

# Peachtree Baptist Church - Part 5

by Paul Washer

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being conformed to Jesus Christ and having a poverty of spirit, recognizing our absolute dependence on God.*

**Duration:** 1:16:16

**Topics:** "Sin And Righteousness", "Gods Guidance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that sin is an abomination to God, regardless of our own categorizations of sin. He urges preachers to focus on the wonderful message of Jesus Christ rather than relying on apologetics or evidence. The preacher also highlights the importance of hungering and thirsting after righteousness, and how God will fill that hunger and make room for growth through trials and challenges. The sermon concludes with a reminder that without God's strength and guidance, all our efforts are in vain.

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## Transcript

Chapter 5, Matthew chapter 5, verse 13. Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost his saviour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trotted under foot of men. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, there is no use in all of this unless you show the greatness of it. God, our hearts are dull to understand the truth that's on my heart. God, use these pleasant words to bring us down, to break our hearts, that we might be restored, that we might be on the right way.

There is no strength in anything except you, O Lord. So please help us. I desire that your people see the things that so burden my heart tonight.

In Jesus' name, amen. Some of you who like very, very strong preaching will wonder at tonight. Some of you who maybe are here for the first night and you heard that there is a hell and fire and brimstone preacher at this church will walk away disappointed.

Some of you will think that the message is not hard. But if you believe that the message you hear tonight is not hard, your ears are very dull and you do not understand that the hardest, most pressing, most cutting thing I have said thus far will be said tonight. The reason why I'm so hesitant to go on and just feel like I need to explain and explain before we even start is that you and I simply, we do not see sin as God sees

sin.

And regardless of what we say with our minds in our theology about there not being categories to sin, we do have categories of sin in our minds. But yet for God, all sin is an abomination. All of it.

All of it. Now, that's the first thing I want to say. The second thing I want to say is this.

Several years ago, several, many, many years ago, the great experts of the athletes declared that they thought no one would ever break the four-minute mile. That it was just a human impossibility. And then someone broke it.

And as soon as he broke it, it was just within a few weeks, someone else broke it. And then someone else broke it. Now, it's no big thing to break the four-minute mile.

Now, what does all that have to do with this? When you set a standard in your mind, you'll never be hard-pressed to go any further than that standard you've set in your mind. And so, you need to have the highest of standards in your Christian life. Because if you have low standards, you'll have low accomplishments with regard to godliness.

If you have high standards, you're more apt to have higher accomplishments. Now, another thing that must be said, and this is true, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing is more important in the heart of God than your conformity to Jesus Christ. And don't say amen.

Because I'd be hard-pressed to find a person here that believed that. You young men, you think more of ministry and preaching than you think of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. We think more of having power on our lives than we think of being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

And yet, nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing is more important. There is no higher goal than to be conformed to Jesus Christ in character. We chase down truth, and that is a virtuous thing to do, but most of us have more truth than we'll ever be able to live.

We want to know great things, and yet, it's like the horse runs a thousand miles ahead of the wagon. We run for truth, but young men, truth is not an end in itself. The knowledge of truth is not the goal.

The goal is with that knowledge, being conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. And what burdens my heart is I know that apart from the Holy Spirit, this truth will not be impressed upon you, because it's been turned into nothing more than a little cliché. But it's the acropolis of the Christian faith with regard to us.

Yes, in all things, the purpose of all things is the glory of God, but it seems in Scripture God gets most glory out of demonstrating His power to conform the wickedest of beings to the image of His Son. And if you want to chase after something, why is it that when I hear men talking about praying and seeking the power of God, it is always praying and seeking the power of God for their ministry? And yet, their lives are no validation whatsoever to what they preach. Any fool, any wicked man can deceive any number of people from a pulpit.

The question is character, conformity to Jesus Christ. You're so hard-pressed. What are you hard-pressed towards? Ask yourself, in all your striving, in all your pressing in, what are you striving for? What are you pressing in for? Now, some of you can answer that question, and others can answer it for you.

You're striving and pressing in for things of this world, and things like that, it's quite clear. That the multitude of your thoughts go towards the things of this world, the multitude of your activity is toward the things of this world. And I'm not speaking to you tonight.

I'm speaking to those of you who believe in your heart that the multitude of your thoughts and the great majority of your energy is in pressing in to the things of God. But I'll submit to you that maybe in pressing in to the things of God, you've got your eyes turned in a wrong direction. Pressing in to ministry, pressing in to goals of ministry, pressing in to make a name, pressing in to do something, pressing in to be used, but not pressing in to be.

Pressing in to be like Jesus Christ, because I can assure you that's what God is working in your life. To be like Him. God does not need talented individuals.

God does not need gifted men. And a man with gifts can be more dangerous than them all. More dangerous than them all.

If he not have the character of Jesus Christ. Now, look at verse 13. How is verse 13 usually preached? Now, I know I'm always saying this.

I'm always coming at it from a different direction. Not always, but a lot. But do you realize how this passage is usually preached? How is it usually preached? As a motivation for evangelism.

As a motivation for getting out there in the world and being salt. You know, out of the salt shaker. Let's get out there.

Let's be a preserving, sanctifying influence in the world. But never forget, when you interpret a text, it always must be in context of what's around it. Now, if you go further past 13, there seems to be some indication that that type of interpretation is correct.

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill. It cannot be hid.

And so, he is talking about us being a light. Being out there in the world. Shining forth.

Influencing. Affecting those around us. But we fail when we only look forward at the context.

And we do not look backward. Now, look at 13. You are the salt of the earth.

But if the salt have lost his, what? Wherewith shall it be salted? It is henceforth good for nothing. But to be cast out, to be trotted under foot of men. Now, you take a careful look at this text.

You study it hard. You open up your Greek text. Do whatever you have to do.

But you take a look at this text and study it hard as to what you find. Salt has certain characteristics that give it its flavor. Salt has certain characteristics.

I mean, it is not a chemistry class, but it is true. Salt has certain characteristics. We can even say that salt has certain elements.

Not only that, we can say that salt has certain essential elements. That means if you take those elements away, it is no longer salt. It is those essential things that make up salt.

And if you take those essential things away, you no longer have salt. Now, you can take those essential things away and replace them with other good things. But it is no longer salt.

You can take those essential elements away and you can call it salt all day long. But it is not salt. Let me submit to you that what Jesus is teaching here in the forefront of this context is this.

There are certain essential characteristics or elements to true discipleship, to true Christianity. You take those away and you replace them with any other thing. You no longer have Christianity.

You have something useless and worthy of judgment. Call it Christianity. But it is not Christianity.

Call yourself disciple, but you are not disciple. Now, the question is, what are these essential characteristics? Let me read them to you. Verse 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Many old preachers would take this text and use it as we used 1 John last night as a test of whether or not you're actually in the faith.

Because these are the essential characteristics of what it means to be Christian. And I would submit especially to those who are thinking about the ministry that if you will give all your attention to these things right here, you'll have no problem with preaching. You'll have no problem with needing power for the ministry.

We have all kinds of men with all kinds of so-and-so power. What we lack are Christ-like men. I have seen, and I have seen it, and you have seen it.

If you have any eyes at all, any spiritual discernment at all, I have seen men get in pulpits and be nothing more than a parade of flesh talking about the size of their church, talking about the largeness of their ministry, their Christian schools, their universities, absolutely everything. And it's nothing but stinking, vile flesh. And it is not the thing for which a man is exalted or a woman is exalted on the day of Christ.

But it is character. Now, just let's apply this. Let's look for a moment.

Let's look at the reality of this. How much of your seeking after all you seek after in Christianity, how much of it is seeking after the very things that Jesus said, if you do not have, you're not even Christian. You see? You see? You know, apart from the Holy Spirit pressing this upon you, everything I say is useless.

If you can't see the urgency and the cutting blade on what I'm saying, your eyes and your ears are dull. This is amazing! This is amazing! That you can have a preacher who can speak with eloquence of an angel, but if he's not poor in spirit, every word is like a pig sacrificed. He doesn't mourn over sin.

He's not even in God's camp. You see, we put so much emphasis. You know, for example, let me give you an example.

You preach one time, you know, and I don't know what old preacher said that, you know, any dumb fool can shoot a big gun off once. But you get up and you go to a church and you preach with power and might, such that it even surprises you, and you come down from the pulpit and people gather around you, hailing you to be some great man of God. How ignorant are the people of God! For a lack of knowledge, God's people are destroyed.

I preached one time in a church, and I came down, and they were looking for a pastor, and I'm not a pastor. They were looking for a pastor, and a group of them came up to me and said, you need to be our pastor. I said, you're out of your minds.

You know nothing about how I treat my wife. Because it's all about show. It's all about external.

It's all about vocabulary and what comes out of someone's mouth. The Apostle Paul wouldn't be given five minutes in any of your conferences. It's about this, guys.

It's about this. And you can't jump over it. You can't jump over it.

That's why, you know, someone hears a young man, he's 20 years old, he preaches with fire, unusual sense of understanding, and they think, man, he's ready. Well, ask him about his character. Ask him about his Christ-likeness.

And then when he says something foolish like, yeah, I'm ready in that too, observe his life and show him he's not. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Sir, do you know what your wife needs more than anything on the face of the earth? A husband that is poor in spirit.

Do you know what your children need? Do you know what this congregation needs? Woman, do you know what your husband needs? A woman who is poor in spirit. Young men, do you know what God desires in a pulpit? Men who are poor in spirit. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

No one else. No one else. Look at this.

It doesn't say, blessed are the poor in spirit, for they have a greater reward. It doesn't say, blessed are the poor in spirit, because they get a bigger crown. It says this.

No one but the poor in spirit will even be saved. That's what it says. The kingdom belongs to them and no one else.

That's all. Now, what is poor in spirit? What is poverty of spirit? It is the absolute opposite of an independent spirit. It's the absolute opposite of an independent spirit.

I used to tell young men, in order to preach God's Word, you've got to have the power of God on your life. My dear friend, to tie your shoes, you've got to have the power of God on your life. You can't breathe apart from the power of God.

Behold your arrogance. Behold my arrogance. That we do so many things without even a thought of dependence upon God.

It's like the Chinese Christian, after visiting this country, said he was absolutely amazed at all that American Christians could do without God. All they could accomplish without God. Dependence upon Him.

When your eyes fly open in the morning, you ought to have such an attitude that, Lord, I shall not move a quarter of an inch to the right, nor a quarter of an inch to the left. I shall not drop from this pillow. Because I know only in that short of time, without your grace and without your power, I could deny you and commit the most heinous abominations.

Need thee every hour? No, my dear friend. Every millisecond. Sometimes when I'm teaching preachers, I say, OK, now all of you, breathe in.

And they'll breathe in. I say, breathe out. And they'll all breathe out.

I say, now from whom did that breath come? And they'll say, well, from God. I say, OK, knowing that, now go out there and do something great for God. What are you going to do? You can't even breathe.

You can't even breathe. You say, people ask me, Paul, what must I do to develop this attitude of prayer without ceasing? I say, that's not the battle you have to fight. The battle you have to fight is the battle with independence.

Because once the war with independence is over, that's all you'll do. You will literally, and this is something that is so very important, you will literally be walking around constantly calling upon God and constantly praying for a greater and greater fullness of the Holy Spirit in your life. Absolutely everything.

You're in the ministry and you see someone coming towards you and you know they're going to be asking counsel or you know they have a problem with you. You're automatically, as you're walking towards them, in your mind you're crying out to God, God, give me wisdom according to James chapter 1. God, fill me with the Holy Spirit. God, I cannot do this.

Praise is going to start in the congregation. And what do you do? You mindlessly enter into it when you should be saying, oh, what an awesome, terrible responsibility lies before me now. I'm to go before Yahweh, Jehovah of Scripture, and to lift up my voice.

Oh, God, that it not be with hypocrisy and dullness of heart. Fill me with the Holy Spirit. I can do nothing.

You say you can do nothing, but you don't know what that means and neither do I. Poverty of spirit. Oh, Lord, I am capable of everything wrong. Without you, everything wrong.

I need you. I need you. Many people say that Luke is the charismatic of the New Testament.

I don't mind using that word just because it's used by a bunch of other people that twist it and give false meaning to it doesn't mean I'm going to throw it away. It's a biblical word. They call him the charismatic.

Why? Because Luke points out continuously in his gospel the dependence of Jesus Christ upon the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit. He constantly points out in the book of Acts the dependence of the apostles upon the work of the Holy Spirit so that it's not the acts of the apostles. It's the acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles.

And it's this attitude of constantly breathing in God's strength. Have you ever run through the woods or walked through the woods hunting and you see a little vine just run across your path? Or a little branch take off and just running through the woods by itself and then all of a sudden it jumps back on the tree? No, the branch is cut off. It dies.

John 15. Scripture, one of the things that breaks my heart is Scripture when it's very, very beautiful we treat it as poetry and we don't take it seriously. When Jesus said, I am the vine, you are the branches.

Apart from Him you can do nothing. And you say, well, I've been grafted into Him. Yes, you have, but there is a principle in Scripture.

If you do not open your mouth, you won't get fed. If you don't cry out to Him, He will not give. It's just a principle.

It's there. It's all over Scripture. God gets great glory out of answering prayer.

It's just constantly crying out to God. Why? Because you know something of what you are. You know something of what you're called to do.

You know something of the great commands laid before you. You know something of the enemy who is going to wage war against you. Poverty of spirit.

And this is why. This is the whole why of Christian suffering. I would submit to you this is the whole why of Christian suffering.

That God sends strong winds. That God allows the gravel to slip under our feet. That God allows enemies to approach.

Yea, they're even sent by His providence. Why? To drive us to dependence upon God. For example, there's no persecution in the church today here in the United States of America.

But, when some dearly loved saint in the congregation falls ill and there is no cure, you watch the people of God hit their knees. And you watch spirituality in the congregation shoot through the roof. Should you not, if you were hearing what I'm saying right now, should you not all be on your faces weeping because of your independent spirit of addressing so many things that you can do.

Do you realize what a practical atheism it is when there are some things that you call upon God for power to do them and other things you do not. Don't worry about this God, I can handle this problem. To develop a spirit of brokenness.

A humble, broken people. I'll never forget I was in Peru and this man came down to do a conference and he was a pastor in Houston or something. He walked in there and he basically said, I'm a man who gets things done.

I'm a man who says lead, follow or get out of my way. And this is what we've achieved in my ministry, in my church. Oh, what a demon makes words come out that way.

They introduced Hudson Taylor one time as a great servant of God. And he said no, a pitiful poor servant of a great God. And he didn't just say it because it would be applauded.

He said it because it was a reality in his life. As I've said before, one of the greatest things to understand is that work that Jesus did with Peter observing when he said, cast that net over. And when that net was cast over and it was filled up with fish and Peter was drawing it in and Peter looked up at Jesus and says, depart from me, I'm a sinful man.

I'm not worthy to behold the great thing you've done. I am not worthy to participate in it. And it is wrong that my eyes should even look upon it.

It's the same way, young preacher. If you're preaching and God truly moves, your greatest desire will be to do the only thing that King Saul ever did right, to hide yourself among the baggage and say, away from me. And that if someone were to come to you and say, oh, what a mighty job you did tonight, in your heart you want to literally run out the door screaming, those are not my words, Lord! Those are not my words! It has not entered into my mind.

It's one of the reasons why in your life, in your ministry, although you can drive this to an extreme, you ought to actively seek to cut yourself away from all hope in men. It's why we never send out a prayer letter that says, we want you to pray about this need. Because that's not what they're saying.

What they're saying is, we want you to meet this need. But to shut your mouth and to call upon your God, to depend upon Him, your children, to realize you can cross every T, dot every I, do everything that the experts say, be the greatest of greatest when it comes to parenting, and your children will wake up in hell one day. That it is not your administration of some special gift, but it is upon God who willeth.

Now that does not mean we should throw up our hands and say, I'll have nothing to do with it. No, we should work with all our might in all these things. We should work with all our might.

You should work with all your might that this church might grow. But if it grows, it is He that gave the increase. You should work with all your might that your children be godly, but if they are, fall on your face in gratitude to God and do not claim one thing for yourself.

You should work with all your might that your marriage might be a demonstration of the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Bride. But if you attain any amount of success, say, not unto me, O Lord, but unto Thee be the glory. Dependence upon Him.

Would your life, if someone were to look at your life, would it be marked by dependence upon God? Now, here's the thing. If just now, if just now I had preached on fornication, or adultery, and one of you were in an adulterous relationship tonight, and I had preached on adultery, and you had heard the Word, what would it have done to your heart? Probably broke you into a million pieces to the point you would have vomited. Is that not true? Is this a lesser sin? You see? This is not a lesser sin.

As a matter of fact, I submit to you that all other sins may be spring forth from this one. It was Satan who wrote the first Declaration of Independence. It was Adam who followed him in his government.

But it should not be that way with us. We should depend upon our God. We should call upon Him.

Someone asked me one time, what does it mean by living by faith? And I told him, I said, every moment you will be destroyed if God does not supernaturally move on your behalf. You have put yourself in such a position that if God does not move on your behalf, you're gone. Dependence.

But there is a drawing forth of such strength. How many problems? And not just in the ministry, but how many problems in your family? How many problems in your relationship with your wife or relationship with your husband? How many problems with your children? And you'll read books and you'll mourn and you'll do all sorts of things and you'll talk to every expert on the face of the earth, but how much just crying out and crying out? There's never been anyone who has cried out to God, persevered in crying out to God, that God has not delivered them. The problem is everyone starts off well.

Very rarely do you find someone who finishes in persevering before the throne of God until they get an answer. You know how I can tell when there's a genuine move of God? Well, let me tell you how I can tell when there's not. When after the service, a man gets up and starts praying, and as he gets louder and louder and louder and more emotional, more emotional, more emotional, everybody else rides the wave with him.

And when he stops praying, everybody rides the wave down with him. If it's truly a work of God, you'll keep moaning even after that brother has gone home. You see? Crying out to God until there's an answer.

Until there really is an answer. Not just when you cry out to God, but not until there's an answer. What you're basically doing is crying out to God for a few minutes or an hour or a day, and then even though He hasn't answered, you stand up and pat yourself on the back because you've done more than most.

But you haven't believed your God. To believe your God is to cry out until your God brings deliverance or at least an answer or at least peace and says, be still. I will not remove this problem, but be still.

And I will show you who God is. Dependence upon Him and the fullness. So many times people believe, you know, I hear parents tell their children, you know, God created them because He was lonely.

You blasphemed God when you said that. God's never been lonely. God did not create out of a need.

He created out of the overflow of His superabundance in the same way God overflows with superabundance. I am a sovereign grace preacher. I do not believe there is a maverick molecule in the entire universe.

I believe that all things are ordained by God. And at the same time, I believe you have not because you ask not. And you say, well, put that together.

I'm not a philosopher. I'm a theologian. I just tell the truth as God puts it out there.

I can't figure it out. And if you don't believe both those truths, you're going to go off in a wild direction. It is true God is sovereign over your life.

It is true that He's going to do with you exactly what He desires. It is true that you are much more beggarly than you should be because you're much more satisfied with the little He's given you. Oh, that God would give us men and women who are not satisfied with the last gift they received, but they want more and more.

Why does He say, taste that you might see that the Lord is good. Why? So that you'll want more and more and more. Another thing about seasons of prayer that you have to be very, very careful of.

God will bring sovereignly into the life of a person seasons of prayer. Be times when maybe you can give yourself to three and four hours of prayer daily and then it seems that God begins to direct you so that

your prayer life returns to somewhat of a more normal stage of maybe an hour or so and then maybe there'll be another time in your life when He'll bring great seasons of prayer. But here's something that you tremendously need to understand.

Many people will meet with God in a season of prayer, a season of seeking Him in the Word. God will fill them. He will strengthen them.

He will do all that to them. And then they stop and ride on that experience. It doesn't work that way.

I'll tell you why. You don't say to yourself, look, I am going to eat for 14 hours today so that I don't have to eat the rest of the week. Because even if you eat 14 hours today, you're still going to be hungry tomorrow.

And that's the way it works in the Christian life. It is not I'm going to depend on you, get my tank filled, and then take off. No.

You don't have a tank. Branches don't have a tank. It is a constant flow from the vine.

You don't fill up your tank and then take off running independently from God and then come back when you're empty. You're never supposed to be empty. My wife, after she was saved, she came to me and she just started this explosion of growth, explosion of wisdom.

She came to me one day and she was sitting there and she had been reading her Bible and she came to me and she goes, we got it all wrong. Husbands hear that all the time. We got it all wrong.

I said, well, what? She goes, have you ever been confronted with a sin in your life and God confront you in such a way that you seek Him, just seek Him in prayer and seek Him in the Word and cry out for deliverance? I said, yeah. She goes, and what happened? Well, He delivered me. And then what did you do? I'll tell you what you did.

I said, well, what did I do? She goes, then you went on to something else, didn't you? I said, well, yeah. And what happened to that sin? Came back, didn't it? I said, yeah. She said, you want to know why? Because God doesn't want you to go and get deliverance once and for all.

That's not the way it works. What God does is He wants you abiding in Him and drawing on His strength every moment of every day for absolutely everything all the time because you're never going to overcome something and do away with it as though it will never come back. But you must live dwelling and depending upon God for absolutely everything.

And that is true. That is true. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Why? Because they live this kind of life. Oh, God, you know, Lord, provide me strength because I've got to preach tonight. You're walking with God when you go, oh, God, provide me strength because I need to breathe.

I need to breathe. Blessed are the poor in spirit. That's why the Apostle Paul talked about he was at his strongest when he was at his weakest.

Oh, that God would take everything in us, all our fleshly hope, all our fleshly strength, all our gifts, everything else, and grind them to powder. As I always teach young Christians, God, I tell them, they hear all this stuff, you know, you've been saved, now God just wants to fill you with life. And that's true.

But I come along and tell them, you've been saved, now God is going to work a work of death in you. Because only to the degree that you die will you be filled. And you should never be satisfied.

Someone asked me, they said, and I learned this from a very, very wise theologian, someone asked the question one time, well, if God fills me, then how can I ask Him to fill me some more? I mean, if I'm filled, I'm filled. Well, no, you need to understand, in a sense it's like a balloon. You get a balloon, blow it up with two breaths.

And what happens? There it is. It's about this big. And it's full.

It's full. But blow it again. What happens? It's bigger and it's full.

Blow it up again. What happens? It's bigger and it's full. I believe that is a great illustration of the way God works with the Holy Spirit inside the believer.

God, fill me. Fill this cavity. And then increase the size of it and fill it some more.

Fill it some more. Fill it some more. My capacity.

My capacity, Lord. My capacity to be filled. And He will make that cavity by bringing trials into your life, strong winds into your life, whatever is necessary.

Whatever is necessary. That's why oftentimes in Scripture we see with many men of God, and I'm saying this for the sake of the young men here tonight, with many men of God, we will see what we call the birth, the death, and the resurrection of a vision. Moses had from the very beginning, it seems, the magnificent deliverance in everything as a child.

It seems that it was instilled in him some sort of messianic idea that somehow God was going to use him to deliver His people. And so what does he do? He grabs an Egyptian, kills him. And what happens to him? He's exiled from Egypt, sent out into the wilderness.

And what happened? Well, there was the birth of the vision. Now it's the death of a vision. So he's walking around that wilderness 40 years.

Death. When he started out, he had a vision that he was going to accomplish by the strength of his own right arm. Forty years in the wilderness.

God, You're mistaken. I can't speak. I don't know what... No.

I can't. Birth. Death.

Go, Moses. What's in your hand? Resurrection of a vision. I've seen that in so many people's lives.

I've seen it in my own. I've seen it in so many people's lives. God has got to destroy your right arm.

And He will because He hates it. He hates independence. Because He's a jealous God.

He's jealous for His own glory. But not only that, He is a God of love. And He knows independence is the worst thing that could ever happen to one of His children.

So He will work in you. Almost every time you can mark it. Find someone who thinks they are specially gifted in certain ways so that that area of their life is going to turn out well and God will destroy it.

God only has one right arm and it is His Son, Jesus Christ. And it is to Him you are to look. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

For theirs is the kingdom. It belongs to no one else. Now, I don't want to say, Are you poor in spirit? That would either bring condemnation or an arrogant answer out of your mouth.

I will ask this. Is God working in your life in such a way, can you see over the years, that He is creating more and more poverty of spirit in you? Cry out, Oh God, create in me this thing. But oh, hold on.

Hold on. It could cost you everything. The most dangerous prayer a man can ever pray is, Oh God, make me like Jesus.

Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted. Folks, modern day preachers, I do not care what they say, they are trying to create some form of utopia on this fallen planet. They are trying to convince Christians that we ought to just dance and we ought to be full of joy, and we ought to be happy-go-lucky, and everything ought to work out right, and everything ought to be good, and we ought to die in a ripe old age, and everything ought to be just fine.

They have forgotten where we are. We are on a fallen planet with a fallen humanity, with a fallen creation that literally groans. And although we have been redeemed, there is an aspect of us that is unredeemed, that is awaiting redemption.

We are still, in a sense, a broken people, a needy people. We still, even though we are the people of God, must deal with sin, and it is a horrible, vile abomination that at times clings to us. It makes sense to mourn.

I know you won't grow many churches that way, but it's true. What does he mean, blessed are those who mourn? Mourn about what? There is only one thing to mourn about. There is only one thing to mourn about.

Sin. Sin! But we are a people who do not understand how vile sin is. We are like fish.

Fish don't know they are wet. And we are like a people who drink down iniquity. Look, it was water.

Now, you've all heard, I'm sure, the illustration of the frog in the kettle. You know, you take an old bullfrog. You throw him in a pot of boiling water and see what he does.

That whole kitchen floor will be wet. He'll jump out of that pot so fast it will make your head swim. You take that same bullfrog and you put him down in some nice, just lukewarm water.

And then you turn up the flame, ever so gradually. And eventually, as it gets hotter and hotter and hotter in that water, his body becomes accustomed more and more to the temperature until he is laying there boiling and doesn't even know it. That is the power of sin.

That is the power of sin. Sin can grab you. Sin has coils.

Sin will not let you go. But I do not see that that is usually the manner in which sin works. In the same way, when I hear a man of God has fallen, I know that's not true.

He's been sliding for a long time. You see, that is why when you see sin coming, you must run. Why? Because just one little entrance and it enters farther and it enters farther and it soothes and it calms and it coaxes and it convinces and it supplies excuses so that eventually, within a period of just a few months, you find yourself comfortable with things that before made you vomit.

It's true. In every aspect of life. It's true with regard to immorality.

Young people, let me tell you, I could preach a whole week just on dating, that it is not biblical in any shape, form or fashion. Dating is not biblical. Not only is it not biblical, it's not even found in civilized culture until about 80 years ago.

And we can see what fruit that has been reaped from that, can't we? It's why a young man came to me and he's crying and he said, you know, my fiancé, and he was a godly young man, my fiancé and me, we want to be so godly, but you know at times I'm taking her home from church and just there in the car and maybe we'll hold hands and then I'll kiss her, I'll do something and then it's just so horrible and what can we do to escape? How can we be strong enough to endure? And I tell him, you can't. You're praying for the Holy Spirit to give you strength to be pure when you're together alone. That's like me praying for the power of God to rob a bank.

God has told me never to get in that situation. He has not told me to pray for power that I might endure in the midst of it. You see, why? Because young people, you have no idea.

I have sat with preachers that at times preach down, it seemed, the very power of God and then it doesn't take a little bit of compromise and a few months go by and they're sitting there wallowing in the filth of the world. It is that powerful. You should be terrified of sin.

It's deadly. And for the sake of your children, if you're not terrified for yourself, be terrified for them. No, I hear people say, well, we can't protect our children.

No, but you don't have to pump filth into your house. We're, in a sense, to be a people. We're behind enemy lines, folks.

We really are. Now, there is joy and there are so many things in the Christian life and so many blessings for God. You know, the true theologian doesn't marvel why bad things happen in this world.

They marvel at the fact that anything good happens in this world because it really shouldn't. It's fallen. It's condemned.

It's cursed. Why should we mourn? Because we are beholding the Word of God. We have become sensitive to sin and, as the Puritan said, the sinfulness of sin.

And when the Word of God, like a mirror, shows us our sin, we mourn. We mourn. But, as I said last night, we are not mourning or repenting with a repentance unto death.

But that gives us the opportunity. This seeing of ourselves in the Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, it gives us an opportunity to see ourselves as we truly are and it gives us the blessed opportunity to repent. The blessed opportunity to get counseling.

The blessed opportunity to cry out for other brothers that we can trust in to pray for us. This mourning does not lead unto death as it did with Judas, but it brings about a new mourning as it did with Peter. A new

hope.

A new hope. Let me give you an example. One thing about fasting that you need to know about.

People talk about fasting in order for so many different things to happen. I fast for the power of God will be on my life or I fast for this reason or that reason. Let me give you the best reason, in my opinion, to fast.

And it's this. You ever meet somebody and they just one day get mad at you or get angry or they say something to you that really is just out of character, as we say. And they'll come to you later and instead of really apologizing, they'll go, look, I'm sorry.

I'm just not myself today. I've got all these problems or I'm sick today or I'm nauseous or I haven't eaten. My sugar level is low.

Something. I'm not myself because of all these adverse circumstances in my life. Well, the truth is, because of all those adverse circumstances, you are finally really seeing them as they are.

And one of the things that fasting has been such a blessing to me, even though I have not made much progress, is this. When I fast and I have no food to comfort me and I have no social interaction because in America, if you don't eat, you don't have social interaction. And I'm set apart by myself with no comfort.

Guess what happens? I get cranky. I get quick. And guess what? I'd like to introduce to you the real Paul Washer.

And when all that comes out and it's exposed and I look ugly, it gives me the opportunity to mourn about who I really am and then to go up to the thing that precedes this and cry out in poverty of spirit, Lord, deliver me. Now, I know I'm teaching a lot of unusual things tonight, but I believe they're necessary. I believe they're truly necessary.

And also, what is it? We also mourn, not only for ourselves, but we mourn for this world. How many of you have ever mourned for Hillary Clinton? I don't mean criticized. I don't mean hated.

I don't mean cursed. I mean mourned. God will honor your mourning a lot more than your criticisms.

What are you? Apart from the grace of God, you'd make Hitler look like a choir boy. Who are you? Every man in here is an Ahab waiting to happen. Every woman here is Jezebel.

Apart from God's grace. We shouldn't be just looking out at the world and cursing them. We should be mourning them.

And I want you to know, Baptists, you've lost your heritage with regard to this. Baptists have never trusted in political strong-arming. Matter of fact, it's been political strong-arming that's left the blood of Baptists all over the world.

We cry out for our enemies. We bless those who curse us. And we look at a persecution as an opportunity to witness for our Lord.

No, I'm not a Democrat, but I don't put any hope in the Republicans either. I put my hope in my God. Like one old Christian preacher said one time, he goes, I don't trust in the left wing or the right wing because both wings are on the same old bird.

We're a spiritual people. We're not a Geneva. We believe that the church is a spiritual organism created by Jesus Christ, and she will always be strange, and she will always be left out, and she will always be persecuted, and she will always be hated until the day she's revealed in glory.

What kind of Christianity do you want? Join the Reformers and put a lance and a spear in your hand and go kill everybody who doesn't agree with you. Or join the Baptists who defended even those who hated them. We mourn for the world.

We cry out for them. We pray for people. I'll never forget one time there was a woman in this church and she had committed heinous crimes against so many people in that church.

And one day she came down the aisle and she was broken into a million pieces and she was on the altar, and I went down there and I sat beside her, and in front of all those people I put my hand on her shoulder and I began to pray for her. Afterwards, you can't believe how many people in that congregation were furious with me. How could you do that? And I said, because if there is no hope for her, we all go to hell.

Blessed are those who mourn. We mourn. Not scowl.

Not pick apart. My mom used to tell me about all those turkeys that we raised. She said, turkeys, they're just an abomination.

One little turkey gets a little dew on its neck that flickers in the light, and the rest of them will pick it to death. What are we? A refrigerator for the pious or a hospital for the broken? Blessed are those who persecute you. I remember on the mission field, and young men listen to this.

There are certain things that, when I say, listen to this, it's for you. I mean, I got called on the mission field a charismatic and everything else, and this was the reason. Sometimes, some of those old, poor assemblies of God preachers who had been cast out of their homes because they left Catholicism, who had never been taught truth by anybody else.

It's the only Christianity they knew. They'd suffered horrible things for the cause of Christ and what they knew. And when they would ask me to come over and teach them something, I'd go over and teach them something.

And because of that, the other missionaries were angry with me, saying I was having fellowship with the ungodly and all that stuff. And I looked at them one day and I said, you know what, men? I said, if there was living across the street a pedophile wife beaten drunk, who was lost, and I went across the street to witness to him, what would you all say about me? They said, well, you know, you're doing the work of an evangelist. You're doing what you ought to do.

I said, here's a man who has limited knowledge about the things of God, who's never been taught, but he's suffered horrifying things by the enemies of God by their hand for the sake of Christ, and you're telling me I should not go to them when they ask me and teach them something? Isn't it unbelievable? What on earth are we thinking about? No, I don't let whoever wants to preach in my pulpit. Yes, I make a stand for doctrine and all these other things, but I am not going to put out the smallest spark in a man's heart. I'm going to love them.

I'm going to tell them the truth, but not like I'm preaching at them. When I'm talking one-on-one, I say, oh, brother, can I just show you something? Or you teach me what you believe. You know what's one of the

most amazing things? I learned this from an old missionary, Thomas Pace.

He was dealing with a man who I believe was a seven-day Adventist. Worked kind of high up in the seven-day Adventist thing and was all about legalism and all about the law and all about food and everything else. So Tom tried to talk to him and talk to him, witness to him, all sorts of things, and the man was just as hard as a rock.

And Tom said one day, the Lord just gave him what he needed to do. So Tom walked up to the man and said, Sir, I've been studying the book of Galatians recently. And you know, that is such a difficult book and I've talked to you and you're always quoting Scripture and it really impresses me.

Would you just sit down for about six weeks and teach me the book of Galatians? And when that legalistic, self-righteous, basically Judaizer started studying the book of Galatians in order to teach it to Tom, one of the finest Baptist missionaries I know, the man was converted. Why? Because there was a missionary there who was blessing those who persecuted him. Was caring.

You know, it's amazing. We'll love the wickedest man until he'll claim to know Christ. And then we'll hate him if he's not in our camp.

Let me tell you something. I don't care who you are. Your theology is really messed up somewhere.

And I don't care who you are. See, theology is like trying to put too many clothes in too small of a piece of luggage. You get it all fit in on one side, it's going to come out somewhere.

And if all your theology fits in just perfectly, you've twisted something. And you say, well, you're saying God's not a God of order? No, I'm saying your brain's not that big. He's a God of order, but it all won't fit in your head.

Blessed are those who mourn. We mourn over what we are. Good lesson for these young men.

Stand in front of a mirror at least 15 minutes a day and just say one thing. It will so help your preaching. And it just takes all the trouble off of things.

All the pressure off. I just don't know. And then when they get mad at you, go, well, I thought you said all truth is revealed truth.

And if it's revealed truth and God didn't reveal it to me, what can I do with the sovereign God? It's not my fault. But just learn to say, I don't know. And guess what? Be one of the first times you're probably telling the truth.

I don't know. I don't know. Blessed are those who mourn.

That's what this means. But oh my friend, when everyone's a child and no one has to be a great teacher and no one has to be a spiritual father and we're all just children, it is a lot more fun to live this Christian life when you don't have to be anything, but what you are, a recipient of the grace of God. Then it turns into a party.

It really does. I hate to talk, and I can tell, and you preachers know exactly what I'm talking about. There are some men you can talk to and you know that while you are talking, they're weighing every word you're saying to find something heretical.

You ever met a person like that? Boy, you can spot them that quick. Blessed are those who mourn. Now, we have blessed are the meek, but we do not have to... I want to skip down to verse 6 because we've gone on.

It takes a long time to preach this. Isn't that amazing? It didn't take Jesus 45 seconds to say this. It would take an infinite number of preachers all of eternity to even get to the first word or the first verse of this.

Tell me it's not inspired. Tell me this is not the infallible Word of God. You know, preachers, young guys, listen to me.

There's all this apologetics and all these different things and evidence that demands a verdict and all this stuff out there. Let me tell you something. You just go to them with the Bible open and show them how wonderful Jesus is.

I mean, trying to use all your arguments to defend the fact that He even exists is like trying to show someone the sun with a flashlight. Just preach Jesus Christ. Every word is wonderful.

Alexander McLaren said, the dust of this thing is gold. But blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Does this describe you? Does this describe you? I mean, just answer the question.

Answer it in your own mind. Would you say that your life is marked out in this way? People could honestly observe your life and see that you were a man or a woman or a young person who hungered and thirsted after righteousness. I know people who hunger and thirst after knowledge, people who hunger and thirst after position, people who hunger and thirst to be used, people who hunger and thirst for power.

Most of you probably don't know him, but he is a great prayer warrior. He's in the Southern Baptist Convention. It's T.W. Hunt.

And I knew the man as a professor and he would pray three to four hours a day for all of his students. And just to walk into the room, you walked into the presence of a man who knew God and you knew it. And I used to go to him and I would talk to him and ask him questions.

And one day I walked in to his office and I sat down and I looked like something the dog had just drug in. And he looked at me and he always would do something like this. He'd always go, Paul, what's wrong? And I said, Dr. Hunt, I'm just so wicked.

I'm so ignorant. I want to know God. I want to obey Him.

I want to be like Jesus, but I look in the Word of God and I'm just so miserable. I want so much. I'm not satisfied with where I am.

I just feel like I'm pathetic. I just hunger, but I just am so far away. And he looked at me.

He was sitting down. And he looked at me. And he stood up.

He walked around his desk. And he came over to me and he laid both hands on my shoulders. And he said this, In the name of Jesus Christ, I pronounce thee blessed.

And then he went and he sat back down. And I was looking at him. And he goes, Paul, you don't understand what I just did.

I said, no, Dr. Hunt, I don't understand what you just did. He said, son, have you never read, Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. He said, son, listen to you.

You've come in here for ten minutes and the only thing you've done is screamed out how hungry you are, how dissatisfied you are with your life, how you want more of God, more of His righteousness, more conformity to Christ. Oh, son. And listen to me, young man.

Listen to me. He said this to me and it set me free. He said this.

He said, because of these things you are blessed, but Satan has so twisted your understanding that he is using the very things that bless you to condemn you and curse you. I hear people that go, oh, I'm just so unrighteous. I just want to be more like Jesus.

And it just drives them straight into the ground. Listen, if you have a true understanding of your need and in your heart you're crying out, I want to be more like Him. I want to be more conformed to His image.

I hunger for that. I thirst for that. It's not going to drive you into despair.

It's going to lift you up to faith. It's going to lift you up to glory. It's going to be used by God.

Never forget that when Satan speaks, he will never, now listen to me, he will never tell you the truth. No. I want to get it so you really understand.

He will sometimes tell you the truth about you, but he will never leave you with hope. When God tells you the truth about you, no matter how hard he speaks, and it might be like those prophets, I mean, they were rude. Some of the things the prophets said, you cannot say in mixed company.

Do you realize that? They said some hard things against Israel and Judah. But even though God would speak that hard, He never speaks the truth without leaving His people with hope. Never.

And that's when you can tell whether you're preaching prophetically or preaching condemnation in the flesh. Because if you preach with condemnation in the flesh, the congregation, God's people, God's lambs, who you're not supposed to whip, will leave totally condemned. But if you're preaching prophetically, incorrectly, biblically, it doesn't matter how hard you speak to them, they will not feel whipped, but they'll walk out that door with hope.

Truth. Truth. I didn't want to start this, and I'll tell you why, because I knew it would just be a failure.

Because it's hard to bring across this idea. Do not delight when in a day you have not committed adultery, if during that same day you've walked in independence from God. Because in the sight of God and His holy angels, both crimes are as heinous, as filthy, they really are.

Those of you who have the Spirit of God, I speak primarily to the gentlemen, you know that if you fell into adultery, the Holy Spirit would press upon you so hard, you would be so crushed in your heart, that what would happen? You would literally be at the point of ripping out your heart or contemplating suicide. But other sins that are more palatable, less socially despised, we can walk with daily and not see a need to shun them and run from them. I pray that you men, you women, you young people, I mentioned one thing

last night, and I'll add another to it now.

The first thing I mentioned last night, that you would be wholly devoted to the person of God's Son. Now notice my language. Not to an idea, not to a ministry of the Son, but wholly devoted to Him as a person.

You will not satisfy a woman to be wholly devoted to marriage. It will not satisfy your wife if she hears and understands that you are completely and perfectly devoted to the idea of marriage. It will bless her if she hears that you are completely and totally devoted to her as a person.

It's the same way. It is not to be devoted to a concept, a theology, an idea, a church, or a ministry. Wholly devoted to the person of God's Son, number one.

The second thing I pray for you is this, that you might see, above all things in endeavors, to seek to be conformed to His image as laid out here in the Sermon on the Mount. That you will seek those qualities that God would impress them upon you, imprint them upon your heart. Because these two things are foundational, and without them, the one who preaches is like one who sacrifices a pig on the altar of God.

Without these things, devotion to the person of the Son and conformity to His image, those who carry out religious rituals are like those pagan priests who do so in their ungodly temples. Anyone can be dedicated to these external things because these external things in themselves have reward. You preach well, people will ask you to preach.

You have a ministry like this with a school and a church and all these things, people will lend you respect for that. But you'll find no glory for men in trying to do the things that are most important before God. Remember what God esteems men do not esteem, and that is devotion to His Son and conformity to His image.

Now this sermon is totally out of whack with all the other things I've preached, the way it's preached, everything. But this was necessary tonight for someone because last night after preaching, it was so impressed upon my heart to preach this. And it has been all day.

I would have chosen something else, but this needed to be said.

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