

Don't Replace the Bridegroom With the Bride

by Philip Powell

The sermon emphasizes the importance of holding to the true gospel and not replacing it with a different message.

Duration: 1:21:41

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 12:23-33, Hebrews 1:1-4, Hebrews 2:1-4

Topics: "Salvation Message", "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the message of salvation as the central theme of the Bible. He highlights that God speaks in various ways, including through creation and through Jesus Christ, who is the heir of all things and the image of God. The preacher also discusses the importance of trouble preceding triumph and the need for the church to echo the call of the Holy Spirit in inviting others to come to Christ. He concludes by examining three passages of Scripture, including John 12:23-33, which portrays Jesus as the humble king riding on a donkey.

Transcript

Okay, well what I want to do today is talk on the Christ as being the power of the gospel and the subtitle is Don't Replace the Bridegroom with the Bride. Don't Replace the Bridegroom, Christ, with the Bride. And I want to direct your attention to three basic passages of scripture.

The first is John chapter 12 and verses 31 to 33. And then the other two are in Hebrews. So John chapter 12 verses 31 to 33.

Jesus is facing the cross and he says, Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself.

This, he said, signifying by what death he would die. You know, we sing that song, don't we? Lift Jesus higher, lift Jesus higher. And I don't have any problem with it.

But if it's supposed to be based on this verse of scripture, when Jesus spoke about being lifted up, it was not being lifted up in a sort of a popular role, but it was rather to be lifted up on a cross. This spake he signifying what death he would die. Now, having said that, I don't think it's wrong for us to sing, lift Jesus higher, lift Jesus higher.

Certainly we can't lift him higher in regard to his suffering. He's already gone through that. But if it's the idea of presenting Christ, then that's fine.

That's no problem. But it must be remembered that when Jesus said it, he was talking about being lifted up upon a cross. Okay, Hebrews chapter one, this is one and two.

God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by or it could be rendered in his son, because in the Greek language, the prepositions are not clear as they are in English. You can have in or by or through or with and very often they they're interchangeable. And here it could read that he has spoken to us in his son.

The idea is that Christ is both the message and the messenger. He speaks, but he is also the substance of the message to us in his son, whom he has appointed heir of all things through whom also he made the world. And then Hebrews chapter two and verse three.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him? Now, remember, the writer to the Hebrews, who some believe was Paul, others have other ideas. We're not sure who the author was in that sense. The writer.

We know who the author is. It's God. But the writer we're not sure of.

He's saying here things to Christians. It's not to the outside world when he talks about how should we escape if we neglect the great salvation, although it can be applied that way. But he is saying it to Christians.

You're saying it to God's followers. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? And the idea is that of a boat at a morning place and suddenly it drifts. It comes away from the morning and it drifts towards disaster.

How shall we escape if we neglect if we let go? That's the thought there. So great salvation, which at the first to be began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him. Okay, now last week what we did, we were looking at the gospel committed to the bride's charge, and we looked at it in several regards.

We looked at it first of all in respect of its definition, and we saw that the gospel that we preach is clearly defined in the Bible. It is a gospel which comes to us through the word of God, and we must not change it. We dare not change it.

The problem with today's society is that we try to become relevant, and really people don't want us to become relevant, because really if we get relevant to that extent as it is being presented today, we lose the impact. And it is the very difference of the Christian and of the Christian message which is its appeal. And this is really the thing that concerns me a great deal of what has happened in Pentecostal and charismatic circles over recent years.

There is a general drift towards the system of the world, and using their methodology and also their message really to a large extent in the psychology and the music and so on that has come in, we are really adapting. We're not simply becoming relevant, but we're really adopting their very method, and there is of course that that destroys the power of the gospel. And so we looked at the gospel in its definition, and we saw that the Bible refers to it as being the gospel of Christ 12 times.

Our key verse was Romans chapter 1 verses 16 and 17, where Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of what is it? The gospel of Christ. For he says, and there you have that expression, the gospel of Christ, which appears 12 times in the New Testament. And then he says that gospel of Christ is what? The power of God.

And we saw that the gospel of Christ is also called the gospel of God some seven times, and as such it is offering God's answer. And then we saw that it is also the revealed righteousness of God. Paul says that this gospel of Christ and this gospel of God became, and he calls it, my gospel.

Now not in the sense that he owned it, but rather in the sense that it owned him, that he is so taken over by it that it is my gospel. Now the problem is today people are preaching their my gospel, but it's a changed gospel. And so you have the gospel according to whoever, and I could mention some names, but in so doing they have actually corrupted the gospel.

The gospel, the prosperity gospel for example, is a corruption of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now that doesn't mean that God can't bless you. Of course he can, but if you put the emphasis upon that, you are destroying the power of the gospel, and that is precisely what has happened.

Now of course you say, but it seems to work. Well it does, and quite honestly I think the devil's quite pleased that it is working. It's gathering momentum in that sense, but it is destroying the very essence, the very foundation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul says that the power of the gospel first and foremostly is righteousness within you. Hallelujah. So he talks about the fact of it being the revealed righteousness of God.

It starts inside. That's the difference with the gospel and everything else. It starts with the inner man.

Then we looked at the gospel last week in regard to its outworking, and we considered what we call the great manifesto of the gospel, where Jesus went down to Nazareth and he announced what his program was, and we saw three things about it. We saw that it is the gospel of total integration in that statement where Jesus said, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me. Holy Spirit, me, anointed me.

The person and the message are the same thing. Jesus Christ is totally integrated with his message, and really if our gospel is going to be powerful, it has to be powerful inside first. It has to hold us together.

You know what I'm finding in certain circles today is that people who have never seen it work try to become teachers of it. Now I'm not just talking about the gospel, but I'm talking about such issues as marital life and family living. You sometimes get people up there telling you how to bring up your children who've never had any children, and you sometimes get people whose marriages have fallen apart who become authorities on how to keep your marriage together.

Now this is so, and it's a sad thing really. A friend of mine said, we have more counseling on marriage today than we have ever had, and we're having more marriages falling apart. I feel that it's a trick of the devil really, my view on this.

I'm certainly all for counseling and helping people, but I do think that there's far too much emphasis on counseling in the church of Jesus Christ, and really what has happened, as we have said, is that the penitent form has been replaced with the counselor's couch, and you all go for your counseling, but really

what you need to do is get before God and get the things dealt with right there at that level of true repentance, heart repentance, and when once that is dealt with, everything is dealt with, and there are some strange things that have crept in to the so-called gospel. Now, you know, I've had some conflict with people on this issue, and sometimes they tend to say, oh, he doesn't believe in deliverance. Of course I believe in deliverance.

I wouldn't be a preacher of the gospel if I didn't believe in deliverance, but I do believe that the gospel delivers, and if you're constantly going back and back and back into your ancestry, and back into your past, and you know, it seems as though what has happened is that a fear thing has got into the gospel, and God is not a God of fear. God is a God of love, and perfect love casts out all fear. Now, I don't have any problem with the idea of dealing with the past, but let's, for goodness sake, deal with it then.

Don't let it keep on coming up. You know, over in Australia, they were all the time repenting over what had happened to the aborigines, and I said, for goodness sake, let's get this thing once and for all dealt with. You know, what happened way back then, it happened.

It's unfortunate, but if we're going to repent, let's repent, and let's get up and go, and the same thing with racial problems, and you know, our Maori friends, and the Pakeha, you know, there's always been that conflict which is very unfortunate, and it's not of God, certainly, but we can't keep on going back into that past, and dealing with the past. What we've got to do is go from here on, and go forward for the glory of God. Hallelujah.

The gospel is the power of God, and if it doesn't deal with the past, then it doesn't deal with anything. Any man that is in Christ is a new creation. Hallelujah.

We're, we're all one in Christ, no difference, but we are new creatures. All things have passed away, and behold, all things have become new. That's the gospel.

Praise the Lord. It's a gospel of total integration. The man and his message.

It's a gospel of wondrous emancipation. We saw that. It stretches from dealing with poverty to dealing with captivity, and it doesn't replace poverty with affluence.

It replaces poverty with assurance. That's what it does. Jesus said, He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, and yet there was nobody poorer in terms of possessions than Jesus Christ.

When He wanted to go out onto the water, He had to borrow a boat. When it came to die, He had to borrow a cross. The only thing He had in the end was a robe, and they took that from Him.

He did not have possessions in human terms, because He does not replace poverty with affluence. He replaces it with assurance, and there's a difference. Hallelujah.

He gives you confidence. He gives you life. He can give you possessions, no problem, but the great thing about the gospel is that it makes you able to handle poverty, and able to handle riches.

Paul says, I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound, so it doesn't matter to me. It makes no difference. He said, I've had a lot, and I can handle that, and I've had nothing, and I can handle that.

That's what the gospel does. Hallelujah. Sometimes we have a poverty mentality.

We look at those people who have riches, and we say, if only we had that, or whatever, or we say they're wrong. No, some people can handle riches. Can you handle both? That's the issue, and when you've got the gospel, you can handle both.

Praise the Lord. So it deals from poverty to captivity. It takes you through assurance to acceptance, and so there's no rejection.

Take it, he said, he preached the gospel to the poor, and he says, I've come to set at liberty those that are captive. Hallelujah. So it goes right through, and in between you have every need known to man represented in that great statement that Jesus made, and he says, I've come to deal with it all.

Hallelujah. It's the gospel of wondrous demonstration, glorious demonstration. After this, he goes down into the temple, and there's a demon possessed man.

Now, if it's just in word and not in power, then the gospel is not effective. It has to be both in word and in power, and I've seen demon possessed people delivered. Hallelujah.

But I don't go chasing demons, and I won't. Some people say, cast this headache demon out, and one friend of mine said an aspirin would do just as well. Can we make demons of this, and demons of that, and demons of the other thing? Demons are very real, but a real gospel knows how to handle them.

Hallelujah. And Jesus went down there, and he brought deliverance. As this demon man came and cried out, who are you? Why have you come to trouble us? And Jesus said, shut up, be quiet, come out of the man, and immediately he was delivered.

Hallelujah. No process, immediate deliverance. Glory to God.

Jesus didn't have to go over it over and over again. That was it, dealt with. Hallelujah.

So we looked at that, the gospel in its definition, the gospel in its outworking. We looked at also the gospel in its recruitment program. Revelation, the last chapter in the Bible, the bride should echo the call of the Spirit.

That's what we've got to be doing, Church, today. It says the Spirit and the Church. Notice it doesn't say the Church and the Spirit.

It says the Spirit and the Church say come. And our onus, our responsibility is to be preaching what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing. And I believe the Holy Spirit is emphasizing certain things today.

We dealt with it in our first message about the holiness, and so on and so forth, the life, and various things there. But we should be echoing the call of the Spirit. And then the bride should influence her latest recruit.

It says the Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come. And so, and friends, you know, if you really want to get a church on fire, if we start something for the glory of God, all you've got to do is see some new converts, and very soon the thing is snowballing, because that is what happens. They take on the emphasis of saying the same message.

And so the Spirit and the bride say come, and let him that heareth say come. And the message spreads through the new convert, the latest recruit. And then the bride should seek to awaken a thirst for God.

And it says, and let him that is thirsting come. And then the bride should offer water impartially, and every one that will let him come and drink of the water of life freely. Now that is the gospel.

Now basically what happens as I see it, and you're entitled to challenge me and question me and all the rest of it. That's what it's all about. We don't set ourselves up as knowing everything, but we do believe that God has given us a message, and we want to bring that message.

What happens is what happened to the early church. They drift away from the true gospel, and they turn to another gospel. Galatians chapter 1, verses 6 and 7, Paul had to write to the Christians at Galatia, and he said, I marvel look at this verse, Galatians chapter 1, 6 and 7. It's not in your notes, but let me just mention it.

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of Christ to a different gospel, which is not a different gospel. I think the old King James says, what to another gospel, which is not another. That's probably a better way of putting it.

What he is basically saying is there isn't any other gospel, but there are people who preach another message which replaces the gospel, and it's not the gospel. And there in Galatia, what it was, it was trying to take people back under the law, and it was telling them they had to be circumcised, they had to keep the law, they had to keep certain ceremonies and so on, and Paul said that is a not a gospel which is not a gospel. The same thing in Colossians chapter 2, he addresses an issue there, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians chapter 2, and it's verse 8, where he talks about philosophy which invades the gospel.

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. Human philosophy, when it gets mixed up with the gospel, presents another gospel which is not a gospel, and this is frequently what happens. Now actually in the structure of the Greek language here, when it talks about the basic principles, it could have been referring to the Greek philosophy of the day, which was that there were four basic elements, earth, fire, air, and water.

And on the basis of that, they projected that basic thing into the astronomy realm, so that you had four basic astrological signs. These were divided up eventually, so you had four segments which were divided up into three, and you end up with 12, the zodiac signs. And out of that also, they developed a theory which had to do with the four personality traits.

You've probably heard of them, sanguine, and choleric, and melancholic, and I forget what the fourth one is. But this is basically Greek philosophy, Greek mysticism. It has invaded the church.

I challenged this in Australia, and got a tremendous expression of approval from the whole congregation that I preached it to, because it had invaded the church. But the hierarchy of that church, which is a very large Pentecostal church, because I dared to kick the sacred cow, withheld my tape. Eventually it got out.

I've got a copy of it, we might run some off and let you listen to it. But basically, basically what it is, it's Greek mysticism replacing the gospel. And it comes out to such an extent that it starts infiltrating even the function of the gifts of the Spirit.

So much so, that you are assessed on your gifting on the basis of your personality. Now, friends, that is not the gospel. That is another gospel.

And it's a great trick of the devil to water down the true gospel of Jesus Christ. One or two of you have been asking me about the stars, because of a certain talk that was given recently. Now, as I see it, the problem about it is this, that what we are tending to do is to go into Greek philosophy and Greek mysticism, instead of recognizing the supernatural power of God.

I do not believe that the birth of Jesus Christ was written in the stars. If you have to accept that as a notion, then that takes you into the whole astrological realm. And it is extremely, extremely dangerous.

Not only that, it is a questionable thing from a point of view of scholarship. It is both questionable from a point of view of scholarship and also of scripture. Let me, I just looked it up, I just felt prompted to do it, and so I looked up in the, I got one of these sets of encyclopedias, and I looked up the word Virgo.

It says here, in brackets, the Virgin. In astronomy, it's the sixth sign of the zodiac, denoted by a Greek symbol. The Greeks represented this constellation as a virgin.

Now, there's no idea that in that thing, even if they call it the Virgin, that there was going to be a virgin birth. The gospel is built upon the idea of a virgin birth, not just simply a virgin. But, you know, to try and marry that up with the star that appeared over Bethlehem is quite ridiculous.

It says, but different fables, now listen to this, fables, that's what they are, but different fables are current as to the identity of the maid, this virgin. She is variously considered to be, you know, different names here, I can't pronounce them even. According to Hesiod, the virgin is the daughter of Jupiter and Cemis.

Now, that is Greek mysticism. That's got nothing to do with the gospel. Now, for what it's worth, my submission is that those wise men, being wise men, they were in touch with God and they saw a supernatural happening.

If you're going to try and link it to the zodiac and the signs of the heaven, how does a star move anyway? It says that the star moved. It says that it came over and it stood over the place where the child was born. What was happening? God was giving them supernatural direction.

It was something he did supernaturally on that occasion. It's got nothing to do with the zodiac and with the signs. And to reduce the gospel to that sort of thing, which is happening in the church of Jesus Christ widely today, is sheer nonsense.

It is taking away the effective power of the gospel. It's a trick of the devil, friends, and I trust that our eyes will be opened. We don't preach philosophy.

Paul says, be careful, because you will be corrupted by philosophy. It will take you into a false area. And this is what is happening widely within the church of Jesus Christ.

And it saddens me. It saddens me at my heart to think that the thing that I was brought into, that my parents, who are 83 years of age and are retired pastors of assemblies of God, that we've been committed to all our lives, that that supernatural thing should have drifted into that sort of thing. It saddens me and it saddens many other people across the world.

Let me say that when I'm going to England, I'm joining up with a group of churches from 150 to 200 who are concerned about trends and are looking as to whether God is calling us to make a stand and to go in a different direction. And I don't know what will come out of it, but it could well be that we will establish, I

don't know, in the purpose of God, a return to the original assemblies of God. Because in actual fact, what it was in its pristine foundation was something very, very powerful.

When men like Stephen and George Jeffreys moved through England and men like Smith Wigglesworth and men who knew God and the power of God, who relied not upon philosophy and Greek mysticism, but prayed and got an answer for God from God and saw mighty signs and wonders and miracles of the Holy Ghost. And I believe that God will bring us back to it, blessed be his wonderful name. And by the grace of God, he is one who's going to nail the colors to the map and say we're going to make a stand for the glory of God.

Hallelujah. And I believe that there will be a gathering momentum of people who will do likewise. Now that is the danger and it's happened throughout history.

And now what I want to show today is how the church tends to fall for Satan's ruse to invert the message and preach the church instead of preaching Christ. This tendency was introduced, and you're feeding your notes, by Augustine in about the fourth century, who through his amillennialism, which we dealt with a few weeks ago, taught that the established church was the kingdom of God on earth. This took authority away from scripture and placed it in the church, whose highest official was said to speak ex cathedra.

And that word simply means from the teacher's chair. And it became all authoritative, so that when now, when the Pope announces something, it is speaking ex cathedra. He is speaking with the authority of the church, and that cannot be questioned.

Now that type of thing is invading the Pentecostal church today, so that the whole thing emanates from leadership, and the ordinary person in the pew is not allowed to question. Well, I tell you, you ought to question, and the Bible tells us to question. And if men do not preach the truth, they ought to be kicked out on their ear, and the truth will come back in by the grace of God and for the glory of God.

Hallelujah. Jesus said, don't call people teachers in that sense. Now as he doesn't say that they aren't teachers, of course they were teachers.

But look at that passage of scripture, Matthew chapter 23 verses 8 and 10. Particularly we'll read from verse 8 right through to verse 10. Matthew 23 verses 8 to 10.

I'll get this thing down here, I think that might help me a little bit. Matthew 23 verses 8 to 10. But you do not be called rabbi, that means respected sir, basically.

For one is your rabbi, the Christ, and you are all brethren. Do not call anyone on earth your father. Now he's not talking about your dad, he's talking about people in the structured church being called father, and yet this is what's happened, isn't it, in the structured church.

And the idea now that, you know, they're promoting a, they should be fathers in the faith, I'm sure of that, but we don't actually call them father in that sense, because that is to go against the word of the Lord. For one is your father, he who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers, for one is your teacher, the Christ.

He's not talking about ordinary teaching, but he's talking about what they did in that day was to set somebody up as a teacher who would speak with all authority, and he would have a control. And that control thing which we addressed in the tape that we put out called the doctrine of the Nicolaitans is a thing that has invaded the Pentecostal church very, very much. It was called at one time strong

discipleship, and it amazes me that the Assemblies of God and other groups that I know of who reacted against it in those days have actually fallen for the trap themselves.

And we've heard of pastors who say to the congregation, look, if you don't agree with what I say, then I release you to go elsewhere. What utter nonsense, what a power do they have to release or to withhold. That is utter nonsense, and it is part of this thing that Jesus Christ is addressing.

It is very, very wrong. I spoke with one young pastor, and he said, well, I've given 10 years of my life, and I thought, yes, and poor people have sat for 10 years under the stuff that you taught. And I said, at least you've been paid, and they had to pay, so it's been a job for you.

And it's been a job for me as well, and I don't dismiss that for one minute, but we have lost sight of the people. And brothers and sisters, my commitment is to people. God made me a shepherd of people, not a carer of shepherds.

Although I care for all, but primarily there has to be a concern that goes out to the people, and this is the thing that Jesus Christ addresses. Now that is what happened in Roman Catholicism ultimately. What they said was that the church was the kingdom of God on earth, and the Pope became the vicar of Christ, the one who replaced Christ.

That very word means that, vicar, vicarious. It means it comes from a Latin word which means a replacement of, and that is what happened. And while it does not happen to that extent within the more free churches, there has still been a subtle drift towards that thing.

With church growth, though the emphasis is sometimes different. For example, not all church growth leaders are into kingdom now, although that is a thing which, if you've listened to Jacob Press, you'll get more insight about that. The kingdom now, we are to bring in the kingdom, and we are the leaders of bringing in that kingdom.

And lots of them that are into that take this very, very strong position. The end result is always the same. Christ is effectively replaced by the church through the leadership emphasis and so on.

This results in forms of arrogance, a development of the elitism. You can't question what we're talking about. We're the leaders, you're only the people.

Elitism, the Bible abhors it, hates it. It is totally wrong. And corruption, lying statistics.

People into church growth usually, I remember a very prominent person in Australia who used to say, and one of the prominent ones in New Zealand said the same thing, never count down, always count up. That's lying in my book. Why should it be? Why should it be? It is to give this image that we're doing better than what we really are, and it's happening over and over and over again.

When I was National General Secretary of the Chambers of God in Australia, I questioned the statistics that were being put out, and we found on one occasion that there were 23 churches listed under the name of one man, 23. Now you say, well can he handle 23? Yeah, well you'd think so, except that I happened to know that he was operating in the outback, and most of them would have probably been aborigine based. And the aboriginal people, as you know, they're nomadic people, they're here today and gone tomorrow.

And so probably of those 23, there might have only been three that were valid. Just walk about things, walk about situations. But it was added to the statistics to make the thing look good.

In fact over there we discovered, it's one of the things in the Australian psyche, I suppose, that every state wants to do better than the other state. And so you get these big states vying with each other to try and do best when you start to bring in your statistics. And so what happens? Actually the books get cooked.

They cook the books to present the image of doing well. And that, brothers and sisters, is deception. What is it? It's preaching the church.

It's presenting an image. Our message is not to preach the church. Our message is to present Christ.

To present Christ. And so with that, what I want to do is look at these three passages of scripture. John 12, 23 to 33.

You'll notice there that the setting is Palm Sunday. And we have a picture of, we're not going to that one first, we're going to the other one first. But we'll come back to that one.

We have a picture of Jesus as king. It says, Behold your king cometh unto you, meek and lowly, and riding on a donkey, and aforesaid the coat of a donkey. What a beautiful picture.

You see, kings never rode on donkeys. Kings always rode on great white chargers. But here is the king of heaven.

Here is the king of lords. Incidentally, Jesus never acknowledged that he was king of the Jews. You know that, don't you? He was the king of the Jews.

But he never acknowledged it. Because that would have limited him. When Pilate said, Are you the king of the Jews? He never answered him.

But when he changed the question and said, Are you a king then? He said, Yes, I am a king. To that end was I born, and for that cause came I into the world. Why? Because he's not merely the king of the Jews.

He's the king of the Marys. And he's the king of the Parthians. And he's the king of the Europeans.

He's the king of the South Africans. He is the king of the kings, and the lord of the lords. If he'd have said, Yes, I am the king of the Jews, immediately it would have limited him.

It would have been exclusive. He is the king of the Jews in an inclusive sense. That he is the king of the whole earth, blessed be his name.

And he doesn't need a white charger to come riding into Jerusalem. He comes lowly, riding on a donkey. For he is setting a precedent.

He is setting an example. He says, If you are my followers, then you'll do what I do. Hallelujah.

You won't set yourself up for somebody great, but you'll come in lowly, meek, humble. The other passage that I want to look at is Hebrews chapter 1, and that's where we're going to start. Verses 1 to 4, where basically what the writer is saying is that all messages are inadequate.

All messages apart from this message, which we have, the message in God's Son, is a final message. And then the third passage I want to look at is what we call the unanswerable question. How shall we escape if we neglect? It's the only question to which there is no answer.

So our message is the Lord Jesus Christ, not his church. Our message is Christ crucified, not Jesus Christ Superstar. Our message is the only message of salvation.

And those are the three things that I want to present from these three passages of Scripture. Let's look at Hebrews chapter 1 verses 1 to 4. God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by or in his son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the world, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. Now, of course, the overwhelming message of the Bible is that God speaks.

God speaks in four different ways. Primarily, he speaks in creation. It's inferred here, but it's not stated.

God, who at various times and in different ways spoke. And then in verse two, it talks about the one who made the world. It identifies creation, though it doesn't specifically say here that God has spoken in creation.

But Romans 1 verses 20 to 26 does tell us that God spoke in creation. It's talking about the gospel, and it says everybody is without excuse because God's voice has sounded out. It has gone out to all the world through the voice of creation.

The person who looks at the marvels of the universe, the sun and the stars, and reflects on the grandeur of this earth, and then says there is no God, is a fool. The Bible says the fool has said in his heart there is no God. But some of these people are so foolish that they blab it around with their mouths.

They don't just say it in their heart, but they say it openly. And yet the whole of creation shows the stupidity of that. But this voice of God in creation is a limited voice, for it shows power, but it doesn't reveal grace.

It doesn't identify salvation, and so it is an inadequate message. The message of creation is that there is a God, a God of power, of great power, who flames the flaming stars into space. But there's no revealing of grace, or kindness, or forgiveness, or love.

It is a message, but it's an inadequate message. The law of the jungle is the message of creation, and the law and jungle, the law of the jungle is read in tooth and claw. It's dog eats dog.

It's a message of power, but no grace and love. The second way that God speaks is through conscience. This is implied here again in Hebrews 1. It tells us that the prophet spoke to the fathers, but the fathers responded through their conscience.

A man can speak in a prophetic voice, and you can dismiss what he said. It depends on how your conscience responds to the message. Romans 2 and verse 15 identifies the voice of conscience.

The Bible says there, Paul says, their conscience either accusing them or excusing them. God speaks through conscience. The problem is that conscience can be dulled and hardened.

Conscience is only a safe guide when God is guide of the conscience. So the voice of conscience is uncertain. It's an unsafe message.

It's a message nonetheless. The third way that God speaks is through the prophets. By the prophets, Hebrews 1 verse 1 says, God spoke in these various ways to the fathers by the prophets.

Second, Timothy 3 verse 16 says all scripture is given by the out breathing of God, the inspiration of God. God breathed into them and they inhaled it, and so they were inspired by the expiration of God's breath. He breathed this very word into them, and so this comes to us from the prophets.

But the fact that they were prophets suggests a forward emphasis. Here they stood, but they spoke of something to be. They spoke ahead, and so it was an incomplete message.

So the voice of creation is an inadequate message. The voice of conscience is an uncertain, an unsafe message. The voice by the prophet is an incomplete message.

The final message, the writer identifies, has in these last days spoken unto us in his son, Hebrews chapter 1 verse 2. So this is the fulfilled and final message. Hallelujah. There won't be any other message from God than the message that is in Jesus Christ.

Now we must remember that, and when we go into this philosophy, which is really a recurrence of what the church has done through the ages, we are making a sad, sad mistake, because we are going back to an old message instead of standing with the total and true and final message, Jesus Christ. He is the fulfilled and final message. So the question, why must Christ, not the church, be our message? Let me suggest to you three reasons out of this passage of scripture.

Because Christ, not the church, is appointed heir of all things. It says in verse 2, has in these last days spoken to us by his son, whom he has appointed heir of all things. The church is not going to possess everything.

Christ is going to possess everything. He is appointed as the heir of all things. Look at this marvelous passage of scripture in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 verses 22 to 28, where we got a picture of the great summation of all things, where God winds the whole thing up.

And look what it says. 1 Corinthians chapter 15, as you know, is that beautiful chapter, which deals with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And here in verse 22 it says, for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive, but each one in his own order.

I'm going to be made alive one day. How about you? If we die, well, so be it. People say to me, what you believe in, cremation or burial? I don't believe in either.

I believe in Christ. But to me it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter which way you go.

Hallelujah. Because we're not there. We're going up there.

Hallelujah. We're going to be with Christ, which is afterward those who are Christ that is coming. Then comes the end when he that is Christ delivers the kingdom to God, the father, when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power, for he must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet.

The last enemy that will be destroyed is death, for he has put all things under his feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it is evident that he who put all things under him is accepted. Now when all these things are made subject to him, then the son himself will also be subject to him who put all things under him, that God may be all and in all.

What has happened? God the father has entrusted everything to the son. At Jordan he said, my beloved son, in whom I'm well pleased. At the Mount of Transfiguration he said, my beloved son, hear him, listen to him.

Get your eyes off everybody else, Elijah and Moses and all others and get your eyes on him. Listen to him. He has entrusted this whole program to the son and ultimately when everything is subject, the son says, there you are father and I am subject to you and he brings everything under the authority of God almighty and there's a perfect equilibrium, a total utopia, a beautiful kingdom of God.

Christ has done it all. Now the church has a part in that program but once you replace Christ with the church, you do a great disservice to the gospel and this is what happens so often. Take for example that verse in Psalm 2 verses 7 and 8 where it says, ask of me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance.

Have you sung it? Ask of me and what is the motivation of it? Usually it is, we are going to possess it. We will go forward and possess the world. We're asking you Lord, give us our inheritance.

It's our, no, no, no, wait a minute, wait a minute, it's not our inheritance, it's his inheritance and if you look at Psalm 2, Psalm 2 is a beautiful psalm of the resurrection of Christ. For God says, this day have I begotten you. Begotten him from what? Begotten him from the dead, begotten him to a new life.

That's what Peter says on the day of Pentecost as he preaches his message. He says, as the second psalm says, this day have I begotten you in that God has raised him from the dead. So he identifies what the psalmist is talking about as being the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

And then verses 7 and 8, it's God speaking to Christ and he says, ask of me and I will give you the nations for your inheritance. He's talking to Christ, he's not talking to the church, he's talking to Christ. The possession is not the churches, it's not the taking of the kingdom by the church, but rather it is his inheritance.

Hallelujah, we're taking the whole thing for Jesus Christ. You say, well you're making a lot out of nothing. No I'm not, this is fundamental I believe, because what so often happens is that we take the glory, we take the credit, when in actual fact it all belongs to him and we're just simply errand boys, we're just part of the great program of God Almighty.

Christ is appointed heir, not the church. And then Christ, not the church, is the creator. Look what it says here, Hebrews chapter 1, God who at different times and in various ways spoke to the fathers in these last days, spoken unto us in his son, whom he's appointed heir of all things, through whom he made the world.

Christ is the creator. And one of the things that I find a problem to handle with, maybe it's because I'm getting older, I don't know, but it's the use of certain words. The word creative has come into vogue such a lot today.

We're creative this, and we're creative that, and we're creative the other thing. The word create really means to make something out of nothing, that's what it means. And we are not creators, only God is the creator.

We have to start with raw material. When you make something beautiful in art, you're not creating it, you're making it, you're assembling it, you're using certain ability, and I don't want to take this thing too far, when I don't mind using the word creative in that sense, as long as you understand that really we are not creators, only God is a creator. God is creator.

Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 3 is often misquoted, where it says, by faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God. People say, there you are, God created the world by faith, it doesn't say that. It doesn't say God created the world by faith, this is what Copeland and Hagen and all those guys are into.

They say that we have the same creative ability as God, because he created it by faith. So if we've got faith, we can create it. But that isn't what the verse says at all.

It says by faith we understand that the worlds were framed. The worlds were framed not by faith, the worlds were framed by God, and by the word of God. Can you see what I'm saying? It's a twisting of the scripture.

Somebody wrote to me recently and said, in a sense we can be said to be people who are little gods, for we are God manifest in the flesh. I said, utter nonsense. I wrote back to him a very very strong letter, and he responded to me quite kindly, and I think we're becoming friends.

But I will not accept that. When it says God was manifest in the flesh, it only is applied to Jesus Christ and nobody else. We are not little gods.

We are not creative. John chapter 1 verses 1 to 14, where it says, in the beginning was the word. It uses the word logos, but it doesn't just mean the spoken word.

This man said, in the beginning was the spoken word. No, it's more than that. It's because we cannot use language to describe the indescribable.

It uses a word there, which is the best word that could be used to express the idea of the inexpressible, to explain the inexplicable, that here in the beginning was this person. It wasn't just spoken word. He was the person of the Godhead.

He was the uncreated son of God, hallelujah, and that one became flesh and dwelt among us. Only Christ, not the church's creator. But then the third thing, Christ, not the church's God.

We are not little gods. It's built upon a wrong idea. John chapter 10 verse 34, where Jesus is in conflict with the Jews, and he has claimed to be God.

He has claimed to be the son of God, and they say, you are blaspheming. And Jesus explains that he is God in various ways. And one of the arguments that he puts forward is that even in the psalms, it was said, do they not say that ye are God? And so Jesus says in John chapter 10, verse 34 to 36, Jesus answered them, is it not written in your law? I said, ye are God.

If you call them gods unto whom the word of God came and the scripture cannot be broken, say ye of him whom the father has sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemeth, because I said, I am the son of God. So what you're going to understand is this, that Jesus is not saying that people are gods. He is arguing for the fact of his uniqueness.

That is what he's doing. But he's employing one additional argument in the strand. It's a bit like in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 29, where it talks about being baptized for the dead.

You know, the Mormons use that, don't they? They say, there you are. It's in 1 Corinthians 15, 29. Else what would they do who are baptized for the dead? Now what Paul is doing is quite clear when you understand.

Paul is arguing the resurrection. That's what he's arguing right through 1 Corinthians 15. And he argues it from every possible angle.

He says the resurrection is proved in nature. It falls into the ground. It rises.

It's proved in the celestial beings. You've got one greater than the other and so on and so forth. And he says, look, he says, and he brings it out of the scripture.

He says, if there's no resurrection, he said, we are of all men most miserable. We're still in our sins. If there's no resurrection, there's no forgiveness.

There's nothing, nothing, nothing. He's using all the arguments. And then he says, and even the heathen world believes in the resurrection.

Else what would they do that are baptized for the dead? And there's a quick, there's a switch actually in the pronouns that are used there. All the way through the argument, he's saying we, I, us. But now when he comes to verse 29, he says them else, what would they do? And he starts pointing outside.

He's using every possible argument. Baptism for the dead was a heathen practice. It was not a practice in the church.

It was a heathen practice. And he says, what would they do who are baptized for the dead? He's not sanctioning it. He's just using it as another argument.

Now, this is something like what Jesus Christ is using here. The argument is that he is the son of God and he is unique in that regard. That's the point.

If you go back to the passage of scripture, you'll find that in Psalm 82, where it comes from, the Psalm is dealing with judges and judgment and so on. And the word Elohim, which is translated God actually was not only used of men of God in the old Testament. It was also used the princes and of judges and so on.

It was used of people in high position, Elohim. I don't want to go into a full teaching on that, but primarily what Jesus, what the Psalmist is talking about is that there are princes, there are standards, there are levels within society. And he says, I have said that you are Elohim.

I have said that you are princes, you are judges, you are in this position and all of you are children of the most high. And so that very word is not the same as it is in the New Testament for God. It has a different meaning and a different understanding.

Isaiah 41 verse 23 actually proves the opposite to what these people are saying when they talk about us being little gods. To show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are God. In other words, if you really claim to be this supreme one, you tell me what the future is going to happen.

Only God can do that and God alone. And so you've got to balance scripture with scripture and to build it on that idea. And as they do, we're saying that we are little gods.

I was once in a television debate with Barbara Sealing, the person who, I don't know if you've read any of her stuff over here, but she argues against the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And she used that precise verse to try and establish her point. And thankfully there was another person on the panel who was a good Anglican theologian who took her to task.

I challenged her, but I could only do it from the congregation. And then he backed me up on the panel and he said that that gentleman down there is quite right. And he put her right pretty quickly.

And this is what is happening. But brothers and sisters, the church is not God. We are not little gods.

Only he is God. Blessed be his wonderful name. Our message is Christ crucified, not Jesus Christ, superstar.

Let me just quickly direct you to John chapter 12. John chapter 12 from verse 20. Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast.

Then they came to Philip who was from their Seder of Galilee and asked him saying, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. Philip came and told Andrew and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. Now Jesus is here riding on the height of popular opinion.

They want to make him king. They said, you're pretty good, Jesus. But of course, Jesus wouldn't commit himself to them because he knew what was in them.

They're 23. But Jesus answered them, saying the hour has come that the son of man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone.

But if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it. And he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am there, my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, him, my father will honor.

We're living in a power hungry generation. And this colors our thinking and clouds our message. I'll say a little bit more about that up next week.

Romans 12 verse 2 gives us a warning. It says don't let the world press you into its mold. Don't be conformed to this world.

J.B. Phillips says, don't let it press you into its mold. Acts chapter 2, verse 40, Peter warns, save yourself from this untoward generation. We're living in a power hungry generation, and that hunger of power has invaded the church.

There's a musical thing going on next week or this week up in Auckland with people like Phil Pringle and Brian Houston, and they're all into this. Prosperity, power, the lot. You'll find Phil Pringle calling down fire in his song, bringing down fire, calling down fire.

It's not biblical. It's totally against scripture. And yet it's a popular thing because that world system has invaded the church.

And it's natural. It's something we want. We want to be able to control.

We want power. Jesus had the opportunity. They're all looking for you.

The Greeks are chasing after you. He said, unless a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die. He identifies the basic fact of the message of the gospel.

The crucified life lies at the heart of the power of the gospel. There can be no power without crucifixion. There can be no resurrection without crucifixion.

But people say it's enough that Christ did it now. He said we've got to follow him. And that word follow means be like I am.

Follow my example. The bygone era, the great message that the church espoused was the message of the crucified life. It was the message of holiness.

It was the message of living right. Because if you live right, you get all sorts of good feelings inside. Hallelujah.

But if you become power hungry, wanting all those things, want to dominate it. Jesus came under it. He spoke right against it.

He said a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. It's deeper than that. The crucified life rests, you see, in the sovereignty of God.

Hallelujah. And notice it here. It rests in the sovereignty of God in regard to the divine program.

Verse 23. But Jesus answered them saying the hour has come. Before, during his life, he said the hour has not yet come.

When Mary at the wedding asked him to turn water into wine, he did what she wanted, but he warned her that she was getting out of step. He said my hour is not yet come. For in her heart she knew that what he was born for.

And she thought this was the opportunity. Here they have a problem. They need an answer.

You are the answer. This is your moment. He looked at her and said mother dear, my hour is not yet come.

But he still turned water into wine. Because she saw beyond that. She knew what was coming.

But she didn't understand it all. But here he now says the hour has come. You see, the crucified life rests in the sovereignty of God with regard to timing.

We've had to go through a whole process. It's been very difficult. But I rest in the sovereignty of God.

He knows what he's doing. Sometimes I wish he'd tell me. But he knows what he's doing.

The crucified life rests in the sovereignty of God. Some of you have had problems and perplexities. You've wondered all about it.

The crucified life rests in the sovereignty of God with regard to the divine program. It rests in the sovereignty of God with regard to the divine principle. Verse 24.

Jesus said except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. It's the principle of death and resurrection. Without death there can be no resurrection.

It's in nature. It's in life. It's all the way through.

Paul says I am crucified with Christ. The ego has been dealt with and I am identified with Jesus Christ. I have died, the divine principle, death and resurrection.

It rests in the sovereignty of God in respect to the divine passion. Jesus said he that hates his life will find it. He that loves his life will lose it.

You lose what you cling to but you gain what you give away. Now that's not natural. That's not the world philosophy.

That's not the understanding of men. You don't get that from Greek mysticism and Greek mythology. You get that from Christ.

It's a divine passion. Hallelujah. And the crucified life rests in the sovereignty of God in respect to the divine passion.

Jesus said if anyone wants to come with me you've got to follow me. That where I am there you may be also. And we say yes Lord we want to be there up there with you in the mansions in glory.

Don't we? But hang on there's a pathway. Where is he going first? He's going to the place of a troubled soul. Ever been there? If you want to get to the mansion you've got to keep following.

Right? For he says the next verse now my soul is troubled and what shall I say save me from this hour? I can't say that. For I've come for this very reason to this hour. This is the purpose of it all.

For you see friends trouble very often precedes triumph. Hello? Hello? That's the crucified message. That's the message of the cross.

We want all the glory. We want all the grandeur. But we don't want the suffering.

But Jesus said now is my soul troubled. That's what's wrong with all this prosperity stuff. Because God says that we will be blessed.

But he says in this life you will have tribulation. In this life you will have persecution. He says if it's enough that they treat the master this way they'll treat you also.

Trouble precedes triumph. Resignation results in revelation. Jesus said what shall I say save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour.

No this is the only thing I'll say. Father glorify your name. What's he done? He has resigned.

He has resigned himself to the will of God. And resignation results always in revelation. Hallelujah.

For what comes out of this? A voice speaks from heaven. Glory to God. And I want you to notice very quickly the different levels of revelation.

In that crowd there were people. There were lots of people. And in that crowd there were people who heard the noise.

And that's all they heard. Nothing more. They just heard a noise.

There were others who identified the noise as a voice. But they couldn't interpret the words. There was only Christ who heard the words.

The words were very clear. But only he heard them. For there are levels of revelation.

And friends the closer we get to Christ the more of the revelation we get. Hallelujah. The church of Jesus Christ is built on revelation.

There's nothing else. Education will never do. Information will never get us there.

The only thing that's going to get us there is revelation. Hallelujah. I tell you what, if there's one thing lacking in leadership today it is perception.

Spiritual perception. And as a result all sorts of clones are coming onto the platform and preaching their heresies. All sorts have been admitted.

Back in the early days of Pentecost they wouldn't have even been given breathing space. They would have been sussed out long ago and they would have been denounced as false teachers. I knew a man who's just passed into the glory about 94 years of age.

His name was John Vick. He had a church in New York that I used to go over to quite regularly. It was a church among the Scandinavian people.

A beautiful church. And he told me of some of these people who came through. People who claimed all sorts of stories about what they were doing in the communist bloc and all the rest of it.

And he said one man came and told this great story and he said I walked up to him after the meeting and said you are a liar. He said get out of here we don't want you to preach here again. That's the sort of thing we need today.

We need men who will protect the church of Jesus Christ from these charlatans. These men that are raking off millions. Think of Benny Hinn on the television the other night and it was said that he gets two million dollars a month.

Poor man. Poor man trading on the gullibility of people. God help us.

God help us. My dear friends and I say that simply because of this. I have studied what he has said.

I know the things he has said and it's total nonsense. Heresy. I might have told you a friend of mine was offered Benny Hinn in one of his churches in Australia.

And the person who offered him said mind you he said you can't believe a word that he said. And I thought that when I watched him on television the other night. You can't believe a word that he says but at least he'll get a crown for you.

And my friend said to the man no way. He said my people are too precious for that sort of thing. And I thank God for men who will take a stand against that sort of thing.

And brothers and sisters if ever we needed it today we need it now. We need men of perception who can see immediately. Hallelujah.

And some of us have been able to identify some of these crooks long before they've been exposed by the world. But some of our colleagues who have just been after numbers have just bent over backwards to get a crown. God forgive us.

God forgive us. In respect of the divine pattern resignation results in revelation when you've resigned everything. Hallelujah.

And your reputation doesn't matter anymore. Then you become a candidate for the revelation of God. Surrender ends in salvation.

Hallelujah. For Jesus says here and I if I am lifted up I will draw all men unto me. Hallelujah.

And he was talking about being lifted up upon a cross. Finally we must keep on preaching the bridegroom not the bride because this message is the only means of salvation. There's no other message.

The writer says how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation. Hebrews chapter 2 verses 1 to 4. And there he paints two pictures. In Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 1 he paints the picture of leaking vessels.

Look at it quickly. Hebrews 2.1. Therefore we must give the most earnest heed to the things we have heard lest we drift away. Or I think as the old King James says let it drift away in the margin as leaking vessel.

We have received something from God. We have received the power of the gospel but how easy it is to let it drift away. The other picture that he presents in verse 3 is the picture of a drifting boat.

I think the old and new King James turns them around the other way. But that's really what the original language brings out. In verse 3 they're both there in the new King James but they're around the other way whereas they're the right way in the old King James.

Verse 3. How shall we escape if we neglect. He's talking about drifting boats and he's talking about the point of no return. When I was a young pastor preacher I went to America and went up to Niagara Falls and there you saw all this water gushing over this great fall.

I mean Hooker Falls is pretty good but Niagara Falls is something out of this world. And you see that water gushing over this tremendous fall. And they told me a story and I've never forgotten it.

Back in 1962 when the story took place. I think in fact I read it in the Reader's Digest. It was a story of a couple, young children.

One was called Deanne and the other was called Roger. Their surname was Woodward. And they lived near the Niagara Falls and one day one of their friends said would you like to come in the boat with us? And so they all got into the boat, these two children and this friend and another mate.

They went down the river. Roger was about seven years of age. And eventually he said can I have a go mister? And he said yes and he took the wheel.

He was going in this boat down towards Niagara. Now I understand in the Niagara across from a certain rock looking right across there is what they call the point of no return. Where if a boat goes beyond that it will be sucked by the drag of the water down over the Niagara.

And there was a woman throwing a party around and she said see that and pointed out is a point of no return there. And then they shouted, somebody shouted well what about that little boat? Roger was holding the wheel, man not taking notice. He'd gone too far.

The man grabbed to the wheel, turned it round and the strength of the engine for a while seemed as though it was going to make ground against the water. But then it gave way and it was dragged relentlessly down towards the fall. It went over.

Roger had on a life belt. Because of the light body weight somehow instead of going under he was carried over the crest of the wave, landed down below. And the boat saw him, picked him up and he was safe.

Deanne somehow miraculously was cast near the edge of the river and a strong arm reached out and grabbed her and saved her. The boat was totally destroyed. The other two men lost their lives.

Roger Woodward was the only one as far as I know who ever went over the Niagara and never lost his life. In each case there was a way of escape. For Deanne it was a strong arm by the riverside grabbed her, she was saved.

For Roger it was the life belt and the boat down below. For the other two there was no escape, they were lost. Life's like a river, we're going down towards an ultimate disaster.

There was one who came into the world, blessed be his name, and he said if you put your trust in me I will save you, I will save you. And the writer to Hebrew said if we neglect that we go past the point of no return. There is no escape.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Why is there no escape? There is no escape because the salvation was great in its cost. The Bible tells us that we are redeemed not with corruptible things like silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ. And things that are precious friends means that they cost a lot, hallelujah, and his blood is precious.

He laid his life down to save you, blessed be his wonderful name, and if you neglect that there is no answer to the question how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? That salvation is not only great in its cost, it's great in its offer of mercy and pardon. That song that is in our hymn sheet, Amazing

Grace, it was written by a man who was a blasphemer, and a man who was a slave trader, and a man who was a murderer, but that man, and I've forgotten his name right now, John Newton, turned to Jesus Christ, and John Newton was taken from a slave trader to becoming a preacher of the gospel, and he wrote that marvelous hymn, Amazing Grace. How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. This salvation is great in its offer of mercy and pardon, and I don't know, there may be someone here who has wandered away from God, and I want to say that the grace of God is sufficient to reach out and touch you. I have a friend called Stan Gibbons, and Stan Gibbons was an alcoholic, a drunkard.

He had beaten his wife and done all sorts of dreadful things, and he was in prison one day, and he was thinking, and he wanted a smoke, and he had some tobacco in his pocket, and he reached out. He didn't have any cigarette paper, but he saw a Gideon Bible, and he reached out and he tore a page out of a Gideon Bible, and as he tore it out, his eyes fell on the verse, If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. And Stan Gibbons said, I wonder, does God mean what he says? And he fell on his knees, and he said, Oh God, get me out of this prison.

But before he was through, he was repenting of his sin on the prison cell floor, and he found Christ as his Savior. And Stan Gibbons, before he got out of prison, he witnessed the 600 inmates in that prison in Birmingham, and to six bishops about what Jesus Christ had done in his life, and now he has children who are in the ministry preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this gospel is great in its power to change lives, and because of that, there is no escape if we neglect so great salvation.

But not only is it a great salvation, it's God's salvation. You see, there's no salvation in the church, but there is salvation in Christ. So we dare not replace Christ with the church.

Hallelujah. It's God's salvation. It's not man's offer to meet man's need.

It's God's offer to meet man's need, and there's no other way. Hallelujah. The bank manager stood back as a salesman sat in his room, and the bank manager said, stupid man, foolish, utter nonsense.

The man had been talking to him about the gospel. The bank manager said, listen, if I'm going to get to heaven, I'm going to get there on my own terms, not on what God says. I'll make my way.

And the salesman leaned forward, and he said, tell me, sir, you're a bank manager, aren't you? If I come to borrow some money from you, on whose terms do I get the money? My terms or your terms? The bank manager said, on my terms. I am the manager. I've got the money.

I lay down the terms, quite so said the impertinent salesman, and he said, you're coming into the presence of the great manager of the universe. On whose terms are you going to have salvation? Your terms or his terms? His terms are surrender. His terms are Jesus Christ.

His terms are not the church. His terms are Jesus. There ain't no other salvation for us, but it's sufficient, and it's in Christ.

And so we preach Christ, crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and Christ the salvation of God, the wisdom of God. Let's bow for a moment in prayer. We pray, Lord, that the awe of this message will grip us all here.

I don't know if there's anyone here who's not committed to Jesus. You want to be. You've never made that commitment, that surrender.

Just give you an opportunity quickly. Just lift up your hand. We'll pray for you afterwards.

I sense we're probably all Christian, but I feel I would be failing in my duty if I didn't give you that opportunity. Just quickly, one moment longer. Lord, I pray that the fear of God will come into us, and the fact of this glorious message that we have to proclaim will so grip us that, Lord, we will be satisfied with nothing less and nothing more.

Let us not add to, and let us not take from. Let us rather preach Christ, for he is the total answer to man's total need. Blessed be your name.

Thank you, Lord, for gathering us together. Thank you for these people. Thank you for their support and encouragement.

I pray, Lord, that we will have a real great encouragement next Sunday for our last gathering, and you will show us clearly that, crucified people, we rest in the sovereignty of God, in your timing, in your plan, in your purpose, and above all, Lord, in your method of bringing out of nothing something wonderful, something glorious, the death and resurrection principle. Help us to practice it, not merely preach it, for the glory of your great name. And now, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit surround us all, now and forevermore.

Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/12/SID12080.mp3>

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