

Unashamed of the Gospel Amidst Our Culture

by Paul Washer

Paul Washer's sermon calls believers to embrace and proclaim the true gospel unashamedly amidst cultural challenges and misunderstandings.

Duration: 50:31

Scripture: John 3:16, Romans 1:16, Ephesians 2:8-9, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Gospel"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares a personal experience of encountering a sad man in a small Alaskan town. The preacher decides to stay and minister to the man, proclaiming the Gospel and seeking God's salvation for him. They spend hours studying Scripture and praying, emphasizing the need for supernatural work of God in understanding and accepting the Gospel. The preacher also highlights the importance of studying and preaching the Word of God, rather than relying on human wisdom or trendy programs.

Transcript

The missionaries who are here would be able to testify right now at how privileged you are to be able to be in a church with worship like this. And I'm not talking about the talent, although there is, the dedication to the task, just to the Spirit of God working through what's being sung and said in the hearts of people. I'm not given to flattery, I hate flattery, it's a sin.

But I have to say something, I just, I, when I teach on, I don't know why, but there have been times when I've had to teach worship leaders on leading worship. And I've simplified the task a great deal. And this is the illustration that I usually use.

If you're ever walking through a major city, New York, or where everyone is out on the sidewalk, I want you to do this sometime. Just as you're walking down the sidewalk with the thousands of people around you, just stop and go like this. Just look straight up in the air.

And just keep looking. Eventually people are going to look at you and they're going to look at, and they're going to kind of go like this. They're going to keep walking and they're going to keep looking.

That's how you lead worship. A worship leader who is so fixed on Christ that the moment you put your eyes on him, you try to look at what he's looking at. And I don't say this very often, but that's what I see in

your worship leader.

Every time I looked at him, I don't want to say I almost laughed, but I did. It was just almost like when Abraham laughed. It was just so much I wanted to see of Christ.

I wanted to see where is he looking. And that's a great privilege. Great privilege.

And it's been a great privilege for me to be here. I feel like I need to maybe stay here a while and be with your pastor and some of the leaders so I can learn some things. I'm just excited to hear some of the things, not only that are going on here, but also some of the things that I've heard them say.

Truths and such. It's almost like water falling on a dry land. Water falling on a dry land.

So you are privileged people. God has blessed you. Now, I want us to go to Romans chapter 1, verse 16.

In the last service, I taught on Malachi and the Great Commission. And people say, well, aren't you going to preach the same thing? I think it's on tape. You could probably get it if you would want.

So I might as well go on to something else. We've talked about the need to be involved in missions. It is not a need on God's part.

Missions is not something that we do to fill a need. Missions is the answering to a privilege. We have been invited to a work that God is going to do.

Don't worry about that. He is going to do it. And as I said, if the Southern Baptist Convention disappeared tomorrow, God is still going to do it.

And I don't want to make you sad or anything, but it might be easier for Him if He got us out of the way. We are not America's last hope. God is our last hope.

But He has invited us to a great privilege. And the mission work on this earth is really quite simple. You can divide it up into two categories.

You either go down in the well as a missionary or you hold the rope for those who go down. Either way, there's going to be scars on your hands. And the question I asked the congregation this morning was, where are your scars? How much does it cost you to be identified with Jesus Christ? I mean, literally cost you.

I don't mean in your heart of hearts. I mean, if I looked at your life, where would I see scars because of your identification with Jesus Christ? How much does it cost you to be a member of this local church? What have you had to give up? How have you suffered? How much service have you given? What does it cost you? And then what does the Great Commission cost you? I mean, really. What does it cost you? Answer those questions and maybe a revival would break out because we'd probably have to say not much.

So we've dealt with missions. We've dealt with the devotion. We dealt with the message on Friday night because missions is about the message.

And if you don't get the message right, all your missions is no more than a baptized Peace Corps. It's the message. The radical depravity of men.

That they are dead in their sin and not all the prying and manipulation. Nothing can raise them from the dead except the Spirit of God. And God has promised to work through His Spirit when men preach the gospel.

And that gospel is this. God the Son becoming a man, living a perfect life, going to a cross and on that cross bearing the sins of His people, becoming accursed, forsaken of God, and then God Almighty crushing His only begotten Son under the full weight of His holy hatred against sin. And in doing so, He satisfies His own justice, He appeases His wrath, and He makes it possible for a just God to forgive wicked men and still be just.

Now I want to deal with one of the greatest problems on the mission field because it's one of the greatest problems in America. And that is the way we have taken this glorious gospel and turned it into a superficial creed that has no power to save, but has great power to deceive a multitude into believing they're saved when they're not. The great many of Southern Baptists never go to church.

And it's not because they haven't been disciplined. It's because they're lost in their sin and they've never been saved. If we were to cancel this meeting right now and go out into this city, into every home, every bar, every place of every sort of thing, we'd find Southern Baptists everywhere who believe they're saved because one time in their life a preacher led them in a prayer and popishly declared them to be born again because they gave the right answers.

We have such a superficial understanding of the gospel. And you say, Brother Paul, what does this have to do with missions? We take that same superficial understanding and we export it abroad. Romanians came up to me one time several years ago, Romanian Baptist leaders, and one of them said this, If what all your American evangelists say is true about how many people have been saved by their mission trips coming over here and all their great crusades, then everybody in my country has been saved four times.

We have such an unbiblical, unhistorical view of the gospel call and conversion and it has led to the great majority of people who believe themselves Christians in America to be not Christians, to be lost and in their sin and yet insulated from the gospel because a religious authority in their life has declared them saved. I lived for many years in a country where everyone believes they're saved because when they were infants they were baptized. The Southern Baptists look at that and say, How could anybody believe something like that? That's terrible.

And yet the Southern Baptist Convention does the exact same thing because we have a multitude of people in this country who think they're saved, though they're not, because one time in their life we got them to repeat a prayer and we count them, but all our counting is not the counting of heaven. And so I want us to look at just a few things. Look at verse 16 of chapter 1 of Romans.

Paul says, For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. I am not ashamed of the gospel. Paul's flesh had every reason to be ashamed of the gospel because his gospel contradicted and opposed and was a scandalous offense to every culture he ever walked into.

But notice this, Paul did not ever seek to adapt his gospel message to a culture. He commanded the culture to adapt itself to his gospel message and that is completely contrary to the way the gospel is being presented today in America and on the mission field. We are so culturally sensitive that we no longer care about being biblically sensitive.

We concern ourselves more with what anthropologists and sociologists tell us about a culture than we are about what is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Men say we cannot. Men have become too complex a being in the United States to understand the mere gospel.

We must first go to his culture and discover what makes him click. Our men are not complex enough and too uneducated in tribal lands to understand the gospel and therefore we must do all sorts of things other than just simply preach to them propositional truth because of course they cannot understand it. What we need to understand is no man can understand the gospel.

No man can understand propositional truth and that's the whole point of the Apostle Paul. God has chosen to supernaturally make the gospel known through the Spirit of God when the gospel is clearly preached. And so we need less men studying men and more men studying God and then preaching what God tells them to preach.

When you no longer have the power of God on your life and the Word of God is not central in forming your message and your methodology, you have to be reduced to a little boy who chases every new fad and every new program that comes down the pike and we are full of them. Because one doesn't work and we go to the next and the one doesn't work and we go to the next instead of doing one thing. And give me a man simple enough to walk into a square, a plaza and preach the gospel until someone gets saved or they stone him to death.

Then you'll see the gospel advance. Missions. Preaching.

It is the work of prophets, not of professionals. It's the work of prophets, not strategists. It's the work of men called of God, women called of God, to proclaim a singular message and we should know that the world will oppose it and it will contradict the world, but God will save a people through it and He'll do so so that it'll be through the foolishness of preaching so that no one will trust in the cleverness of man or even in their own ability to understand but in God who reveals things to babes.

Just think for a moment. Here's Paul the apostle going to a Jew. He's going to a Jew.

And he's going to tell him the greatest blasphemies. He's going to tell this Jew that God became a man. Blasphemy! He's going to tell this Jew that the God who became a man was nailed to a tree, which means He became under a curse.

The very God who declared the curse comes under a curse. Blasphemy! He's going to tell them that He rose again from the dead. He's going to tell them that He wasn't seen by everyone, which is going to make them doubt.

He's going to tell them to repent and believe the gospel even though it's going to cost them absolutely everything. He goes to a Greek who has no knowledge of biblical history, who is filled with Greek philosophy and the greatest of academics known to mankind. He's going to go to a Greek full of pagan superstition.

And he's going to say that God became man. And the Greek is going to say, that's the worst thing you can say to me because everyone knows that Spirit does not mix with the material world. This is absolutely absurd.

He's going to tell them that an untrained religious teacher who was a carpenter from a despised city has more wisdom than all the philosophers combined. He's going to tell them that He was rejected and hated by His own people and crucified as an enemy of the states. And then He's going to tell them that this little Jesus of Nazareth, blasphemer and enemy of the state, rose again from the dead, ascended up into heaven, and now is Lord of lords and King of kings.

Even Caesar will bow his knee to Him. Absolutely absurd! But that's what we've got to see. It is absurd! It is going to be absurd to every culture on the face of the earth, and no one's going to understand it ever unless when we preach the Spirit of Almighty God comes and brings life out of dead men's bones.

This is not the work of little boys. This is not the work of little strategists. This is not the work of culturally sensitive experts.

This is the work of prophets. That when we go to the mission field, when we preach from this pulpit, we stand here as men in a valley of dead bones knowing that absolutely nothing will be accomplished or a message will be absurd unless the Spirit of Almighty God does something supernatural. It cannot be manipulated through stories.

It cannot be manipulated through altar calls. It is God alone. And so the preacher stands there and says, Here I stand upon the Word of God, so help me God.

The miraculous must be all around the preacher. It's the only thing he has. Nothing is going to happen unless God takes this absurd message and opens up the heart of men and tells them it's true.

A man asked me one time, How do you preach the Gospel to Agua Duna Indians on the Marino River in Condorcanqui in the northern province of Departamento Amazonas in Peru? How do you preach the Gospel to Agua Duna Indians? I said, I don't. I preach the Gospel to men. What about this? What about that? I don't know.

It's never been a problem. You put so much emphasis on it, but for me it's never been a problem. I preach the Gospel and men get saved.

And they do understand a message that cannot be understood because the Spirit of God has promised to raise them from the dead and give them understanding. That's how I preach the Gospel to Agua Dunas. And that's how churches are formed.

Preaching of the Gospel. And it is the power of God. Listen to me.

It is a known truth that there is a greater manifestation of the power of God in the conversion of a man than in the creation of the world. Because God created the world ex nihilo, out of nothing. But He recreates a man out of a corrupt, depraved mass.

And the preacher knows he has no power to do that. Only the Spirit of God. The preacher no longer has to run with trifles and be clever.

The only thing he has to do is the only thing he knows he can do. And that is preach the Gospel because nothing else will save a man. Preach the Gospel.

But then look at our Gospel. Just look at it. Look what we've done.

We've taken the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ and reduced it down to something that is not the Gospel. And since it has no power, what we preach, we no longer have faith in the Gospel and we have to do all sorts of things. Turn the church into a six flags over Jesus to get people to come.

Entertain them to death. Have one activity after another to keep carnal people occupied or else they'll go to the theater. Because the Gospel we preach today by and large in America is not the Gospel.

We've reduced it down to an empty creed. It is not the liberal politicians that are destroying this country. It is the conservative preachers.

Because this is what we've done. Let's just look for a moment at the creeds in our lives. Do you know you're a sinner? Well, yeah, everybody knows they're a sinner.

Okay. Would you like to go to heaven? Well, yeah. Well then, pray this prayer and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart.

It will only take five minutes. Well, okay. Go to heaven, right? Sin's forgiven.

Go to heaven. Pray this prayer and ask Jesus to come into your heart. They pray the prayer.

Did Jesus come in? Well, I'm not really sure. Of course He did. If He didn't, He's a liar because He promised to come in.

He said, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens up the door, I'll come in to them. There's only one problem.

That's not what that verse means. I told an evangelist that one time and he says, I know that's not what it means, but it works. It works.

And then we carry this on to other things. A man comes and says, I don't know if I'm saved. And a lot of preachers will say, Well, let me ask you, was there a point in time in your life when you prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart? Well, yeah.

Well, were you sincere? Well, I think so. Well, then you're saved and you need to quit letting the devil bother you. Then there's another one.

We even carry this further. Another creed. What do you want to do? Do you want to be filled with the Holy Spirit? Yeah? Okay.

What is the one thing that keeps you from being filled with the Holy Spirit? Sin. Okay. Confess all your sins.

Have you done that? Yes. Alright, now it's God's will that you be filled with the Holy Spirit. So right now, since you've confessed your sins, now ask God to fill you.

And then stand up and walk as though He has. Don't tell me you haven't heard this. This is what American Christianity is.

I see that hand. I've seen Southern Baptist evangelists do some of the most disgusting, despicable things on this earth in the name of getting people to come forward. It's wrong.

This numbers game we're playing is wrong. And not only does it do damage in this country, it does damage to missions and it does damage to missionaries. Folks, it's not what you think.

Missionaries don't walk out there and preach the gospel and hear the hallelujah chorus being sung by angels and then 30,000 people are converted. Missions is hard work. And you may go for a long time and see very few people converted.

But our denominations got to the point where if they don't see numbers, something's wrong. The missionary's bad. We've got to do something.

What are numbers? What about integrity? What about just God? What about being faithful? We do have the biggest number of people in prison in the United States who are Southern Baptists. We rank highest among the denominations of having Southern Baptists in jail and they didn't get there because of persecution. We can't even find most of our people.

And then you know what we say? We say, well, you know, most of the people who get saved in our churches don't stay so we need a disciple. Is our theology really that bad? They don't stay because they're not saved. Because we've passed them through these little things and they said yes to everything.

They jumped through every hoop and we popishly declared them saved. You have no authority in Scripture to tell any man he's saved. You have authority to tell him how to be saved and you have authority to teach him biblical principles upon which he can base assurance.

You have no authority to tell someone they're saved because they did that little thing you asked them to. Most men are not converted. And a carnal, unconverted church is a great burden to the church.

So what I want you to see, just for a moment, let's just take a look at this. The thing about, do you know you're a sinner? Would you like to go to heaven, pray and ask Jesus to come into your heart? Well, let's look at the first one. Do you know you're a sinner? They say yes.

And a lot of times we'll say it kind of, you know, lightheartedly. Well, you know you're a sinner, don't you? That's like someone walking up to my mother who passed away a few months ago from cancer saying, a doctor saying, well, you know, Barb, you've got cancer. No, we're not angry, but we should realize it is a serious thing.

Sir, do you know what the Bible says about sin? We say, do you know you're a sinner? If they say yes, we go on to the next step. But what you need to realize, if they say yes, they know they're a sinner, it means absolutely nothing. Ask the devil if he knows he's a sinner.

He'll say, yes, I am. And a mighty fine one at that. And how can they know what it even means to say that they're a sinner? They don't know who God is.

They know nothing about His attributes, His holiness, His justice. They don't fear sin. In the same way, a fish doesn't know it's wet.

We're a people who drink down iniquity like it was water. How can we know? So it's not the question, sir, do you know you're a sinner? The question is, sir, since you've sat under the preaching of the Gospel, has God so worked in your heart that the sin you once loved, you now hate? That the sin you once thought was no big deal and almost something to laugh about, you're now terrified of? That the sin that you were

apathetic toward, you are now concerned about and want to be set free from? Has God so worked in your heart? Not have you made a decision, but has God worked in your heart? Has anything happened? And then the question is not, do you want to go to heaven? Everybody wants to go to heaven. They just don't want God to be there when they get there.

That's what political theory is all about. Creating a heaven on earth. Creating a utopia.

A place where we don't suffer. A place where we get everything we want. Heaven, heaven, heaven.

Everybody wants a heaven. They just don't want God. The question is not, do you want to go to heaven? The question is not, do you want to escape hell? In the rice fields of Peru, we burn off fields after the harvest.

When you burn off a field, there in Departamento Amazonas, every poisonous viper in the world that's in that field runs out because of the fire, but it's still a viper when it gets out. We're not talking about escape from hell. We're talking about a new creature.

We're not talking about just going to heaven. We're talking about desiring God. The question is not, do you want to go to heaven? The question is, has the God you have hated, ignored, and been apathetic toward, who has not been the God of your life, has He so worked in your heart under the preaching of the Gospel that you now esteem Him as worthy above all things and desire Him? That's why when it talks about eternal life, it's a present tense thing.

It's something that you receive here on earth because eternal life is not streets of gold, gates of pearl, or even longevity. Eternal life is that you might know Him. And one of the ways that you know that you've truly become a Christian is that you intimately desire to know Him.

And you're not reducing your Christianity down to I attend church once a week, but my life is filled with every other thing but Him. There's no way you could look at my life and say, I passionately desire to know God. I've got enough religion to make me respectable in the South.

That's all. He says, depart from Me. I never knew you.

You say, well, I know Jesus. That really doesn't mean much. The question is, does He know you? If I walked up to the White House today and said, I'm going in, they'd say, no, you're not.

And I'd say, no, you don't understand. I know George Bush. I'm not going in.

But if George Bush walks out of the White House and points at me and says, I know Paul Washer, I'm going in. So the big thing is not whether you think you know Jesus. Does Jesus know you? And the word no there is such an intimate term, even though it's in Greek, the Hebrew idea that's carried over, it is such an intimate term that it's often used with regard to sexual relations between a husband and a wife.

And what it's saying is, on the day of judgment, He says, depart from Me. I never knew you. You who were workers of lawlessness in that whole context.

And what is He saying? Depart from Me. I never knew you. Those of you who called yourselves Christians and My disciples, but you lived as though I never gave you a law to obey.

And when He says, I never knew you, on the day of judgment, this is what's going to happen. You're going to walk up there fully convinced, because of some Baptist pastor, you're going to walk up there fully convinced that you're a Christian, because one time in your life you prayed a prayer and asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart like it was a flu shot or something. And He's going to look at you and He's going to say, depart from Me.

We did not walk together on earth. We did not commune together on earth. We did not fellowship together on earth.

I was not yours. You were not Mine. Depart from Me.

We did not pray together. You did not speak of Me. You did not seek My face.

You did not want to know My will. You were nothing to Me. And I was nothing to you but a prayer.

And as all those marquees of Southern Baptist churches say, a ticket to heaven. I'm no ticket. Depart from Me.

I never knew you. We say, do you know here's a sinner? Yeah. Okay, let's go through the next evangelical hoop.

Do you want to go to heaven? How many of you have ever heard someone say, no, I'd rather go to hell? And let's just stop for a moment. One of the most horrid things that goes on in America is children evangelism. Why? It's not because it shouldn't be done.

It's the way it's done. I would not let my little children attend probably 95% of the Southern Baptist Sunday School classes in this country. Because I'm not going to have some lady look at them or some man look at them and say this.

How many of you little children love Jesus? How many of you want to go to heaven? How many of you want to pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart? And then how many of you want to get baptized in a baptistry that looks like a fire truck that blows confetti in the air and shines your names in lights whenever you do that? And then what happens? They go through our Southern Baptist machine, listen in to all our stuff. About 14 or 15, they start totally dishonoring their parents. They start living in the world.

They commit all sorts of atrocities. Go to college and live like hellions. And then, when they realize that that really doesn't work out that well and you do need a little bit of religion in your life to make your life really, really good, then they come back and rededicate their life to Christ.

And we don't have enough knowledge of historical theology to realize that the whole thing is a circus. And then some who really do get saved later on have to grapple with years. Did I rededicate my life or did I really get saved? And eventually they figure out, I really got saved.

Can children be saved? They most certainly can. But there will be an understanding of the gospel. There will even be an understanding of sin.

There will be a repentance. And when a child makes a profession of faith, you don't say, Oh, right, you're saved. You never have to doubt it again.

And you don't say, You're not saved because you're a child. This is what you say. You say, If you have believed on Jesus Christ, you are saved.

Now, the evidence that you've done that is you're going to continue walking with Him and growing in Him. And He's going to be teaching you and training you and disciplining you. But listen to me.

I want you to know this. If you depart from the faith and begin to live like a hellion and God does not intervene and God does not discipline you, then I want you to know something, little child. You've got nothing here today.

Because the evidence He's truly saved you in the past is that He continues saving you all the days of your life. You think, I've never heard things... You have heard things here. Some of you are guests.

You have heard these things here. But all you have to do is read Old Baptist and you hear it all the time. We have done the same thing as in Catholicism.

Don't you understand that? The same thing. Catholicism. You're saved by one little creedal thing you do.

And then no one ever addresses salvation again. All it is is just the priests and everybody working to keep them in the church. That's all that matters.

Keep them in the church. Keep them in the church. Live like hell.

Live like the devil. But keep them in the church. They're saved.

They were baptized as infants. We do the same thing. Go to all those Christian bookstores of yours.

How many books are written on this? What is the true gospel? How many books are written on what is a true biblical gospel call? How many books are written on how can you know from Scripture that you truly have a biblical assurance of salvation? You won't find them. But you will find every book in the world on how to keep people in a church. You know why you need all those books? Because you've got to do everything in the world when most people in the church are goats.

When you get people saved, you don't have to worry about them coming to church or walking with God. So we ask, do you know you're a sinner? If they say yes, we say, do you want to go to heaven? If they say yes, then we say, repeat this prayer. You find that in the New Testament.

And don't go to Romans 10. And don't go to Revelation 3.20. You find that in the New Testament. Jesus comes to Israel and He proclaims, the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Now, who wants to ask me into their heart? You say, you're being facetious. Yes, I am. Sometimes that's biblical.

Jesus did it and the prophets did it. Just to show the rank dunceness of what we're doing. That's not the gospel call.

The gospel call is repent of your sins and believe the gospel. Then we've got all this about the hour of decision and making your decision. And do you want to know something? We have the idolatry of decisionism today.

Why? Because you go to people and you ask them if they're saved, even though there's no fruit in their life, they say, I'm saved because I made my decision. You don't hear them saying, I'm saved because I'm looking unto Christ. They're looking unto a decision and the sincerity of their decision rather than looking to the resurrected Christ.

Repent and believe the gospel. What does that mean? Repentance. And this is not a thing about Arminianism or Calvinism because the old Arminians and the old Calvinists agreed totally on this.

And it was this. Repentance was a supernatural work of God in which God came down and dealt with a heart when the gospel was preached and opened up that heart to understand the wickedness of its sin and the holiness of God and brought contrition, brokenness, until the person becomes totally destitute of any hope in their flesh or their ability to merit God's declaration of righteousness. And then they throw themselves upon Christ believing that He has died for them and their salvation is sealed in His person and His work.

It is a supernatural thing. But we put so much trust in the arm of the flesh today manipulating people in all sorts of things that we never have an opportunity to see anything supernatural. I remember several years ago preaching and I was in this church and they had all the counselors prepared which is always a very dangerous thing.

They had all these counselors prepared and as I was preaching one night people began to weep over to my left. And then people just began weeping. It just started moving across the congregation.

And in the middle of the sermon people started coming and just coming to the front. And one girl I remember just crying out and the head of the counselors was looking at me like, we're supposed to go. And I went like this.

And then five minutes later go by people convulsing and weeping and that head counselor looked at me and just didn't like me anyways. And she just was like, we've got to help these people. So I knew she was going to bolt on me.

So I went down from the platform and I stood beside her and I said, don't touch the ark of God. God is wounding these people and God will heal them. Don't say peace, peace when there is no peace.

And about 20 minutes later you just saw joy creep in. God did a work. I remember one old Southern Baptist evangelist, the real deal.

He was standing there with a pastor and a person came up to him and said, Pastor, I've got to come to you and I've got to talk to you because I don't know if I'm saved. And that old evangelist looked back and said, No! Don't go to the pastor! Go to God! Go to God! Till God sheds abroad His love in your heart and God affirms that you're saved. Let me give you two examples.

I was preaching years ago near a university and there were a lot of people coming and this girl in her thirties, she had just basically really suffered a lot in her life. Sin. One day, one service, she comes forward, she's just weeping and I said, What can I do for you? She said, I need to be saved.

I said, For some reason, I just asked her, Well, how many times have you already been saved? How many times have you asked Jesus to come into your heart? She said, Six. I said, It didn't do any good, did it? She said, No. And I said, It won't do any good now.

She said, What must I do? And what I'm going to tell you makes so many people mad, what I told her. I said, Young lady, you need God. Go home.

You've heard counseling. You've heard the gospel. Go home.

Go home and cry out to God and seek His face until He saves you. She went home, came back the next night, looked like, I mean, just the most miserable human being in the world. She said, I have no relief.

And I said, You'll get none from me. What do I do? I said, You've got two options. Go home and cry out to God until He saves you as though hell was opening up its mouth to swallow you down or stop seeking God.

She went home again seeking God under conviction of sin. The next night, I was praying with her father before the church started and the music started to play and we ended our prayer and I sat down and when I sat down, I had my eyes closed. I was still praying and all of a sudden, I felt someone sit down beside me and I opened my eyes and it was her glowing.

I said, What happened? She said, I sought God all last night and fell asleep in utter desperation. But this morning, I woke up and God shed abroad His love in my heart and I know I'm a child of God. You don't hear that anymore.

Why? Because we've taken the gospel and reduced it down to a creed taught by little boys who ought to spend less time preaching and more time studying the Word. The supernatural work of God. I was up near Alaska several years ago and as I got up to preach in this little town, there was a little pulpit in a little church that actually told me the grizzly bear population outnumbered the people population there.

And as I got up to preach, a giant of a man, old man, 65 years old, but he could have whooped every 20 year old in this building. He walked in and he sat down on the front row and he was the saddest human being I've ever seen in my life. So I just preached the gospel and after I got done, I went straight to him and I said, Sir, what's wrong with you? What's happening in your life? He pulled out a manila envelope with an x-ray and I don't know anything about x-rays, but he showed it to me and he goes, I've just been to the doctor.

I'm going to die in three weeks. He goes, I've lived out in the bush on a working cattle ranch all my life. He goes, I've never been in church.

I've never read a Bible. I believe there's a God. And one time I heard someone talk about some guy named Jesus.

I'm terrified. And I said, Well, you heard the gospel message. Did you understand it? He said, Yes, I did.

But then with more theology than most preachers, he said, Is that it? I understand what you said. It was clear. I understood it.

I mean, who couldn't understand it? It was clear. Is that it? Most preachers right then would have said, I tell you what, let's pray and ask Jesus to come into your heart. No conviction of sin, no idea of God, His attributes, nothing.

No revelation, nothing supernatural, nothing. Just, yeah, I understand it. I said, Sir, you're going to die in three weeks and I'm supposed to leave tomorrow.

I'll cancel my plane and we'll stay here until you die. And this is what we'll do. We'll go through Scripture after Scripture after Scripture and we will cry out to God and we will seek Him until either you die and go to hell or God saves you.

And so we started. Went through promises in the Old Testament about the Messiah and His salvation. Went through promises in the New Testament.

Went through John 3, 16. Prayed. Called out to God.

All sorts of things. An hour went by. Another hour goes by.

I go to Him and I say, Sir, let's go back to John 3, 16 and just read. He said, well, we've read it so many times. I said, let's just pray and ask God to just give us some light.

Show us what this means. And I'll never forget because my Bible was sitting on that man's lap in those big old hands of his. And he said, okay.

And he goes, for God so loved the world. And then he went, I'm saved. All my sins are gone.

He died for me. I'm saved. Oh my God, I'm saved.

I said, Sir, how do you know that? He said, haven't you ever read this verse before? What happened? What we don't let happen because of all these stupid little systems and methodologies that we have. All these pat answers. These exploratory these's and those's.

They're just preaching the Gospel and looking for the fruits of salvation which are repentance and faith and not popishly declaring the work done when the Spirit hasn't even begun the work. But then again, if we do that, it will change everything about the Southern Baptist Convention, won't it? I know what I'm saying. Why is he so angry? Why does he talk this way? Well, just think about it for a moment.

I've read a lot of books. I can be eloquent. I could have you feeding out of my hand right now.

I could have you thinking I'm the best guy in the world and the nicest man you ever met. But that's not what I'm called to do. We talk about missions.

I'm sometimes afraid that Fidel Castro will die because when he dies, Cuba will be filled up with North American evangelism that has sent more people to hell in America than every bar in America. Peace, peace, when there is no peace. I don't care if you prayed a prayer.

I don't care if you asked Jesus to come into your heart. And I don't care if you say one time you repented or one time you believed. I don't care because God doesn't care.

Because nowhere in the Bible when it talks about biblical assurance does it say, was there a point in time in your life when you prayed and asked Jesus to come into your heart. The evidence that one time in your life you truly repented is that you're still repenting today and you're growing in repentance. Because over the years God has shown you more of Himself and more of your sin.

And it's caused you to have a deeper mourning. And yet your mourning does not leave you to despair because also God has revealed to you greater and greater grace in the face of Jesus Christ and you're conformed to that image. The evidence that you repented unto salvation a long time ago is that you're still

repenting today and growing in repentance.

The evidence that you believed unto salvation a long time ago is that you're believing today and Christ is more precious to you today than ever before in your life. You will know them by their fruits. Not by their confession of faith.

Do you know what your confession of faith in Jesus Christ is worth? Zero. Because many will come before Him on that day and pronounce a confession of faith. Lord, Lord.

And He'll say, depart from Me. I never knew you. Not he who says, Lord, Lord, will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven will enter.

And that does not mean that we are saved by works or that we are kept saved by works. It means this. Salvation really is a supernatural work of God and when someone is saved they really do become a new creature.

And new creatures live new ways. Behold, if any man be in Christ, not some men, if any man be in Christ, he's a new creature. Old things pass away.

Behold, the new has come. Is that a description of your life? Or are you counting on something you did 25 years ago or 5 years ago that has not changed you in any way except giving you a false form of godliness in the fact that you attend church once a week but your life denies the power of transforming godliness? Be afraid. Be afraid.

Oh, dear, dear people. Dear people. As I say many times, I will not lose sleep tonight because you don't have self-esteem.

I will not lose sleep tonight because you don't feel good about yourself or your checkbook isn't balanced or self-realization is not something you've accomplished. I will lose sleep tonight because one day you will stand before God naked and you will be judged and some of you will be cast into hell by the very Word of God. If it was any different than that, I wouldn't be a preacher.

I'd be a cabinet maker in Illinois. This is not some thing you do like a cherry on the top of an already perfect life. This is heaven, hell, life, death, judgment, salvation, damnation.

It's either this is the most important thing there is or this is absolutely useless and you should go play golf. Now be careful because there is one waiting outside these doors who will meet with you and before you make it to your favorite restaurant to eat, he will already have stolen the Word out of your heart. And even though you've heard such a solemn message, you'll be talking about football before the waitress even takes your order.

Pastor.

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