk. She said, come, he's beside himself. So he ran out to this farmhouse and there's the cellar.

And the wife, she opened up the door and there was the man down at the bottom of the cellar. He had ahold of the pillars of the house and he was screaming, I'm going to hell! I'm going to hell! And his wife said, Mr. Duncan, look at the mighty sinner now. And she slammed the door.

Leave him in there. Do not heal those whom God is wounding or you will find yourself to be a false prophet crying out peace and comfort when there is none. Let God disturb them and let God give them peace.

You have authority, young men, to tell men how to be saved. You do not have authority to tell them they are. And most people walking around this county believe themselves saved because their pastor told them they were.

Now, and let me go back. Sarah, just again, it's the same illustrations, but it's so necessary. Dear friend, listen to me.

There are people that come under conviction of sin in a meeting and even before, I mean, halfway through the meeting, they cry out to God, Save me. And God saves them. And not only saves them, but gives them assurance of their salvation.

That quick. With one tiny little prayer, God, save me. And that's wonderful when that happens.

But there are also times, and in God's providence, I do not understand it, but it is true, it is biblical, it is historical, men might wrestle for weeks. Where is that in our churches today? Where is it? No. Go through the prayer.

Repeat it. Squeeze my hand. If what I'm saying now to God is what you would like to say to Him, squeeze my hand and you'll be saved.

That comes out of Southern Baptist evangelism. I've seen it. And don't smirk because it comes out of yours too.

My dear friend, what have we done? What have we done? Oh, sometimes the most wonderful, loving thing you can do to a person seeking God is tell them, go home. Go home. Go home.

Someone says, well, you know, I like to strike when the iron's hot. Well, if God's heated up the iron, don't worry, it's not going to cool off. He who began a good work will do it.

How many people have I gone to and said, go home. Cry out to Him. I can do nothing for you.

You know the Gospel. You understand it with your mind. Cry out to Him until He finds you.

And they do. I stay with them through the night. Sir, I'll stay here all night.

We'll go through all the promises of God. We'll pray. We'll cry out to Him.

How many times have I seen people read over promises and promises and pray and cry out, and then all of a sudden, bam! I'm saved! God saved me! Yes. Yes, indeed. And then when they say that, I say, yes, with a full heart, I'm happy.

But know this, hear the first warning of an evangelist. You walk out of here tonight, if this profession is true, it will be confirmed by a continuing work of God in your life. But if you go out here tonight and nothing changes, you've got nothing here tonight.

Oh, read Pilgrim's Progress when you get time. Understand our heritage. Oh, the wonder and the shame of being Baptist.

The wonder and the shame. The wonder and the shame. Wonder at our history.

Shame at our present state. Now, we go on. There's another test.

Verse 3 of chapter 2, And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in Him. My goodness, look at that! Look what he's saying! Your relationship to the commands of God will be evidence that you are saved or not saved.

Now, let me ask you, in the average Baptist church today, how much time is given preaching about anything God's commanded? As I said before, in Matthew chapter 7, you can look at that and actually, you can translate it. I mean, to be saying, if you want to give clarity to the translation that's there, it is, depart from me those of you who called yourself my disciples, but you lived as though I never gave you a law to obey, a precept to follow, or wisdom to listen to. Antinomianism.

Lawlessness. Has God not spoken with regard to our minds and what we're allowed to think? Hath not God spoken with regard to our hearts and what should dwell there? Hath not God spoken what our eyes should and should not see, what our ears should and should not hear, how we should and should not clothe our bodies? Isn't it pathetic that an itinerant preacher like me, I do not so much have to pray up when I'm preaching under a tent in inner city San Antonio, but I have to pray up and know that I'm walking with the Lord when I walk into an average Baptist church because of the way most people dress. You say it's legalism.

No, it's not. There are commands in the Bible. It doesn't say we're all supposed to dress like a Puritan, but it does say we're supposed to be decent and cause no offense or stumbling.

Well, you can't judge a book by its cover. Yes, you can. Jesus said you can.

By their fruits you will know. I believe fruits there is plural so that it's speaking about all the aspects of their life. My dear friend, the commands of God.

Let me give you an example. In my denomination, multi-millions of dollars is spent on Sunday school. Sunday school to teach our children.

Nowhere in Scripture does it command that there be a Sunday school. But Scripture does command with all the authority of the Decalogue and all the authority of the inspired Word of the Holy Spirit commands fathers to teach their children. And not one dime is spent towards that.

Why? We prefer plan B rather than plan A because plan B makes the church look big. We've taken over. You just can't do things your own way.

Everyone does what is right in their own eyes. Now, I'm not saying it's unbiblical to have a Sunday school, but what I am saying is it's unbiblical to replace the commandments of God with the traditions of men. And preacher, let me ask you a question.

How much time have you spent preaching that the fathers, under the admonition of the Word of God, must take control of their families, give up their hobbies, and dedicate themselves to their wives and the

teaching of the Scriptures to their children? No, Sunday school. Youth group? My goodness! Yes. The most pathetic thing in America today is youth ministry.

It is pathetic. You get some young, personable young man who's never raised a family, doesn't know anything, and he's going to take your children? And then your children become a companion of fools because they only learn from each other. Look what we're doing.

You say, Brother Paul, yes, I do believe the very foundations of almost everything that we're doing today in America ought to be exploded and destroyed so that you just understand where I'm coming from. I believe it's wrong, wrong, wrong. And I won't cooperate with it.

I won't leave it, but I won't cooperate with it. It's just wrong. It's a circus.

The church has turned into a six flags over Jesus. Entertainment. It's wrong.

It's just wrong. It's just wrong. It's just flat out wrong.

There's no biblical precedent for it. There's no contextual grammatical precedent for it. There's no historical precedent for it.

Your families come to church and they're segregated immediately. Woman goes to a class. Dad goes to a class.

Children go to a class. Youth go to a class. What on earth is going on? You destroy the family with your church.

And the parents like it that way because they don't have to deal with their children. But that's another sermon. And whereby we do know that we know Him if we keep His commandments.

Now, this is not speaking again about perfectly walking in the commandments of God because we've already been assured that we will not. But it is again about a lifestyle. A new reality has come into your world and the reality is the commandments of God.

Are the commandments of God pertinent? Are they before you? Is your life being directed by them? Is there any reality of the Word? Because if there's not, be afraid. Be afraid. No, not everyone is a scholar.

Not everyone is a theologian. Not everyone has the gift of teaching. Another thing about Sunday school.

Just get more teachers and build more classes. Have you not read James? Let not many of you become teachers because you'll undergo greater condemnation. We totally bypass that and make as many teachers as we possibly can.

Well, they're not qualified. Well, they'll get qualified while they're teaching. How many times have I heard that? It's a lie and it's abomination and it's one of the reasons for the destruction of what's going on today.

Folks, I know I sound critical and I know some will walk out of here saying I'm just bitter and frustrated. But my dear friend, this is really true. It really is.

It really is true. It really is true. We're to impress upon our people the commandments of God.

And what does John tell us in this very epistle? They're not burdensome or a grave thing for the people of God because our hearts have been renewed. Our hearts have been regenerated. We've been given new hearts created in the image of God and true righteousness and true holiness.

And we're going to love these things. Now, my dear friend, I am not saying that if you're a true Christian, you're never going to have a time when you don't want to study the Word. I'm not saying that you're never going to have a time that your heart's not dull because I go through those times.

Any man who said he didn't is a liar. But at the same time, when I am that way, it breaks my heart. And the second test applies again.

I'm brought to confession. God, how can I be this way? But do the commandments of God have any fashion in your life? Now, it goes on to verse 6, another test. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.

The one who is a Christian will walk as Jesus walked. You say, well, then we're all going to hell. No, understand this.

Let me give you an illustration. It's the best way I can explain this verse. When I was a little boy, even though I was terrified of my dad, I respected him, and I wanted to be like him.

And we lived in the north, and we'd get these big snowfalls at times when we were kids. And my dad, we raised cattle, and my dad would get me up every little boy. He'd get me up 5.30 in the morning, 5. First Bible verse I ever heard was, Paul, boy, get up, no rest for the wicked.

That's what he used to tell me. And I would get up, and we would go out, and it'd still be dark, and there'd be snow on the ground, and the way the snow is at night when just the moonlight's on it. And my dad was a large man, and he would walk and take these gigantic steps that so far superseded and surpassed my ability.

But I would grab the feed buckets or the water buckets or whatever I was carrying, and I would, with all my might, I would stretch from one footprint to another and try to put my feet in my father's footprints. It was the great desire. And how did you know it was the great desire of that little boy's heart? Because he did it.

Now, in doing it, I looked foolish. In doing it, I couldn't really do it. In doing it, many times I stumbled and fell down.

But you could see through those attempts that the real desire of that little boy's heart was to walk just like his dad. That's what this is teaching here. It's not teaching that you'd just walk through the world as Jesus would with all the authority and power and sinlessly and gloriously.

No, but someone can look at your life and see the great passion of your life is to walk like He walked. And also, this is a good word about the world and its father, the slanderer and the accuser. When I was a little boy and I'd walk that way, if some man was just coming by and saw us who didn't know us and didn't know how well my dad could fight, he would probably say, look at that stupid kid, what's he trying to do? But my dad would look back and know what I was trying to do.

And if he'd ever heard some man say such a thing, that man, he would have had words with him. In the same way, I know so many people when someone genuinely, even in the church, when someone

genuinely becomes revived of the Holy Spirit and desires to really walk with God, other people will say, look at them. You know, goody two-shoes, holier than thou.

What's happened to them? Well, I remember them when they were this way and that way. Well, they thought they... Congratulations, you're doing the work of your father the devil when you do that. Now, he says, verse 8, another test.

Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in him and in you, because the darkness is past and the true light now shineth. I just want to stop here for a second before we go to the next test. Do you see how clearly this points out a progressive sanctification? Not only in the deeds, but in revelation and understanding.

One of the greatest New Testament covenant... New Testament or New Covenant promises is this, they shall all be taught of God. No one will have to say to his neighbor, know the Lord. They'll know him.

The smallest believer will know. And the Spirit will guard and guide that believer and lead that believer into greater and greater revelations of who God is and what God desires. And you will see greater and greater manifestations of grace in that believer.

Albeit, that at times that believer will take one step forward and two steps back. There'll be struggles, there'll be wars, there'll be scars. But over the course of their life, you will see progressive sanctification.

Progressive sanctification. Now, let's go on and look at this. He says, Verse 9, He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in darkness even until now.

He that loveth his brother abideth in the light and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness and knoweth not whether he goeth because the darkness hath blinded his eyes. Now, Charles Leiter, who's been just a great blessing to my life, he's been a father to me, I've heard him say countless times when he's preaching, he'll say, you know, I go into a church and they're all, you know, a deacon gets up and says, you know, we're Christians.

We shouldn't be hating one another. If you're hating one another, you're not Christian. You see, here it goes back to the idea that salvation is not simply a human decision whereby a person decides to jump out of the line going to hell in order to jump into the line going to heaven.

Salvation is a supernatural work of God and if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. And there are certain things he cannot do in the same sense that a good tree cannot produce bad fruit. And the greatest manifestation of your Christianity is loving your brother.

Now, brother here is not the poor, even though we ought to love the poor. Brother here is not someone of another color, even though we ought to love all people of all colors. Brother here refers to Christian, to other Christians.

You hear these men who say, oh, the church is just full of hypocrites. I can worship God in this bass boat or this deer stand or this or that. Again, they're doing the work of their father, the devil.

They hate God's people. They hate them. Love for the brethren is one of the greatest tests.

Young people, especially for young people. If you love to be with worldly carnal people, it's because you are a worldly carnal person. And that's just all there is to it.

If you do not enjoy the fellowship of the saints... Now, let me tell you something. Fellowship is not when two saints get together. Fellowship is when two saints get together and talk about Jesus.

Now, let me ask you a question. When was the last time you just bumped into a Christian and started talking about Jesus and not the ball game? When was the last time? You know, I could literally stop attending church and still be as biblical as everybody who goes. Because if you read Hebrews correctly, forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, that's what you're told to do.

But that's not the purpose or the end of why you congregate. It's to care for one another, encourage one another. Look what we've done.

We come to church. We sing because we're led. And we feed because we're fed.

And we walk back out the door. You should walk in church. Pete's Tree Baptist Church.

Let me just tell you something. You should be praying before you get here. You should be praying as you walk in this door.

And you should be praying, Holy Spirit, show me to whom I can go. Show me to whom I can minister. Show me who needs encouragement.

I want to minister before the service, after the service. I want to be a blessing. I know a little woman that didn't feel enough courage to speak with anyone.

And she would just go and just at night pray and pray over the people who were in her church. And then she would write out Bible verses as she felt like the Holy Spirit was giving them to her, to hand. And she'd come to church and she'd say, The Lord wanted me to give you this verse.

And the Lord wanted me to give you this verse. Why are you here? In Peru we say, Tu vives porque el aire es gratis. The only reason you're alive is because air is free.

I mean, why do you come here? Just to feed? We're a body. Someone asked me a while back, What will it take to bring reformation and revival to America? And I think it will take persecution that either destroys all our churches or turns our buildings over to homosexual communities to live. Sometimes I get scared.

We don't function as an organism, a spiritual organism. We function as an organization. Boy, you get in a house church in the middle of the jungle in Peru during the war with the Sendero Luminoso and talk about fellowship.

You get with a bunch of believers on the Amazon River in a downpour and hear their praises go up to heaven. You go to a third world country where they fellowship together because they have no other place to go. And they have no money and they have no food.

And they cry out to one another. And they're begging one another and they're crying out to God. And they're caring for one another.

Our fullness kills us. Poverty never hurt the church. Wealth, yes.

Well, fellowship. Now, let me give you an example. You know the passage in Scripture where Jesus says, I was naked and you didn't clothe me.

I was hungry and you didn't feed me. I was in prison and you didn't visit me. And all that.

And we use that verse to start prison ministries. Well, that's not what the verse is about. Now, we ought to have prison ministries, but that's not what the verse is talking about.

Let me share with you what the verse is talking about. If you ever lived in Peru or other third world countries, you'd understand this. In Peru, for years, there was a prison called Lurigancho.

It's considered one of the worst prisons in the Western Hemisphere. If you're thrown into that prison, as in other prisons around the world, you do not have a shelter in that prison. It's four walls.

You do not get food in that prison. You do not get water in that prison. You do not get clothing in that prison.

If you get sick, you do not get medicine in that prison. And the only way you're going to live in that prison is if someone from the outside comes every day and gives you what you need to survive. A family member, a friend, or so on and so forth.

Now, what is Jesus talking about? In the division of the sheep and the goats, what is He talking about? He's talking about this. Christians who stood and made the good profession of faith, they professed faith in Jesus Christ publicly and they were thrown into prison. Now, when word gets back to the congregation that so-and-so deacon or so-and-so brother or so-and-so sister has been thrown into prison for being a believer in Jesus Christ, the community of faith has to get together and the Holy Spirit has to raise up someone who says, alright, I'll go.

I'll take them water. I'll take them food. I'll take them clothing.

But the problem is this, when that person goes with the clothing, with the food, with the water, the authorities identify that person as a Christian and throw them in the prison too. That's what He's talking about, America. Not a prison ministry.

He's talking about My people. They were sick. They were in prison.

My people. And you did not help them. And in not helping them, you demonstrated you did not love Me.

And not loving Me means I never regenerated your heart. You see how you can just take the blade off all these verses when you just kind of glimpse over them and pull out the newest commentary written and then just open it up and say, oh, there's my text. Instead of looking at what it says.

Because when you look at what it says, it's frightening it's so powerful. It's just like the thing, you know, the Roman road. I want to tell you something, the Roman road has sent more people to hell than any other thing I know of.

Because it's superstition. It's evangelical fundamental superstition. That's all it is.

Now someone who knows the Gospel could use that track and probably use it properly, but most people don't know the Gospel. Let me share with you something. Believe in your heart.

Profess with your mouth. Confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord. Yes, that applies to a man calling on the Lord to be saved.

But at the same time, let's just look at something here. The context is Rome. Romans 8. Like lambs led to the slaughter.

We're being slaughtered. What could it mean? It could also mean this. All of us are working construction and we're believers.

We're just having a good time out there and all of a sudden we hear the pounding of a drum. Boom, boom, boom. And just terror fills our hearts.

We look out the door of the building we're working on and here comes the Roman soldiers and they're all carrying that altar. And there's a little bit of smoke going up from it. And they put that thing down and they stand there with their swords and they say, Come.

And one who is not among us as a believer walks up there gleefully, takes a pinch of incense and throws it into the fire and goes, Caesar is Lord! Walks away happy. And then it's our turn. And the first brother goes up there and confesses with his mouth.

Takes the incense. Does nothing with it. And says, Jesus Christ is Lord.

And his head is removed. And then the next one follows. And his head is removed.

And then the next one follows. And his head is removed. You see America? I knew one Scotsman who said, You Americans, you can't interpret the Bible.

You interpret it through your flag and your pocketbook. He's right. Oh my friend, this thing is terrifying.

I agree with Luther. Luther said, The Bible, my friend. The Bible's not my friend.

Have you ever read this thing he said? What do you mean my friend? It's my enemy. Cuts me off at every turn. It's a fearful thing to read this thing.

Now, as a conclusion, I just want to say, go back to chapter 5. And all through, all the chapters we have missed, there are all tests in there. All of them. Beautiful tests.

But go to 12. He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

What it all comes down to, remember yesterday when I was preaching about when Jesus told those men, Depart from me, I never knew you. And they said, but Lord, we prophesied in your name. We did miracles in your name.

We cast out demons in your name. And you see right there that they're not born again because their argument as to why God should have let them in heaven is their religious works. Where a believer, if he ever heard Jesus say, Depart from me, I never knew you, which won't happen, but if it ever did happen, the believer would not attempt to defend himself with his works.

He would say, but Lord, in thee I have trusted and put my hope. Now, especially to the young preachers, and I'm a young preacher. As preachers go, I always tell young preachers.

Someone came up to me one time and said, you're a man of God. I said, no, I'm a boy of God. When you're about 65, you're a man of God.

Takes a long time. Let me tell you something. That camel going through that eye of the needle, you'll not get into heaven with one shred of self-righteousness.

You won't fit through the eye. And that leads to great glory in this sense. Christ becomes all.

Christ becomes everything. He becomes everything. And here's what, young men, let me encourage you about something.

When you say right now, Christ is everything, I want you to know, you don't have a clue what you're talking about. Twenty years from now, you're going to look... But when you say Christ is your all, your heart is so full. You really mean it, don't you? You really do.

Twenty years down the road, you're going to look back and you're going to say, Christ is my all. And you're going to think, twenty years ago when I said that, I didn't have a clue. And then when you're 60, you're going to say, Christ is my all.

And you're going to look back at when you were 40 and realize you didn't have a clue what that meant. And then hopefully, your passage over Jordan, Christ is my all. And then you'll see Him and He'll be your all.

He'll be your all. Just Christ. Just Christ.

Not unto us, O Lord. Not unto us. Unto Thee be the glory.

Unto Thee, O Lord. That Christ will be all. That He will be all.

That He will be all. And that is why it is such a necessity to preach on the radical depravity of humankind. I remember when I bought my wife an engagement ring three years after we were married.

I have a good woman. And that guy that worked behind the counter, he put diamond out on the thing and I said, well, that's pretty. How much is it? He told me.

I said, put it back. You ever bring out something like that again, I'll jump across this thing and I'll whoop you right where you stand. So he said, well, how much can you pay? I said, well, this is an engagement ring.

It's really important. \$250. He brought out a ring, a diamond ring, and I looked at it.

Where's the diamond? And then you know what that rascal did? That rascal brought out a piece of black velvet and he laid it on that table and he put that ring on that black velvet and you could see that diamond like you could see the midday sun. Son, that is why you preach on sin. The darker the background of our depravity, the darker we paint the picture, the brighter is the grace of God in the face of Christ.

That all flesh be abased and Christ be exalted. Now, carnal church members will hate that. True believers will rejoice.

They'll rejoice. I don't like to finish with just illustrations, but I want to give you an illustration about Christ being all. And it's this.

Maybe you've heard this. It's been said a million times possibly, but there was a famous painter in Europe and he had a son. And they painted together.

They were each other's inspiration. They actually were each other's inspiration. But one day the war came, World War I, and the son was recruited off and taken off, fought in the war and was killed.

And the father got news, was absolutely destroyed. It tore him into a thousand pieces and he limped through his life. But one day the father hears a knock at the door and he goes to the door and there's a young soldier standing there and he says, Sir... And then the soldier breaks out in tears and he says, I'm the reason your son is dead.

And the man says, Well, what do you mean? He said, I was in front of a rifleman and the gun went off and your son threw himself in front of me and took the bullet and he died. And I'm so sorry. But I want you to know that I esteem your son above all things, all people.

Look, sir, while we were in our foxholes for those many, many months, I've always wanted to learn how to draw. And I just... I can't draw very well, but your son tutored me and I know you're a famous painter and I know that I can't hardly draw, but I painted this picture of your son. He means so much to me and I would just appreciate it if you would take it.

And the man said, Well, of course I will. So the man took it and he went inside and he opened it up and it was rather crude. But he framed it in one of the most exquisite frames he could find.

He moved back all his own paintings from the gallery and put it in straight center in the gallery. And look upon it every day. Well, he died.

And Sotheby's and all the great auction houses came into his house and they opened it up and art dealers from all over the world came and they all were ready and prepared and excited about being able to buy such exquisite pieces of art and they were all thinking of their wealth. And so the auctioneer came and he threw down the gavel and he said, The auction shall begin and it shall begin with this piece. And the piece was unveiled and it was the drawing, the painting of the soldier, of the son.

And everyone laughed and scoffed. Some people even got angry. They said, Look, we didn't come across this ocean to have jokes played on us.

We didn't come here to bid on this nonsense. Now please, get this out of the way and let the auction begin. And in the back, a voice went, Sir, and it was that young soldier.

He said, Yes? He said, Sir, I have a soldier's pay. That painting means more to me than absolutely anything on the face of the earth because that was his son and he died for me. And sir, I got like eight pounds here.

A few pence. I'll give everything. Just don't throw the painting away.

Give it to me. I'll work. I'll do it.

Just give me the painting. And the auctioneer said, Sold for six pounds. And everyone sighed with relief.

Ah, finally, now let's get on with the auction. Then the auctioneer slammed down the gavel one more time and said the auction is over. And everyone said, What? How can it be over? And the auctioneer stood back and said, I shall now read the last will and testament of the Father.

And he opened it up and said, The one who takes my son gets it all. The one who takes my son gets it all. To hell with your streets of gold and your gates of pearl if it means more to you than the one who sits on the throne, the Lamb who was slain.

This is not about heaven. This is not about a mansion on the hillside. This is about it would be worth a thousand deaths in hell to catch one glimpse of the glory of the Lamb.

And that should be what draws us. Ministries can be demonic, worldly, and idolatry if it is not for the Lamb. The Moravian cry was this, that the Lamb who was slain might receive the full reward of his suffering.

And that should be our cry, to know Him. Him! Everything else is dung. Everything is dung and less than dung.

It is Him. It is the Lamb. Young man, you give yourself to the Lamb.

The Father will honor you. For my boys, I have seen, I have preached with the big men. I have stood in their pulpits in their churches.

Some of them I do not even believe to be saved. All that is called the fire of God is nothing but false fire, much of it today. Mechanisms and mechanics and organization and pride and celebrities in pulpits and men who care not for Christ.

You talk to them about church growth and you will have their ear. You sit down with them and talk to them about the glories of God revealed in Christ in the book of Colossians and they will look over your shoulder for a more important person. My prayer for my two little boys is this.

I do not care, Father, if you grind them to powder, make them martyrs. I do not care that they have eloquence or brilliant minds, but they would be wholly devoted to Your Son. Take my two sons and give them to Your Son.

That their hearts, maybe they not be efficient men, maybe they never do hardly anything, that does not matter, but that their hearts be true to the Lamb. Because God accomplishes much through men like me whose hearts are not as they should be. You think too much of men.

There has never been a great man of God. There has only been pathetic, sinful, faithless, weak, disloyal men of a great and a merciful God. And that's all there will ever be.

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