

Militant Evangelism

by Ray Comfort

The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing our objectives, using the right weapons, and disciplining ourselves to prayer in order to be effective in evangelism.

Duration: 47:08

Scripture: Luke 19:10, John 4:35, Acts 7:51-53, Romans 7:7, Philippians 3:12, Jude 1:22-23

Topics: "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher tells a story of a father who risks his life to save his son from crocodile-infested waters. The preacher uses this story to emphasize the importance of taking action and winning souls for God. He urges his audience to be men of action and to quit themselves like men in the spiritual battle. The preacher also highlights the need for militant evangelism and discusses three keys to an army's success in spreading the word of God.

Transcript

Looking at 1 Timothy chapter 6, we'll go back to verse 5. Paul is speaking of the ungodly and says, Perverse spewings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness. There are those nowadays who do preach that gain is godliness, from such withdraw yourself. But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into this world, and it's certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, let us therewith be content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some covet it after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. So Paul is speaking of transgression of the tenth commandment, and those that transgress, those that are covetous, pierce themselves through with many sorrows. But the contrast for the godly is, but you are men of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

And then the apostle says, fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life, under which that also called, and has professed a good profession before many witnesses. The Bible is unashamedly filled with admonitions to warfare.

It is God who teaches my hands to war. Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Now hear, fight the good fight of faith.

And we know as Christians, we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces. And the weapons of war are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. So tonight, I designed to share with you a message entitled, Militant Evangelism.

And we're going to look at three keys to an army's success. Three keys for an army to be successful. The first key, I believe, for an army to be successful is that it must know its objectives.

It must know the direction in which it is heading. I heard a true story about a man who stood up on a plane in the US. This happened in 1976.

He grabbed a stewardess around the throat. He put a gun to her head. He said, take this plane to Detroit.

She said, it's going to Detroit. He said, oh, sorry about that. And sat down.

That's from a book called Heroic Failures. And in fact, Stephen Pyle, who was the president of the Failures Club in Great Britain, wrote that book, Heroic Failures, and it became a bestseller. And he was therefore forced to resign his post as president.

But sadly, much of the church is like our heroic failure. We don't know what on earth we are doing here on earth. I mean, what is the supreme object of the church? What are we doing here on earth? Well, my Bible says, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost.

And if we're Christians, we should be following in the footsteps of Jesus, seeking and saving that which is lost. If you have a close walk with Jesus, you'll lay your head upon His breast, you'll feel the heartbeat of God, and you'll know that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Listen to what Charles Finney said.

He said, it's the great business of every Christian to save souls. People often complain they do not know how to take hold of this matter. Why? The reason is plain enough.

They've never studied it. They've never taken the proper pains to qualify themselves for the work. If you do not make it a matter of study, who may successfully act in building up the kingdom of Christ, you're acting a very wicked and absurd part as a Christian.

Christianity Today had a survey recently of their readership, two years ago. An evangelical magazine, they found out that only 1% of their readership witnessed on a regular basis. 1%.

See, some people say, well, the supreme object of the church is to worship God. And that's true. God seeks such to worship Him, but how does He seek them? Through you and I. If we're going to lift up our hands and worship to God, let's be sure we're prepared to reach out our hands in evangelism for God.

You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve. And I believe worship without service is nothing but an empty farce. What would you think of a crew who was on a boat and they said, oh, we love our captain, we esteem our captain.

And when they're out to sea, the captain calls out to his crew, a boat is sunk in front of us, people are drowning, let down the lifeboats. And the crew, instead of doing what he said, say, oh, did you hear the

captain's voice? Praise the captain. Glory to the captain.

Now, if they love the captain, they'll do what he said. And Jesus said, why do you call me Lord and do not the things that I tell you? J. Oswald Smith said, oh, my friends, we're loaded down with countless church activities. While the real work of the church, that of evangelizing and winning the lost, is almost entirely neglected.

The body of Christ is not a pleasure cruiser on its way to heaven, but a battleship stationed at the very gates of hell. Saints, how many of you have heard of Charles Spurgeon? I trust all of you. Prince of Preachers.

Second question, how many of you have had the privilege of a university education? Could you slip up your humble hand? I'll not embarrass you. Others of you, like me, who are mere peasants, and you haven't had the privilege of a university education, I wonder if you would gird up the loins of your mind. I'm going to share with you a quote from Charles Spurgeon, the Prince of Preachers.

I want you to squeeze that four-inch of the sponge between your ears and see if you can comprehend what Spurgeon is trying to say. Spurgeon was a great intellectual, an eloquent preacher, who said things like, you prick your fingers on the thorns of conscience as you try to pluck the rose of sin. Incredibly eloquent.

He had a vocabulary of 25,500 words. Shakespeare had 25,500 words. If you're average, you've got about 13,000 words.

So listen carefully to see if you can comprehend what this great intellectual preacher is saying in this quote, especially the opening sentence. Listen carefully. Spurgeon said, Brethren, do something! Do something! Do something! Now can you perceive? Are you able to comprehend? Can you understand what Spurgeon is trying to get through to us? I'll read it again for those of you who are a little slow.

Charles Spurgeon, I'll give you the whole quote. Charles Spurgeon said, Brethren, do something! Do something! While societies and unions are making constitutions, let us win souls. I pray you be a man of action, all of you.

Get to work and quit yourselves like men. Old Surov's idea of war is mine. Forward and strike.

No theory. Attack. Form a column.

Charge bayonets. Plunge into the sin of the enemy. Our one aim is to save sinners.

And this one we're not to talk about, but to do in the power of God. I thank God that he saved me while I still got some energy. I'm so grateful he didn't wait till I was 140 before he saved me.

Or I'd walk in a church and say, Glory to God. Oh God, excuse me. Oh, there's still some energy in my body and my prayer has taught me to number my days that I might apply my heart unto wisdom.

And the wisest thing you can do with your life is seek and save that which is lost. There's no wiser thing. I was doing a seminar once on evangelism.

Came out of the seminar. As I was walking down the street, a woman chased me down the street. Does happen occasionally.

Anyway, this 70-year-old lady, she says, listen, I'm 70 years old. She said, I've been a Christian for many years. She said, I'll soon stand before my maker.

And she said, I've never let a soul to Jesus Christ. And she burst into tears of desperation. Saints, don't you wait until you're on your last legs before you get desperate for God to use you.

Say, Oh God, let compassion swallow my fears. God, use my mouth while I can speak. Use my mind while I can think.

Use my eyes while I can see my hands while I can reach out. He that wins souls is wise. And as I travel around, I find there are multitudes of young guys pumping iron just because they want a body like this.

And I say to them, Lady, you're laughing too much. Do you know muscle takes 72 hours to degenerate? It's all it takes. As you start pumping up, it doesn't take long, it pumps down again.

Build up the muscle of your character. Look not on things that are seen for the things that are seen. A temple, the things that are unseen are eternal.

He that wins souls is wise. It's so true. That old saying, there's only one life, it'll soon be past.

Only what you do for Christ will last. Seek and save that which is lost. While you're young, while you've got energy, while you're creative, say, God, use me.

Remember to use the Lord to bring the knowledge of sin. You don't want to be involved in futile evangelism. You want to see souls soundly saved.

Realize that salvation is the Lord. Nothing you can do can save souls. It's God that saves souls, but you can faithfully plant the seed and say, God, bring the increase.

Be a true and faithful witness. I was on a plane once. A woman was sitting next to me.

She was a pub owner, a bar owner who lived in England. I said, Have you had a Christian background? She says, No, not really. I said, Do you see a need of God's forgiveness? She said, No, not really.

So I said, Well, do you realize the Bible says if you hate someone, you're a murderer. If you have lust in your heart, commit adultery. If you steal one thing, you're a thief.

If you tell one lie, you've borne false witness and sinned against heaven. I said, Now do you see a need of God's forgiveness? She says, I do feel bad after talking to you. And that's good! Only the sick will need a physician.

Only those that see the disease will appreciate the cure. And only those who feel bad will cry out to God for mercy. Paul said, I have not known sin, but by the law.

Most of us kind of think Jesus said, Go into all the world, grab a sinner and bring him back for the pastor to preach the gospel to him. That's not what the Bible says. It says, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

You see, you've got as much chance of having sinners visit a church building as you have criminals visit a police station. It's not a nice place to go when you're guilty. Now, if you are a policeman and business is down, but you want business to perk up somewhat, you can chromeplate the bars, put in central heating,

pipe music, carpet yourselves, put a little notice out the front of your police station.

Tonight, seven o'clock, all welcome, but still very few criminals will visit the police station. You could get an overseas police speaker or in a police rock band, but still very few criminals will visit the police station. If business is down, go out and apprehend them.

Paul spoke of being apprehended of Jesus Christ. Others, having compassion, saved with fear, pulling from the fire, hating even the garments spotted by the flesh. Now, as I mentioned the other night, there's a lot of sheep where I come from in New Zealand, and I think I'm right.

Correct me if I'm wrong. Isn't it true that sheep have lambs? Shepherds don't have lambs. I have yet to see a shepherd standing with his flock and say, Oh, excuse me, I'm going to have a lamb.

No! Shepherds don't have lambs. Sheep have lambs. And that's the principle of increase in the body of Christ.

I once said to a shepherd, what do you do if your sheep don't reproduce? He said, Oh, well, I give them a season, and then thanks there's a sermon there somewhere. So we're here primarily to seek and to save that which is lost. Not to sing songs to Jesus while in the lifeboat, while people sink into hell around us.

We're here to seek and save that which is lost. Understand that the reason God was manifest in the flesh was to destroy the power of the grave. And Jesus came specifically to seek and to save that which is lost.

And if we call ourselves Christians, we will walk in His steps and seek and save that which is lost and not be bound by the fear of man. So we must know our objectives. Second, we must know our weapons.

The weapons of a warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Above all, taking the shield of faith, says Scripture. Above all, taking the shield of faith.

We need to know the difference between subjective and objective faith. If you're a subjective Christian, you'll say things like, praise God, I'm really happy because things are going good. Praise the Lord.

If you rejoice because things are going good, you'll lose your joy when things go bad. The Scriptures say rejoice not because demons are subject to you, but rejoice because your name is written in heaven. And if you make heaven the object of your rejoicing, no one will steal your joy from you.

Learn to rejoice objectively. Say my name is written in heaven. And when things are going good, you'll have joy unspeakably full of glory.

And when things are going bad, you'll have joy unspeakable and you'll be full of glory because you rejoice because your name is written in heaven. Secondly, we're looking at weapons. The word.

An army marches on its stomach. Wherever I travel, I find Christians, professing Christians, who don't feed upon the word daily. If you want to push over someone twice your size, go to a country where they have starvation.

You're weak when you don't eat. And the same applies spiritually. The devil will stomp all over you if you don't feed on God's word daily.

Instead of suffering from spiritual malnutrition, so many do. And thirdly, the power of prayer. Now what do you think of when you hear the word prayer? Do you think boring? Or do you think, this is the incredible privilege the saint of God has of coming into the throne room of God and boldly, through faith in the name of Jesus, asking what he will and governing the destiny of nations.

You know, some people joke about my name and say, oh yeah, comfort. Some comfort you. You make us laugh and hit us in the face.

Scripture. But if you study with the word comfort and see what it really means, especially in the old English. A friend of mine brought it out.

He said this. He said he saw a picture of James the first with a sword in his hand. And he was prodding his troops in the back, pushing them on into battle.

And underneath it had James the first comforting his troops. And the word comfort doesn't necessarily mean there, there, it's okay. It means to encourage, to provoke, to exalt, to take the two-edged sword and plunge it into the back of the troops.

And that's the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And that's the area in which the Holy Spirit provokes me because I am lazy when it comes to prayer. I envy people who say, oh, I love to pray.

No, I don't. I'd rather watch television. For me, it is self-discipline.

I'm in an army. I have to deny myself daily, take up my cross and follow Him. When it comes to reading the word, no, I'd rather read Reader's Digest.

I mean, to me, the Bible seems heavy, heavy going. Fellowship? No, I'd rather sit back and just relax at home. But I discipline myself.

I forsake not assembling together. I discipline myself to read the word. I desire the sincere milk of the word.

I discipline myself to prayer. And this is where the Holy Spirit helps me. He takes the two-edged sword and plunges it into my back so that I pray.

Now, this is going to sound as though I'm a very spiritual person. I'm not. If you think I'm spiritual, call my wife and ask her.

I'm not. I'm down to earth. That'll sound as though I'm spiritual.

I get up at night and pray. I see God, twelve o'clock, one o'clock, through at about two. And I find that's the most effective time for me to pray.

And I can do it because of my lifestyle. I'm an itinerant evangelist. I'm an associate pastor that doesn't have pastoral responsibilities.

I don't counsel people. I just travel most weekends around the country and do writing during the week and answer mails so I can have a snooze during the day if it gets me down, if I get tired. So I can do that.

I'm a lifestyle. But I found I have to discipline myself and the Holy Spirit surely helps me. Because one night, some time ago, I said to my wife, Sue, tonight I'm not getting up to pray.

I'm sleeping right through. That night, around midnight, for no reason, our bed collapsed. We'd slept in the thing five thousand times and hadn't thought of collapsing.

I had a wonderful time of prayer that night. Another time I was teaching missionaries up in Denver. I woke up in the middle of the night.

Right in the middle of the night. I thought, well, I should pray. This is the thought that came to mind.

I should pray. I should deny myself and pray. But if I remember rightly, the remote is just by my hand.

The television is just there. And one flick of the switch, I can just sit back and relax and watch a bit of television if there's something sexually explicit or something violent or something bad. I can change the channel even before my conscience makes me feel guilty.

I had that thought in .5 of a second. Woke up, should pray, no, watch television. I sat back and you know what I saw on television? One man, two women.

First woman leans across to the man and says, what about Ray? I thought, and he said, yes, Ray, the devious one. You think I will learn the lesson a little time after that? I said to Sue, I'm not getting up tonight to pray, I'm going to sleep right through. That night, around midnight, I heard a sound that made me jump up.

I got a shot of adrenaline through my body, stood up beside the bed like mice, like saucers. It sounded like the drug squad before they do a bus. By law, they have to knock.

That's what the law says, they have to knock before they do a drug bus. That's in California. It sounded like that.

Knock, knock, knock on the door. I was up out of bed, eyes like saucers, filled with adrenaline. You know what it was? My stupid dog, leaning against the door, having a scratch.

You know, the problem with most of us is that we are involved in a battle. And the name of the battle is the battle of the blanket. Yes, they're lying there.

The blanket says, you're not moving. Yes, I am. No, you're not.

Grab the blanket, take it captive, pull it off the bed. You say, what about the wife? What about the wife? Rip it off. Wrap it around you.

And see God in urgent prayer for this world. I mean, what's your attitude to the word prayer? The Bible says we're ambassadors for Christ. And if you get a hold of my wallet, what would you be doing with my wallet? But if you get a hold of my wallet and open it up, you'll see a picture of me.

It's quite nice, really. It's got Department of Eternal Affairs. Ray Comfort, ambassador.

We're ambassadors for Christ. We're involved in the Department of Eternal Affairs. I was at John Wayne Airport in Orange County, getting my ticket.

Left it on the counter there and a guy picked it up. He says, oh, are you from the State Department? I said, no. Department of Eternal Affairs.

Do you know the Lord? He says, no, but he does. Saints will only pray as much as we value prayer. Hudson Taylor, the great prayer warrior, that missionary said, the prayer power has never been tried to its full capacity.

If we want to see mighty wonders of divine power wrought in the place of weakness, failure and disappointment, let us answer God's standing challenge. Call unto me and I'll answer you and show you great and mighty things you know not of. If the church is ever to get on its feet, it must first get on its knees.

John Bunyan said the prayer is a shield of the soul, a delight to God and a scourge to Satan. Well, Martin Luther said, I have so much to do today that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer. Now, Martin was a monk and he had plenty of time to spend in prayer, but we can see the principles.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. It's like this. I'm chopping down a tree.

I've got a blunt axe. I'm bruising the bark, sweat's pouring from my brow. You come up to me and say, what are you doing? I say, don't talk to me.

I'm chopping down this tree. You say, why don't you stop and sharpen the axe? I say, I'm too busy chopping down this tree. No, stop.

Sharpen the axe and slice through the tree. And saints, whatever you have to do, first thing in the morning, stop and sharpen the axe through prayer and you will slice through that day. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you.

So tonight we're looking at a subject of militant evangelism. We're looking at three keys to an army's success. The first key is an army must know its objectives.

We're here primarily to seek and to save that which is lost. Secondly, an army must know its weapons. Faith, objective faith, the word, feeding upon the word.

No Bible, no breakfast, no read, no feed. Discipline and prayer. And thirdly, we must know the enemy.

Now, in a natural battle, we send out reconnaissance to find the strength and the weakness of the enemy. We don't need to do that as Christians. As soldiers of Christ, God has given us a comprehensive war manual in His word.

As we study the scriptures, we see that we have a threefold enemy. The world, the flesh, and the devil. If you and I will deal with a big problem, we'll find victory.

See, D. L. Moody said I've had more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any other man I've ever met. It's the flesh that's the problem. If you'll once and for all deal with the flesh, the devil will have no foot upon you, foothold upon you, and the world will have no attraction to you.

The Apostle Paul said, I know that in me dwells no good thing. That no good thing is the Judas of the old nature. That Judas that lifts his hands up and cries, Master, Master, and betrays the Son of God with a kiss.

That Judas that feeds off the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And Judas will only live as much as you feed him. Be so careful of what you look at and what you listen to that comes from the

world.

So much of it is designed to stir up lust. And what is lust? It's the deliberate stirring of the sexual desire. And dear Christian, when the sexual desire is inflamed, you will wonder where your tender conscience went to.

Treat your conscience as you would a good referee. When the referee of conscience blows the whistle, stop the game. There's been an infringement of rules.

But don't be surprised if the referee of conscience walks off the field if his whistle is continually ignored. You can forsake the guide of your youth. You can sear your conscience as with a hot iron, so that things you felt guilty about six months ago that you can do today you don't feel guilty about and think to yourself, God's accepted it.

As in truth, the fact that you have seared your conscience as with a hot iron, so it loses its sensitivity. The length of some Christian girl's dresses reveals their naivety. If the average girl knew how the average guy thinks, she would dress with a little less.

Come on. The Bible says, by the means of a whorish woman, a man is brought to a piece of bread. What does that mean? By the means of a loose, easy woman, a man is brought to a piece of bread.

Well, if I see a piece of bread sitting in front of me and I want to devour the bread, the bread doesn't go, oh, don't eat me. Oh, it's just a matter of picking it up and chewing it up. And by the means of a loose woman, a man is brought to a piece of bread.

There is no resistance in a man when it comes to a loose woman. Ladies, realize that. Look at scripture.

See what happened to King David. He said, man, this was the psalmist of Israel. God delivered Israel by his hand with Goliath.

What was wrong with you, David? Were you blind? Now, I'm going to digress and share what I think happened with David when it came to Bathsheba. For many years, I had something that really annoyed me as a kid. I was about seven years old and I'd lie on my bed at night and I'd think to myself, well, it's just about sleep time.

I'm going to be asleep any minute and I'm going to watch my eyelids come down and in the morning, when I wake up, I'm going to be able to say, yes, I saw the lids come down and witness the second I went to sleep. And I'll wake up in the morning and say, missed. That happened for about 35 years.

I never witnessed myself going to sleep. Never once. As I lay there, I think I'm going to see it.

I'm going to see the lids come down. I wake up in the morning and say, missed again. About a year ago, I was sitting in front of television with my wife, watching a black and white old movie.

I was enjoying it and suddenly I went, oh, and Sue says, you've been asleep for 20 minutes. I said, I have not. She said, yes, you have.

And I thought, missed it again. And suddenly it dawned on me what happens. You know what happens? The brain goes to sleep a split second before the eyes close.

Just a split second. The same way when you turn your computer off at the wall, then the screen shuts down. When you turn your television off, then the screen shuts down.

That's why people go to sleep at the wheel. They say, ah, I've got everything under control. Yeah, I'm fine.

I've got my family with me. I feel a bit sleepy, but if I feel myself going to sleep, I'll just pull over. Suddenly, off they go.

It's the last thought they had because they didn't understand the sleeping process begins in the brain and then the eyes close. And the same happened with David. He had a hold of the wheel.

Everything was in control. I'll just get Bathsheba over here. She looks like a dish.

I'll just ask her. Her husband's doing a battle, thinking he is under control. No way, when it comes to sexual sin, the brain shuts down.

And I've seen it happen again and again. Men walk into the devil's trap, blind. Why? Because their brain is shut down.

They're asleep. They're deceived. I've seen pastors with a wonderful anointed ministry, wonderful wife, lovely kids.

They're caught in adultery with their secretary. Why? Because they walk into it blind, not understanding when it comes to sexual sin, the brain shuts down. And why am I speaking like this? Because in a Gallup poll recently, it was revealed on university campuses among those who call themselves Evangelicals, 50% thought the premarital sex was okay for a Christian.

50% of those who call themselves Evangelicals thought the premarital sex was okay for a Christian. And another survey in Christianity Today among 300 pastors, 23% admitted in a confidential survey, they've been involved in some sort of sexual sin. Nearly one in four pastors suddenly were honest enough to admit they've been involved in some sort of sexual sin.

If that's the state of the pews or the pulpit, what must the pews be like? When you're tempted sexually then, get upon yourself the legs of Joseph. Don't hang around to resist temptation. The Bible says, flee fornication.

And ladies, be aware of the power you have over a man. If you dress to stir him up sexually, you're inciting violation of the seventh commandment. You're inciting violation of the law, and you're guilty of law-breaking yourself.

If we spy Judas alive and well, we have to put him to death. If that Judas of the old nature, the lust of the flesh is alive with our breast, we must put him to death. Well, firstly, let's see if we can identify him.

Turn to Acts 7.39. You see, when I'm speaking of Judas being alive and well beneath the breast of the so-called believer, I'm speaking about false conversion, a subject that I would like to minister on, but we haven't time this week. But the Bible speaks of believing in vain. It speaks of receiving the grace of God in vain.

It speaks twice of false brethren. It speaks of false teachers, false apostles. And the Scriptures warn that many will cry out on that day, Lord, Lord, we did many wonderful things in your name.

And you'll say, depart from me, you worker of lawlessness. Here we have Stephen, the soldier of Christ, giving his farewell speech to those who are about to promote him to headquarters. And it's interesting to note, here is a successful preacher, biblically.

He climaxes his sermon by telling his hearers, the congregation, that they're stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart, resisting the Holy Spirit. They slain the just one. They've become as murderers and betrayers.

And then he climaxes with the law of God. And this was a poke in their self-righteous eye. Those who thought they'd kept the law.

Verse 53. You who have received the law by the dispensation of angels and have not kept it. That's what stirred them up more than anything.

And they ran upon him. And they stoned him to death. But in verse 39, we see Stephen speaking of Israel's attitude to God in the wilderness.

He said, whom our fathers would not obey, but trust him from them. And in their hearts, turned back again into Egypt, saying to Aaron, make us gods to go before us. As for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we don't know what's become of him.

And they made a calf in those days and offered sacrifice to the idol and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. So here we have, in the short portion of Scripture, three stages of Israel's backsliding. One, in their heart, they turned back to Egypt.

Two, they lost the reality of Moses. And three, they created for themselves an idol. And we know in Scripture that Egypt is a type of world and Moses is a type of Christ.

If you're a false convert, in your heart, you'll turn back to the world. Friends don't know, pastor doesn't know, but believe me, you know and God knows that in your heart, there's a hidden desire for the sinful excitement of the world. Second sign of a false conversion, you'll lose your reality of your what with Jesus.

As for this Jesus who brought me out of the world, I don't know what's become of him. To lift your hands and say, I love you Jesus, will seem kind of corny to you. And yet the Bible says, if any man loves not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.

And the third sign of a false conversion is you will create for yourself an idol and rejoice in the work of your own hands. You'll shape a God to suit your sins. You'll make a God of your own creation and snuggle up to your God and become self-righteous.

Not trusting in the shed blood of Jesus. Not confessing your sins daily. Not walking in humility.

You don't have to because you've created a God who's void of any reference to sin, righteousness and judgment. A God who has no moral attributes. A God you can feel comfortable with.

A non-existent God. And a God that will allow you to do anything your heart's desire. According to 1 Corinthians 10, 7 to 15, idolatry is the root cause of sexual sin.

A. N. Martin said, you can only get into the realm of deliberate sin when you get out of the realm of the fear of God. You see, we have lost sight of the true God of the Bible. The gospel which says God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life was betrayed.

An idolatrous image of the character and nature of God. The God of the Bible kills people. In Genesis 38, God killed two men because he didn't like what they did sexually.

Oh, that's Old Testament. New Testament. God killed a husband and wife because they told one lie.

They transgressed the ninth commandment and God killed them. Instead of saying, oh God, why did you do that to Ananias and Sapphira, we should be saying, oh God, why didn't you do that to me the first time I transgressed your law? Instead of being humbled by God's patience and his mercy towards us, many of us become emboldened in our sins, saying God doesn't hear, the God of Jacob doesn't regard it, and we use the grace of our God for an occasion of the flesh. But if we worship the God that Joseph worshipped, the God whose eye is in every place beholding the evil and the good, we'll say, how can I do this thing and sin against God? You know, before I was a Christian, I was terrified of committing adultery.

I used to make leather jackets for people and miniskirts became the rage and young ladies would come and a certain type of young lady would come into my store and they'd say, would you make me a miniskirt that long? Measure me up. And it was just real scary for a young married man. And I thought, boy, I feel as though I'm walking on thin ice.

I feel as though my feet are sinking in a miry clay. And I wasn't a Christian, didn't understand conversion. Then I got saved and I thought, thank God I found the rock of the fear of the Lord.

And my feet stood firmly upon the rock. And now I say to my wife, love, I'm going to be faithful to you. Not because of the goodness of my heart.

I don't have to dig too deep to find dirt. But I can say, I'll not sin against God. That's how you know I'm going to be faithful to you.

Because I fear God. Not just in a reverential fear, but I am terrified of God. Because I know that Paul said, wherefore knowing the terror of the Lord we persuade men.

And I know God says adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God. I fear God and it's healthy. The fear of the Lord is clean.

And the Bible says, through the fear of the Lord, men depart from sin. And if you don't fear God, read Proverbs 1 and Proverbs 2. It'll tell you how to get the fear of the Lord. It comes through understanding.

If you cry after wisdom and understanding and say, oh, I hunger and thirst after understanding. As a man seeks precious jewels, God will give you understanding. Wisdom will come and you'll begin to understand how great God is, how powerful He is, how omniscient He is.

You know, someone the other day, just, I think Sunday or Monday, came up and says, I just can't understand hell. I don't have a concern for the lost because I don't understand hell. You know how you can help understand hell? Think of it like this.

If you pick up a newspaper and the newspaper says to you, someone just received a seven dollar fine from a judge for a crime, you can conclude it was a petty crime. The punishment shows you it was a petty crime. But if you pick up the paper and it says a man received 14 multiple life sentences for a heinous crime, you know it must have been a terrible crime.

And we can catch a glimpse of the exceeding sinfulness of sin by looking at the punishment met out by the holy judge of the universe. Everlasting damnation, eternal torment, hell forever and ever and ever of those that sin against God. And we can catch a glimpse of God's holiness, His justice, His righteousness, and His truth by studying God's law, understanding the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and seeing the punishment met out for those who transgress God's law.

Cultivate the fear of God. The best thing you can do, young person, in your life, is cultivate the fear of the Lord, because it will cause you to walk the straight, narrow path of holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Saints, if you find Judas alive and well beneath your breast, make it your aim to hang him by the neck until the very life is squeezed out of him.

How do we do that? How do we once and for all deal with that old nature? Galatians 6 verse 14. Closing scripture. Galatians 6 verse 14.

Paul said, God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world. There's the key. Christ on the cross is the key to crucifixion of that sinful nature.

Father and son were once on a camping trip as they pitched the tent. The father said, son, see that river? It's full of crocodiles. If you want to fish, fish off the wharf.

The son says, okay, I'll fish off the wharf. Three days the kid fished off the wharf, got kind of bored. He began thinking, you know, I'd be safe in a boat amidst the crocodiles, be kind of exciting out there.

In a sense of bravado, the fool got a boat, went out into the crocodiles and began fishing. Now things were sweet for a time until a crocodile came alongside that boat. Its tail hit the boat.

The boat overturned. The kid screamed in terror. The father heard him scream without hesitation, dived off the end of the wharf into the crocodile-infested waters, grabbed his beloved son and pulled him to the safety of the shore.

When the son opened his eyes, they saw a horrific sight. A crocodile had got its great jaws and wrapped them around his father's legs, leading them in bleeding shreds. Now what I'm going to say is unthinkable, but imagine if that son turned to his father, who was lying there, bleeding to death, and said something like this, Dad, I really appreciate what you've just done for me, but you know, I found it kind of exciting out there amongst the crocodiles.

You wouldn't mind if I get on the boat and go out again, would you? If that son could think such a thing, let alone speak it, the blind fool hasn't seen the sacrifice his father has just made for him. And dear professing Christian, if you have any even hidden desire for the sinful excitement of the world, you've never seen the sacrifice of the father. If that son has truly seen what his father has just done for him, a sense of horror will consume him at the cost, the extreme, the length, the expense his father went to to save him.

He'll pour contempt upon the drops of water that still cling to his flesh. And the true penitent, the true Christian has seen that God in the person of Jesus Christ, without hesitation, dived into the very jaws of hell to save him from the folly of sin. A sense of horror consumes him at the cost, the extreme, the length, the expense God went to to save him.

He pours contempt upon the sinful desires that still cling to his flesh. He cries with a hymnist, and when I think that God his son not sparing, sent him to die, I scarce can take it in that on that cross my burdens gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin. Do you know, any zeal I have as a Christian, any enthusiasm I have to give out tracts, to look a fool for Christ, to run around putting tracts here and there, trying to witness to people, doesn't come from some third or fourth mystical baptism of fire.

You know where it comes from? Good old fashioned gratitude. Twenty-two years ago, I suddenly caught a glimpse of God's law. By God's word at last, my sin I learned.

Then I trembled at the law I'd spurned, till my guilty soul imploring turned to calvary. Suddenly I saw my sin as exceedingly sinful under the light of God's law. The Bible says the law is spiritual.

Oh, I hadn't committed adultery, but I desired to. Lust burned in my heart. I was a thief.

I used to steal apples from the neighbors. Just reach through the fence and grab them. God's not impressed with the value of the thing we steal.

I was a liar. Not big lies, just little fibs, white lies. God will punish all liars.

All liars will have their part in the lake of fire. I lived a life in rebellion to the God who gave me life. There's one thing I fight hard to bear.

You give your little kid a piece of candy, the kid goes snatch, stuffs it and walks off. Kid, I'll teach you some gratitude. For 22 years I must have seemed like a fat little ungrateful kid to God.

Never once bowing my head in reverential prayer when I ate a meal and saying, God, I thank you for food. Never once saying God, I thank you for my eyes, my brain. Thank you for giving me life.

Thank you for my loved ones. Thank you for the freedom of this country. Just snatched what God had for me and walked off in rebellion, a child with disobedience.

Ungrateful, unthankful, unholy. With an idolatrous understanding of God's character and nature. I used to pray every night, said the Lord's Prayer to the God of my own creation.

Never once did I ever say what have I ever done to deserve even one of the pleasures I've known. What did I ever do that was worthy of you and the kindness you've shown? But instead of giving me hell, God gave me heaven. And now gratitude burns within my soul.

It's a continual fire within my bones to live for God's will and honor. It's been said, one distinguishing mark of an unregenerate person is ingratitude. And gratitude is the prime motivation to evangelize.

George Whitefield said, I had a day in my life when I fully surrendered in consecration to the Lord. And in that day I said, I call heaven and earth to witness that I give myself entirely to be a martyr for him who hung on the cross for me. I throw myself blindfolded and without reserve into his mighty hands.

Hear what that great preacher said? I call heaven and earth to witness that I give myself entirely to be a martyr for him who hung on the cross for me. I throw myself blindfolded and without reserve into his mighty hands. Oh God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me and I unto the world.

Once I've seen the sacrifice of the Father, how can I ever go back to the sinful excitement of the world? To do so, I have to tread on the blood of Jesus Christ to get back there. No! I crucify myself to the world and the world to myself. Nothing spiritual.

Willful crucifixion. I will not go back to sin in the light of my Father's sacrifice in Christ. They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Do you know if you study John I think chapter 20 or 21 I think it's 20. You'll find there's a man called Joseph of Arimathea. And the Bible says he was a believer but secretly for fear of the Jews.

A secret believer. He was captive to the fear of man. The fear of man was a sneer to Joseph of Arimathea.

He preferred the praises of men to the praises of God. But the Bible tells us something happened on the day of Jesus' crucifixion. Perhaps he stood at the foot of the cross and heard Jesus cry Father forgive them for they know not what they do.

Perhaps he had in that dark, dark day he had the light of understanding from God's law and understood this was the Messiah becoming a curse for us. Being bruised for our transgressions. Something happened to a point where Joseph of Arimathea, that trembling fearful man, boldly went to Pilate and claimed the body of Jesus Christ.

And Joseph had the privilege of taking the Son of God off the cross. But have you ever wondered what that would be like in reality? For him to have to reach up and take a hold of that cold blood stained lifeless hand of the carpenter from Nazareth and rip it from those six inch barbs and think to himself, these were the hands that once held nails and wood being held by nails and wood. These were the hands that fed multitudes with bread, the bread of life.

As he gazed into those lifeless eyes of Jesus Christ and saw death gripped in those icy eyes. These were once warm eyes filled with the life of God that brought conviction of sin to multitudes. As he reached down to pull those feet from that cross, those blood stained feet.

These were the feet that walked the shores of Galilee that walked the sea of Galilee, the beautiful feet that preached the gospel of peace as he looked to the lips of the Son of God. Those lifeless lips, white lips as death took their grip. These were the lips that fed multitudes with the words of life.

There was another man there on that day, Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews who it seems suffered also from the fear of man because three times the gospel of John said he came to Jesus by night. Three times it mentioned so there's obviously an inference somewhere there. Who knows that perhaps Nicodemus helped Joseph of Arimathea take that cross down.

Perhaps as he reached up and got his hands covered with the blood of the Lamb of God, he was reminded of the spotless Lamb he offered in atonement for his own sins and thought how merciful the death of that little Lamb was, how quick it was and how cruel and merciless the death was of the Lamb of God. Saints, the cross of Jesus Christ needs to be as real to us as it was to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. We need to see Jesus Christ evidently set forth and crucified.

Have you seen the cross tonight? Have you turned from your sin? Have you understood the exceeding sinfulness of your sin? Is your heart burning with gratitude? Do you know him whom to know is life eternal? Let's bear in prayer as we close, shall we? Father, we pray that we would be able to say with

Isaac Watts, when I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and poor contempt on all my pride. Saints, without the aid of music, if God is speaking to your heart in any way tonight, whether you be unsaved, whether you be a backslider in heart, whether you be lukewarm, whether you have seen yourself as a false convert tonight, I want you to get up from your seat, come to the front and rend your heart before the Lord. I sanctify the front of this building as an order unto God.

Just get up from your seat, come to the front, kneel down and say, God, do a work in my heart. Some of you don't have a problem with lust. That's your problem.

Lust is not your enemy, it's your friend. You don't battle it, you embrace it. Others of you are lukewarm.

You couldn't care less about the unsaved. In your heart, you're saying, I'm saved, go to hell, world, I don't care. You need to say, God, take my heart of stone, give me a heart of flesh.

Others of you have been deceived into a wrong priority. You've been caught up in everything but the perfect will of God to seek and save that which is lost. Who will be the icebreaker? Just get up from your seat, come to the front, kneel down.

God bless you. There's many that God is speaking to tonight. You're captive to the fear of man, you're held by the cords of your own iniquities.

Now, listen carefully, you don't need someone to pray with you, you need to get a hold of God. I've noticed many times in our traditional otacalls, we immediately put a counselor by someone who's seeking God. And I've experimented with, say, 90 people at the altar, I say, put your hand up if you need someone to come and counsel you or pray with you, and not a hand goes up.

Because people don't want the help of man, they want the help of God. They don't want to hear from man, they want to hear directly from God. Others of you, you're double-minded, you need to come.

There's an argument going on in your mind. Don't resist the Holy Spirit. Come and say, God, do a work in my heart.

Grab hold of the horns of the altar, that place of mercy, and say, God, do a work in my heart, please. Give me a desire to seek and save that which is lost. Give me the wisdom, give me the will, give me the words.

Make me wise, that I might seek and save that which is lost.

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