

What Does God Mean to Us

by Ralph Shallis

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing God and His Word, and how this knowledge can multiply our faith and give us a deeper understanding of God's nature and purposes.

Duration: 50:58

Scripture: Genesis 1:1

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of preaching the message of God's word. He highlights that this message is the only one that can truly satisfy the human heart and bring true worth to one's life. The speaker encourages the audience to hold their heads high as they go out to preach, reminding them that everything in the universe is held in Christ's hand. He also points out the contrast between the beauty of God's creation and the insensitivity and blindness of people in today's society. Additionally, the speaker briefly mentions the ancient Hindu belief of the world resting on the back of four elephants, contrasting it with the sober and simple account of God's creation in the Bible. Finally, he concludes by emphasizing that nothing else matters if God reveals Himself to us and that Christ is summed up by the word grace, which originally meant beauty and later came to represent acts of generosity.

Transcript

Oh, Father, don't let anybody here make the mistake of thinking that the Word of God can come from a man. Father, you've blessed us during this week and we've got used to hearing your voice through human beings and seeing the light of Christ on many faces. But, oh God, don't let us make the mistake of letting our eyes see no further than the human face and our ears hear no further than the human word.

Lord, turn our hearts to you now and save us from the besetting sin, the appalling sin of looking to the creature instead of the Creator, to a man instead of the Spirit of God. Father, we depend upon you, speaker and hearer alike, with all our being in the most desperate need to have your pure word from heaven. Your own heart opened and, oh God, deliver us, deliver us from any kind of human intervention.

We ask this because Jesus died for us. Our only standing with you and we ask with confidence and we believe, Lord, that you can satisfy our heart this evening. We believe in you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. As I've been praying it over, I believe that what we need more than anything else in the world and what we need constantly and what we need more and more all the time is a true vision of the Lord Jesus Christ, a true knowledge of God, because our faith only exists when we first begin to glimpse God, when we first have our inkling of Christ which comes to us through the preaching of the gospel, through the reading of his word, through the Spirit of God looking at us through somebody's eyes, and it is this which begets faith in our heart. We turn to God and with our tiny, infant, imperfect faith we put our trust in him.

And then it's as we continue to look at him, understand him and know him that our faith grows. And as our faith grows, God is able to reveal himself more and more. I'm absolutely certain that the reason why most men's faith, most Christians' faith is so weak, imperfect, is simply because they don't know God except in a most fragmentary way.

When we consider that it took God thousands of years of human history before he could even bring his son in human flesh upon this earth, because he would not have been understood before, how it took him two thousand years to create and educate and discipline and condition the thinking of a human nation where only a tiny handful of people recognized him when he did come. We realize what immense difficulty God has in getting through to the human soul, in revealing himself to us. And it's only in the measure that we see God and know him that our faith can take hold of him and bring God's Spirit into operation.

Let us read, I would like to read, if time permits, several passages in the Scriptures with you. John 1 and verse 1, first of all, which we all know by heart, I dare say. In the beginning was the Word.

We are going out this month with the Word. Not our Word, not man's Word, not George Verwer's Word, but with the Word of God. We have a message to men, the only message which can meet their needs, the only message which can save souls, the only message which can give the light of Satan.

God is sending us out with this Word. It's the Word which the apostles were driven out to preach. And in the beginning was the Word.

In God's estimation, the Word is the beginning of everything. This is why God had the Bible written, so that we could have his thought concentrated in human language, expressed in human language, and completely defined. Thought is indefinable until it's expressed in language.

You may have a marvellous thought as you walk down the road one spring morning, but if you don't stop to put it into language, it very quickly disappears, and you can't even remember what it was two minutes later. It isn't until thought is embodied in Word that it has real significance for anybody else. But when God speaks, that Word is accompanied with power.

The Word of God, as we understand it in the Bible, is God putting into execution what he has on his heart, what he has in his thought. When God speaks, the thing happens. Because God is in authority.

God is the supreme authority. The whole universe only exists because God is thinking about it and holds it in his hand. And therefore, if we can only hear the voice of God, if only we can hear the Word of God and see it and understand it, if God can design, define his thought to us, then our message to this world will come crystal clear and like a blazing fire, like a hammer blow, as Jeremiah said, breaking in pieces even the hardest rock.

God is looking today for men and women through whom he can push his Word, but men and women who first of all hear his Word, see his face, men and women who know him, who are prepared to have any

sacrifice in order to get this vision and this knowledge of God. God isn't looking for preachers today. He's not looking for tract distributors.

Thank God for them. But what God is looking for is men and women of God, men and women who know God so deeply, so intimately, who've had the very Word of God burnt into their souls, men and women who've been almost blinded with the vision of Christ, men and women who are obsessed with the supreme thought of God's heart and who've got something really to say to men, men and women who really know the truth. And so John begins his gospel with this plain statement, in the beginning was the Word, in the beginning was the logos.

In Greek, the word logos has a double meaning. It doesn't only mean the spoken word. It doesn't only mean also, I might mention in passing, it doesn't only mean the isolated word, the noun or the adjective or the verb.

It means the whole sentence and the whole discourse. And this is why the whole Bible is said to be the Word of God. If you make a speech or if you make a declaration or a manifesto or a statement, all that is your Word, your logos.

And the Bible is the logos of God. It's God's statement, God's declaration to mankind, God defining his thought, his textbook. But the word logos means more than the expression.

It means the idea, the reason, the thought that is behind that expression. What John is saying here is that in the beginning was the logos, that is, God was thinking, God is thinking. It would be more correct to say because God has no past or future.

For God, everything is an eternal present, if we can express it that way. I think any way we try to define God must sound impotent and ridiculous to him. But that's perhaps the only way that we can understand it.

God is simply reality. And there cannot be anything passing away or still to come with God. Everything just is, as far as God is concerned.

And God thinks. God made man in his image a thinking creature. But God thinks.

God has a thought. God has a reason for his existence. And this reason he calls the logos.

What God is thinking of all the time is the sum total of everything that is truth, goodness, and beauty. The sum total of all intelligence, of all wisdom, of all that is right, of all that is conformable to his own nature. And because God thinks this, this thing that he thinks is as real to him as himself.

In fact, it is himself. And because we are born and made in such a way that when we see utter beauty we fall in love with it, whether it's a sunset or a girl's face or the birth of our little child or a flower in springtime, God loves the logos with all his power and all his being. And he calls the logos his son.

He says, today have I engendered you, but that is an eternal today. God, in a certain sense, is always at the point of having engendered his son. And God loves the son with a love that is beyond all comprehension.

And yet the Lord Jesus said to his apostle the night before he was crucified that he loved us in the same way that his father loved him. And he said, you've got to love each other as I have loved you. And this is the hallmark of true Christianity, and it's by this that all men will know that you are my disciples.

When God made the universe, I'm sure there is no doubt that with the delight of a creator's heart, the delight of a poet's mind, the desire to create beauty, he was projecting, so to speak, something of himself into all his handiwork, just as in a painting or a poem or any piece of workmanship. You can see the artist's soul. You don't have to study a man's work very long to recognize his character in everything that he has made.

And those of us who have eyes to see, those of us whose eyes have been anointed by God, we can see through all the handiwork of God in the whole creation, in the whole universe, from the smallest things in the microcosm to the nebulae and the whole universe itself, the whole macrocosm, we can see the thought of God. We can perceive his love of us, as Paul said in Romans 1, in the things that he has made. And this is why everybody is inexcusable.

God has written an immense book of philosophy and science and poetry. The whole universe just shouts out the name of God. Yet men are blind, they don't see.

They're deaf and they don't hear. Their heart is insensitive and they don't perceive. What a tragedy for God.

How God must weep over this human race that he created to love himself and to know him. Jesus said, this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. The only human form in which we can know God.

I'd like to turn back now to the Old Testament a minute, to Psalm 33. When I was a young Christian I was very troubled because it seemed to me that the Bible said practically nothing about many of the deep problems and thoughts which I felt needed resolving and needed definition. But when I really undertook to read the Bible, I discovered that God says a tremendous lot.

This is what is so marvelous about the Bible. It satisfies the plain, blunt realist who is just interested in getting a job done. It satisfies the philosopher, it satisfies the poet, the mother, the king, it satisfies the dying man, it satisfies an impotent cripple, it satisfies everybody, it satisfies the man who's headlong in love and about to marry, it satisfies the mother as she looks at the face of her little newborn child.

This is what is so miraculous about this book. It is God's answer to every human need. And it is in proportion as we study the Bible, which is a sort of mirror, that we really begin to see what God is like.

The Bible quickens our spiritual sight and gives us such a vast and accurate and marvelous definition of God, and knowledge of God, that our faith is multiplied by infinity. When we understand what God really is, what he's driving at, what his objective is, why he made the universe, why he tolerates evil, his whole process of delivering men, and his conception of the new scheme of things that he's going to bring into being, and that he's already beginning to work on as he saves men and women now. This enables us to pray objectively, and we're praying in the line of God's thinking.

The result is God helps us in our praying. The Spirit of God himself prays for us with groanings that can't be uttered. God just drives us along evermore to take hold of him for the realization of his full will.

Oh, brothers and sisters, how is it that so many of us can spend so many years just foodling around, messing around with things of secondary value, messing around with second-hand knowledge of God, and content with a little limited vision, when God has such tremendous things to reveal to mankind. You remember there was a young fellow who used to sell boots, who heard a couple of Christians, older

Christians, talking one day, I think it was in front of his shop, saying the world had never yet seen the man, what God can do through the man who really does believe in him. And that young fellow said, well, I'll be that man.

That was Dwight Lyman Moody, who led two million souls to Christ in his lifetime. But you know what God did through Moody? That's not God's last word. I believe that if God today can find the man who can take hold of him for more than Moody did, God will use him in a greater way still.

Oh, if only all of us people would take hold of him. If only all of us would move forward in faith. I believe the whole world could be turned upside down in one month.

If every Christian in the world today won only ten souls a year, in two years the whole world would be converted, not just evangelized. You work it out on paper. We've got a God who is limited by nothing, except by the principles of his own nature, which he has established for us in the Word, and by the limitations that we put upon him by our unbelief and our sin.

In Psalm 33 and verse 6, we read this marvelous line of David's poem. I think it was David who wrote this. By the word of the Lord, by the logos of Yahweh, the heavens were made, and all their army by the breath of his mouth, by the spirit of his mouth.

So everything that exists, the nebulae, the atoms, your nerve cells, your brain, all these things were made by the word of the Lord. This is what John tells us in the first chapter of John. All things were created by the word, and without him was not anything made that was made.

Doesn't this enlarge our conception of God and enlarge our faith? Until a few years ago, I think many, even Christians, thought that God had created the universe and sort of wound it up like a clock and left it to function more or less on its own, and that God intervened when he wanted to, and we call those things miracles. But now, even our secular scientists have come to understand that the whole universe is simply energy built up according to the most marvelous mathematical pattern into a structure that we call a material universe, but which is really immaterial. You probably know better than I do that our human body, scientifically speaking, is almost empty.

The spaces between the atoms forming the molecules are like the spaces between the stars in the universe, and the spaces between the molecules forming the tissue of our body is even greater. And even the electrical charges, which we call electrons and neutrons and all the rest of it, are merely charges of energy or electricity which apparently are immaterial and that nobody can define and that nobody understands. This is why the Bible says that God has made the universe of things which do not appear.

He has made them by the word of his mouth. I believe that the energy of which the universe is constructed with all its marvelous, intelligent, mathematical pattern is nothing else but the creative energy which God is forever putting out by his Holy Spirit, so that if God ceased to think about the universe, the universe just wouldn't exist. All things exist simply by the word of the Lord, and this ties up with what we read in Hebrews chapter 1, where we read that Christ himself upholds all things by the word of his power.

In verse 3 of chapter 1 of Hebrews, he reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by the word of his power. Isn't it nice to think, brothers and sisters, comforting, reassuring, strengthening, invigorating, as we plow through the villages and towns of France, surrounded by so much atheism, apparently like a needle in a haystack, there's one soul here and there who believes

these things, whereas the vast majority of human beings seem to give us the lie to everything that we say and believe? Isn't it marvelous to think that as you walk along the street, you're giving out your tracts, every last electron of your nervous system, every single particle of your being exists because God is thinking about you, and Jesus Christ is holding that in existence. And the man who is opposite you and who is laughing at you because you believe in God, even his whole physical system is simply held in being because Jesus Christ is upholding the material structure of his being.

All the flowers, all the trees, the clouds, the dust under our feet, all this only exists because Jesus Christ is holding it in existence, keeping it together, exerting the energy by the Spirit of God which gives it existence and gives it what we would call reality, but which for God is something transient and which will disappear one day. Yes, I think it's good to remind ourselves of these things. Sometimes when we're in a tough corner or we seem to be so much alone, it's a good thing to remember that God does really hold the whole world in his hand, but that's putting it even feebly.

Let's see what Isaiah said about it in chapter 40. I think this is a tremendous passage because Isaiah lived 700 years before Christ at a time when he saw the ten northern tribes of Israel swept away into captivity in Assyria because of their unbelief. He saw the whole testimony crumbled to pieces.

Even the good king Hezekiah, who had produced a certain amount of reformation in his earlier days, now that Isaiah was an old man, had turned more or less away from the Lord, he'd married a young wife and begotten a wicked son, Manasseh, who for 52 years led Judah into apostasy. Poor Isaiah, in his latter years, it seemed to him as if even the whole spiritual universe which God had brought into being in creating Israel and the bitter Bible that existed at that time, all this even seemed to be crumbling about him. What a vision this man had of God.

Look at chapter 40, verse 12. Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Who has directed the spirit of the Lord or as his counselor has instructed him? Whom did he consult for his enlightenment and who taught him the path of justice and taught him knowledge and showed him the way of understanding? Why, the nations are like a drop from a bucket and are accounted as the dust on the scales. Behold, he takes up the isles like fine dust.

Lebanon wouldn't suffice for fuel nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. All the nations are as nothing before him. They are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.

To whom then will ye liken God or what likeness will you compare with him? The idol? A workman casts it and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for its silver chains? A man who's too poor chooses for an offering wood that won't rot and he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an image that won't move. Haven't you known? Haven't you heard? Hasn't it been told you from the beginning? Haven't you understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he who sits above the sphere of the earth and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in.

Who brings princes to naught and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. Verse 25, to whom then will you compare me that I should be like him says the holy one. Lift up your eyes on high and see who created these, the galaxy, the nebulae, the universes of universes.

He who brings out their army by number and calls them all by name by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power not one misses its way. Oh, I think we could go on all night drawing from the Bible from the infinite resources of God's revelation. Let us just turn a minute to Genesis chapter 1. This is a chapter that has been a tremendous problem for Christians, the chapter that has been more attacked than any other in the Bible and today the vast majority of people who profess the name of Christian treat this chapter as sheer mythology.

The German liberal theologians and philosophers have destroyed the faith of the majority of Christendom in this book and yet Christ said that not one jot or tittle of this book could disappear. It was easier for the universe, the material universe to disappear than for one jot or tittle of the books of Moses, the law, to disappear or to fail. It was because Christ believed this page, the story of creation, that I was driven to study it and to search and to find out what was the real truth of the matter.

I realized that if I couldn't believe this page then I couldn't necessarily believe anything that Christ said. If he was mistaken on this point then he might be mistaken on any point at all. And in chapter 2 where we read that a man leaves his father and mother and gives to his wife and they become one flesh, Christ quotes this verse and builds all his teaching on marriage and divorce on this particular verse.

Christ was convinced that these two chapters were the word of God. We haven't time to look in any detail at this but I want to point out just a few things. Down to the creation of man in verses 26 and 27, I reckon that there are about 22 phenomena listed, beginning with the creation of the heavens and the earth, that is the whole universe, and from verse 2 onwards with the creation and the adapting of this planet for life and the appearance of life in its progressive and different forms, culminating with the appearance of man.

It's very interesting indeed to go through this chapter and make a comparison with the discoveries and statements of modern science. Men have taken a long, long time to discover what God said at least 6,000 years ago. We don't know who wrote this particular chapter.

We know that it must have come from Adam and must have been passed on down from father to son. We know that it came into the hands of Moses. It was almost certainly revealed to Adam personally by God.

Some interpreters of the Bible think that these 6 days and nights, evenings and mornings, were 6 progressive revelations that God gave to Moses, lasting over a period of 6 days and nights, during which God revealed things that no human brain could ever discover by itself at that time. Science has come to believe exactly what this chapter says. It has come to establish the same facts and also to put them in exactly the same order.

I haven't time to go into this, it would take me perhaps 20 minutes, and that's not the place this evening, but maybe you can work it out for yourselves. It's a phenomenon beyond comprehension that anybody, especially in such a remote antiquity, could have thought of all these phenomena without introducing any absurdity at all. You know the ancient Hindus used to think that the world was a great disc, a great plate, so to speak, resting on the back of four enormous elephants.

In this chapter we have nothing of the folly that men used to introduce into their cosmogonies. We just have a sober, simple account of God's creation of things. And the only difference between what this chapter says and what pretty well all modern scientists have come to believe, is simply that most modern scientists are atheistic or agnostic, and they say that it all happened by itself, whereas the Bible simply assumes that God is the author of all these things.

The Bible doesn't tell us how God did these things, and the scientists still don't know how the things happened, but the Bible affirms that God is the author of these things. The Bible also affirms that when God made man, he didn't just make another animal, or evolve one animal into another, but that man was a definite act of God, made in the image of God as something quite distinct from a mere animal. And this changes our whole attitude to life, our whole philosophy of life, changes our politics, changes everything.

Whereas today we've grown up in a world where pretty well everybody believes the opposite, that man is simply an evolving animal, and that the only real God that exists is matter itself, and that therefore God must be good and evil if he has any consciousness or any entity at all, because there is both good and evil in the world around us, and if all things that exist are simply a form of God, if God is nothing but matter, well this means that we have to do with a God who is no more intelligent than we are possibly, and a God who is perhaps good to me today and evil to me tomorrow, a God in whom I can't trust, and a God with whom I cannot dialogue, a God, in fact, with whom I can have no dealings at all, a God that I must fear and distrust. Through this chapter, every time that God created something specifically, it stated, God said, and then the thing happened. God had an idea, so to speak.

He spoke. He put forth the energy of his spirit, and this word was vocalized. It became concrete.

It became, as we would say, real. The universe came into existence. The Bible doesn't tell us how long this process took.

The Bible doesn't tell us anything about the details, except that God was the author. But it's not only astonishing that the man who transmitted this chapter to us found all the right facts, 22 of them at least, but he got them all in the right order. That is to say, in the order that modern science has come to look upon as correct.

And you know very well that if you have two things, A and B, which you have to arrange in a certain order, you can have 50-50 chances of getting it wrong, which is quite a lot. And when you have three things to put in a certain order, A, B, and C, there are six different ways of arranging them. When you've got five things that you have to arrange in a certain order, you've got 120 chances of getting it wrong, one chance of getting it right.

When you have 22, or you may like to think of it as 21, I work it out in different ways at different times, there are more than a thousand trillion ways of arranging these 22 facts. More than a thousand million, million, million chances of getting it wrong. Against one chance of getting it right.

This isn't why I believe the Bible is the Word of God, but it's marvelously reassuring as we come to the Word of God on the very first page, which has been so attacked and ridiculed, to find that we can only come to one possible conclusion, if we have any intelligence and intellectual integrity at all, which is, this must be the inspired Word of God, it cannot possibly be anything else. And when Christ said that every jot and tittle of it matters to God and is correct, well, I can believe it. And so it's with this behind us that we can then start reading all the rest of the Bible.

It's very reassuring, very, very reassuring. I want to go a little bit further. Let us go to Psalm 19.

This psalm was written by my old friend David. I'm going to have a terrific session with David and Paul and quite a lot of them when the time comes. The heavens, says David, are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

I'm sorry, I read that badly. The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. The Greek word here in the Septuagint version, you know the Jews translated the Hebrew into the Septuagint sometime before Christ, the Greek word for handiwork is poiesis, from which comes our English word poesis or poetry.

It means handiwork, craftsmanship, but it also means poetry. You know the Greeks were so enamored with poetry, they had such a tremendously developed aesthetic sense, that for them every work, every bit of workmanship, anything that you made just had to be beautiful. And a piece of workmanship was a poem.

A poem was a piece of workmanship. It must have been quite wonderful as men began to realize, as the scriptures were translated into other languages, as they looked up at the starry heavens and the galaxy, that all this, all this is God's poetry. God expressing his thought.

God writing his soul in the language intelligible to man. It was marvelous when I began to discover this. During those years when God began to open heaven to me and reveal himself, I learnt to read two books at the same time, the Bible in my right hand and the book of nature in my left.

Every sunset, every dawn became for me a poem that God scrawled across the sky. I felt it was almost sin not to stop my work and to get away alone and just be saturated with all that God was telling me through the ecstasy of such an experience. Oh, what a crazy civilization we have.

I've lived in cities like Grenoble and other cities in the Alps and in some of the most beautiful cities in the world where the most incredible beauty is up above our heads, snows, glaciers. You see all the people hurrying along the streets in their cars honking, just trying to get to the end of the street. Nobody ever looks up.

You see a beautiful sunset come across the sky. Nobody has time to look at all. People are insensitive and blind.

I can remember when sometimes I used to go up on a Saturday or a Sunday up into the mountains to escape and be alone for an hour or two. All the people from the city would come crashing up there to ski or just to picnic on the grass. They wouldn't look at the beauty.

They just brought all their noise and their transistors up there. They just desecrated the place. I remember once I was in a beautiful place in England, a marvelous little mountain stream, and some other people came along where we were camping.

They parked their car and all they could do was read the newspaper and watch the car. What a blessed thing it is to have eyes that are open, isn't it? There's a lot of truth in that old hymn, Heaven above is brighter blue, Earth beneath is sweeter green, I think it is. Correct me if I'm wrong.

Well now, since the Logos is Christ himself, because John tells us that the Logos became flesh and dwelt among us and we saw his glory, that is his character, the character of God, the character of the only begotten Son of God. Because the Logos is Christ, that means that all the beauty, intelligence, wisdom, power that we see in all God's handiwork is simply an expression of Christ that God is trying to reveal to us. Falling in love, the birth of a little child.

All these things are meant to speak to us of God. God is just trying to get through to us and open his heart to us and tell us all kinds of things about himself. If only we can understand and if only we can divorce forever all these things that God has made and God is saying from the appalling, the artificial and corrupt interpretation that men put upon all these things.

This is why, brothers and sisters, any kind of perversion of the relationship that is meant to exist between man and woman who were made in the image of God, male and female is like blasphemy against God himself. It's a degradation of the image of God. God made man and woman in his image and he put them together and said, be fruitful and multiply before they sinned.

Human marriage was meant to be for man perhaps the culminating experience of the revelation of God to him. It was meant to be something in which God could really open all his heart and show him what real love is. And yet there's nothing that man has more degraded and in which man has lost the true nobility for which he was created.

In Christ we can recover this, although we are still in poor wretched bodies that have been contaminated by thousands of years of human folly and sin and we must never forget that. Even in our rediscovery of Christ in marriage and in love and in the family relationships, we must always remember to our humility, our humiliation, our shame that we have to watch, we've got to keep our bodies under, we've got to be as if we're not married, so to speak, as Paul said. We just haven't really time to be married in this world.

We're married, but God will probably say, well, you have to spend half your life separated. Ask George about that. Ask me too.

I want to go a little further. I mustn't go much further or you'll have poor old George just giving the benediction as he said just now. Let us go to Colossians chapter 1. Please understand me, I'm not just trying to give you a pretty little sort of philosophical twist to your theological thinking.

No, I'm only I'm only trying to to whet your appetite to know God and to make it possible for us all to believe that we can know God in a way that probably is beyond anything that we have yet conceived. And it's in proportion as we do know God that we shall really understand his love for us and understand his message and that our faith will be able to take hold of him for the things he really wants to do through us. In Colossians 1 verse 15 we read that Christ is the image of the invisible God.

By him all things were created. He is, verse 17, before all things and in him all things hold together. He is the image of the invisible God.

Man's problem is since he was spiritually blind blinded by the fall that he could no longer see God. And all human philosophy and religion is really completely ludicrous in its attempt to define God. It's only when we come to Christ that we can have any conception of a true image of God.

Even Moses, in the days before Christ utterly forbade Israel to have any kind of image of God. Any image of God that man can think of utterly degrades God's person. But when Christ came the disciples, the little band of disciples who built up around him gradually came to realize that this very, very human man whom they knew so human that he grew up and played and worked in the streets and in his workshop in Nazareth to the age of 30 without anybody at all except his mother maybe having any idea he was anything else but just a man.

So very, very human. But the disciples came to realize that blazing through the human personality of Jesus of Nazareth there was all the personality of God. This is how man discovers God.

This is how we can see God. It isn't enough for us just to try to find God in the nebula or in the atom. This is just like a music that goes through our fingers.

God knew that man needed a much clearer definition of himself. And so God took the trouble to become incarnate and to come to us and to reduce to the dimensions of a little human personality. I don't mean to say that irreverently for Christ was not little in any sense except physically small, a tiny little speck in the universe just as we are.

But a human personality is a small, limited thing. And within these tiny limitations God concentrated everything that he calls the Logos, everything that he loves, everything that he is, everything that the universe is meant to tell us concentrated in the person of Jesus Christ. When I learned this, when I discovered this, I went back to the Gospels and I began to read them over and over and over again with new eyes.

I began to see in Jesus Christ something that I had never seen before. I didn't just love him now because he'd saved me and because somehow I believed he was the truth, but I could see more and more who he really is. And I've said this before and I suppose I'm a fool to say it again, but when you're in love you are crazy and you just can't stop talking about it.

But when I discovered these things, when I was still a relatively young man, I just fell in love with God. There isn't any other experience worth living for on this earth except telling people about it and seeing other people fall in love with God. But there really is no other kind, no other conception of Christianity that comes up to what the Bible is trying to tell us.

Christ is the image of God. It's not only in his human personality, in his life, in his teachings, in his worship, in his workmanship, in his intelligence that we see God. But that human face was crucified.

It was crowned with thorns. It had the beard torn off. It had its eyes bunged up with blows.

It was lacerated. It was covered with blood. And that body that contained all the Godhead bodily on the cross was just mutilated out of recognition, just a mass of blood and wounds and pain.

And men just laughed God out of this world. They just stuck him up on the pole and swept him out of human history, or tried to. And yet it's through the crucified face of Jesus Christ that we really see God.

It's in that crucified face of him who is the author and sum total of all the beauty and wisdom that ever existed, all the power and all the energy behind every atom in the universe. It's in that crucified face of Jesus in his utter weakness given over to all the hatred of men and all the power of Satan that day that we can see God. God looking at us through those suffering eyes and stretching out those wounded hands to us, pouring out from his very heart, his lifeblood, to say, this is how I love you.

This is what you mean to me. This is how much I need you. Will you have me? If you will, then I'll give you everything.

You have all things with Christ said for. The whole world of us, the whole universe, and what is behind the universe. All this marvelous thought of God, all this is ours, with all its power, all its meaning and all its

significance.

You know, when we've got a conception of God like this, it doesn't matter very much if a few people laugh at us, if some days we just don't manage to sell a book and we go to bed hungry with an empty stomach. We know that we have been integrated into God on the highest level, on the spiritual level, and this new life that we have in God doesn't depend on circumstances, doesn't depend on the material universe. Even when my body and my brain are dissolved, because this is rooted in God, it's as permanent as ever.

When I die physically, I shall lose my earth consciousness. You can kick me around, I shan't be able to hear, smell or touch or see anything at all. I may totally lose all consciousness of this planet, all contact with this earth, but my consciousness of God will remain intact and unimpaired.

And of course it's in proportion as our consciousness of God is developed now here on this earth, in proportion as we know God now, that we come to know, that we shall be able to appreciate God in that day when we really do see him face to face. Oh, I pray that God will somehow deliver me from all the things that seem to just drag me down and stop me from having time with him, that stop me from ever reaching out to a greater vision of himself. What does it matter, says Christ, if you lose a hand or you lose an eye or your foot or your life itself? What does it matter if your wife turns against you? What does it matter if you go to bed hungry? What does it matter if you're tortured, if you're freezing in Siberia behind barbed wire? What does it matter? Nothing matters if only God reveals himself to us.

Just one final point. Christ is almost summed up by the Apostle Paul in the word grace. The Greek word grace originally meant that which created joy, and to the Greek mind it was beauty that created joy.

Charis, translated grace in our Bibles, originally meant beauty. For wherever he went, said, you know about the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the word charis in Greek history came to have a second meaning.

The most beautiful thing that that cruel Greek world ever witnessed was an act of real generosity, as when a man forgave his enemy or when a master liberated his slave. To the Greeks that was beauty, it was a very epitome of beauty. And so the word beauty came to mean generosity.

And so Paul, wherever he went, told men about the unutterable beauty of this God who was incarnate in Jesus Christ. He told them the story of Jesus. Men were amazed and never heard anything like it.

And then he told them the story of Christ's crucifixion and told them how God in his incredible generosity poured out his blood to save mankind. This was the only way God could express the immensity of his love. This was the message that Paul took all over the Greek-speaking world of his days.

This is the message he wanted to take into Spain and would have if the Romans hadn't chopped his head off. This is the message that we have to take, friends. And it's the only message which can satisfy the human heart.

It's the only message that brings true. It's the only message that is worth giving one's life for. And as you go out and preach it during this month, may God keep me faithful in prayer for you all.

But hold up your heads as you go. Remember that every atom in the universe is held in Christ's hand. And remember that you've got a message which just turns to absolute shambles.

All the philosophies, all the politics, all the economics, all the social structure of this world. And as we go forward with Christ unifying us in this amazing love one for another, we have got the thing that everybody is looking for. I'm sorry to say that that is all there is of this recording.

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