

Living for Yourself or Jesus

by Robert B. Thompson

The sermon challenges believers to choose a life of self-denial and service to Christ over selfish living, emphasizing the importance of relationship with God and community support.

Duration: 52:02

Scripture: John 17:1

Topics: "Self Denial", "Godly Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of living for Christ rather than living for oneself. He highlights the need to prioritize serving others and meeting their needs, as Jesus instructed his followers to do. The preacher also discusses the concept of denying oneself and setting aside personal desires in order to fulfill God's will. He references the parable of the talents to illustrate the consequences of not living for Christ. The sermon concludes with a call to focus on glorifying God and seeking His will rather than relying on political parties or personal efforts to bring about change.

Transcript

We're going to turn to the 17th chapter of the Gospel of John and read verses 1 through 5. John 17, 1 through 5. You'll read with me if you will, it's on the board. After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed, Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son that your Son may glorify you.

For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. Now this is eternal life that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me.

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. Now, I know what God wants to say to us today, and I hope I won't cloud it up with a lot of words. And it fits this little prophecy that we just had.

And that is that God wants, Jesus wants a closer relationship with us. And from the prophecy, I would say there's probably some that the Lord is dealing with you about getting closer to him. That's my burden.

Now, there's a difference between religion and relationship. And we have to be careful that we don't settle for religion when God is looking for relationship. Now, it's like in the New Testament.

There's two different messages, yet they're related, but in a way they're different. And I think we understand them. We understand one of them, but we don't understand the other.

We don't even realize the other is there. The first one is what we call getting saved. That is, getting our sins forgiven.

There's a good scripture on that, on 2 Corinthians 5, verses 14 through 18. You bear with me as I feel for the mind of the spirit. I want to get exactly what God is saying to us this morning.

For Christ's love compels us because we are convinced that one died for all and therefore all died. Meaning that because Christ died for us, died on our behalf, therefore in him we died. He died for us and we're associated with him in his death.

And he died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again. Now, should no longer live for themselves. Of all the troubles in the world that come about, it's because we don't deny ourselves.

I may seem strange to you or oversimplified, but it's not. The basic trigger, the thing that triggers in our life that makes the difference between being a real Christian and just being a member of a religion is in denying yourself. Now, Jesus said, no man can be my disciple unless he denies himself.

And it's right there, that's where the rubber hits the road. Right there. And we have to make a choice as an individual whether we are going to please ourselves in this world or whether we are going to, like it says, no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them and was raised again.

We have to make a choice starting out at whatever age we come to the understanding that that's what God wants, whether we're 10 years old or 90. It doesn't make any difference. I've known old people that have never denied themselves.

Never denied. They don't know what it means to deny themselves. They're good people, decent people.

They go through many hardships, many pains, many traumas, but they do it against their will. They try to make life as blithe as they can, but to get into that change that must happen in us if we're to grow, if we're to grow, if we're to become a giver instead of a taker, if at the age of 70 we're a prophet or a prophetess rather than a selfish individual who is making constant demands on their children that sometimes their children can't afford either in time or money, which I think is more often the case than the exception. Denying yourself just doesn't happen because you go around the sun and become older.

It's a conscious choice that you make. It's a choice that you make on how you're going to live your life. And I noticed that as I grow older myself, that most of my pain comes from the disobediences of other people.

And when I was younger, most of them came from my own problems. Now they come from those who depend on me. Or look to me.

At my age, I could say, OK, honey, this is it. We're retired. You shouldn't have to be working as hard as you are.

Let's get a vacation trailer and let's live it up. We'll go across the country and we'll find nice spots and we'll spend there a couple of months and then we'll find another place and all and just say, forget you. Forget you.

You don't need anything that we have to give or if you do, it's tough beans. We're old and it's time for us to retire. OK? But you see, if you're following the Lord, every day you become more valuable if you're really following the Lord because of experience that you have to share with other people.

So you can live to yourself. And most people do. You can tell from their speech.

It's me, my and mine and my problem. But God wants us to. And you may.

Some of you in here may have family decisions pressing on you. And you can either find your own happiness and joy and let the other people shift for themselves. Or you can allow yourself to be the ox.

The burden bearer. The person that just puts up with stuff so that other people may be helped. If you're at an age, if you're 40 or over, there's going to be younger people in your family who don't quite have the smarts.

Sometimes you wish you could unscrew their head off their shoulders and put some brains in there. But it doesn't work that way. Constitutionally, we're not able to do that.

So that means that we have to inconvenience ourselves. Inconvenience ourselves. And instead of pleasing ourselves, Well, I'm getting older now and I deserve to go to Hawaii.

And I deserve, I deserve. That is the cry of Madison Adney. You deserve what we have to sell you.

Well, that isn't the way you look at it. Look at that verse again. I didn't even intend to preach on this.

I'm going somewhere else, I think. Now, they should no longer, verse 15, they should no longer live for themselves. Well, if you don't live for yourself, who are you going to live for? Jesus.

And what is Jesus going to do? He's going to say to you, feed my sheep. Feed my lambs. Take care of people that have needs.

When you see young people batting their head against the wall of life because they don't have the brains and they're being led around by our culture. They don't have the experience. They're full of vitamins and ready to go.

But they don't know which end is up. And you can see that. Then you have a choice.

You can involve yourself and help. Or you can say, well, I deserve, I've paid my dues. I went in a restaurant one time.

He was going to give me a discount. He said, you paid your dues. Wonderful, I paid my dues.

But there's other people coming up. And they need, why am I preaching on this, Lord? Someone in here must be facing a decision about whether you're going to live for yourself or whether you're going to look around and see what the need is in your family first of all and your friends and get yourself involved and quit thinking about yourself. Am I hitting anybody? I don't know what's going on here.

This is not where I'm going. But maybe it'll help somebody. I did pray you'd get help.

So maybe it's helping somebody. But it's so important. If you don't do that, you won't grow.

You'll be an 80-year-old baby expecting the younger people to wait on you. It's the older people that should be given to the younger, not vice versa. It's the older people who should be given to the younger.

You should be inconveniencing yourself for those who depend on you and who trust in you. If you don't, you'll be an 80-year-old baby when you die. People will be thankful they're rid of that responsibility.

Whereas, you could have given something so that when you go, they say, What do we do? That was our guiding star we were hearing from the Lord. You're making that choice today. You're making that choice today.

Whether you're going to live for yourself or whether you're going to live for Christ. And whenever you live for Christ, if you're passionately in love with Jesus, pretty soon you're going to find yourself in places where the four faces of the cherubim of glory are the faces of man and the faces of Christ, the lion, the eagle, the man, and the ox. And there's a time to be God's ox.

You just bear that thing like a dumb ox. Just bear that load for the sake of other people. And quit thinking about yourself.

That's good preaching. I tell you, I'm going to get the offering plate. I'll fix it.

That'll loosen it up. Alright. People panicking there.

Alright. He died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves. Now, Christ has been raised from the dead.

That is a fact of the Christian religion. But there's something else involved in there. And that is when it turns from a religion to a relationship to where we're related to Jesus.

And these are two different things. They really are quite separate. So from now on, we regard no one from a worldly view.

In other words, we're not even looking at Christ from a worldly view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. We celebrate the fact that He was raised from the dead 2,000 years ago.

We know that's true. That's a religious doctrine, a tenet that we hold, a belief that we hold. But Christ is alive today and He's in this room.

And He wants to meddle in your business. Yeah, He wants to meddle in your life. So it isn't enough to say, well, I'm a member of the Christian religion.

Cool. That is not going to get you very far. Its purpose, the purpose of the Christian religion is to bring you to the man so that you have a relationship with him.

I was talking to someone, I can't remember, some young people. Oh, yes. I was talking to some young people in college now.

And they were having, well, I'll tell you who it was. It was Shelly Brown. And she was saying, she has friends there that she met in Campus Crusade.

Young people. And now this is what they're saying. We're wondering if there is a God.

So you get into college and you get into biology courses and science courses and you get in with, or even philosophy or sociology. It can be a bummer, I'll tell you. And there's a spirit there.

There's an atheistic spirit there. And you may be raised in church like these young people were that Shelly was talking to. And you're a very tender person.

You haven't really been exposed to the hard atheism of the university campus. And I've certainly been there in my life. And I know what that's like.

They're good people, wonderful people. But when it comes to Christ, boy, there's a wall like that. And you're not prepared for this.

You're not prepared for this. And these young people are reexamining, how come I believe this anyway? How do I know it's true? I attended church and everybody said it was true. So I went along with the crowd.

But now I'm betting my life on this. I'm not even sure it's true. And so Shelly was asking me for some scriptures.

And I gave her one in John 7 that meant a lot to me when I got saved, which was, if any man will do his will, he will know the doctrine. You can see the deal there. You do my will and then I'll show you.

Not I'll show you and then you do it. You do it and I'll show you. So I said, all right, I see that.

I understand that. So I got nothing else going here. 19 in the Marine Corps.

I'll try it. And if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. And I'll say it doesn't work.

And I tried it and it worked. In fact, it's been working for 55 years. And so to be honest to the commitment I made to Christ, I've got to say the thing works.

They've been proven to me over and over and over again. And I've told you on a couple of occasions how after two weeks as a Christian over in Oahu, I was so discouraged, so depressed. So, you know, two weeks coming unglued.

And I said, God, if there is a God, speak to me. So I flopped my Bible down. You know, this treatment.

I look under my finger. It says, my son, keep my commandments. Whoa.

You know, the odds of that happening, the probability of all the words in the Bible, this is my son. So I made it through that week. That was fine.

I've had a lot of experiences since then. No way can my life be accounted for by random incidents. The probability is not there.

It's taken a course. I was not raised in a Christian home. It's taken a course that the Lord said, you do it.

I'll prove it to you. He's proven it to me. And I'm telling you, I'm not a minister.

I'm a friend of Jesus paying a debt. All right. I was not raised in a Christian home.

I wouldn't know how to be a minister if I had to. All right. So they were telling Shelly.

Of course, old Shelly's there trying to get the campus converted. And we're not even sure that there is. You know, what is this? And Shelly says, what do I say? And I said to him, don't argue with him.

Don't argue with anybody. It's fruitless. Tell him to pray.

Just tell him to pray. Oh, God, I'm not even sure that's a God. That's all right.

I prayed like that. And I said, God, if there's a God, give me faith. And he gave me faith.

You don't have to believe there's a God to pray. Pray. You can argue.

You can argue a long time about every conceivable philosophy. And get yourself nowhere. Pray.

And say, God, do something for this boy or girl. If you're up there, hear me. I'm sick and tired of trying to do it myself.

Hear me. You know what? God will hear you. He may surprise you.

He'll prove to you that he's there. You don't have to reason about it anymore. He's alive.

The man is alive. I know that now. The man is alive.

And he's here. And there's people here that he wants to be closer to him. You're not as close to him as he wants you to be.

All right. And he says, we once regarded Christ in this way. We do so no longer.

We're not interested in theological books that tell us about what Christ did 2,000 years ago. We want to touch Jesus today. We need help today.

We need wisdom today. We need comfort today. Listen.

Our nation. I've lived long enough to see remarkable changes in the United States. And I'm telling you, well, I hate to cop out and leave this world with the young people.

But boy, it doesn't look too good. All right. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

That doesn't mean, as often as said, that if you accept Christ and do the four steps of salvation, that you're a new creation. It takes time to make a new creation. God is working on me to this day.

After 55 years, I'm still being made a new creation. So don't treat this textually. Paul is talking about his own experience in the Lord.

If any man be in Christ, there's a new creation. But it doesn't happen the moment you do your religious thing. It takes a lifetime of giving your life to Jesus and not living to yourself, but to Christ.

There's something that you have to do. It isn't a case of maintaining a belief that you believed some years ago. That's religion.

This is relationship. You have to be related to Jesus. You have to walk with Him, talk with Him.

Hallelujah. I'm fixing to get wound up here. All right.

Now, the old has gone. See, when you were saved or when you accepted Christ, God picked you up on eagle's wings. That's one thing God did.

He picked you up on eagle's wings. And you have a wonderful time, maybe for a month or two months or three months. Everyone in the church looks sweet.

And life is wonderful. And God is carrying you on eagle's wings. See, you haven't learned to walk in Christ yet.

God is carrying you because He's so happy to have a son come home. My two sons and I, one time, were climbing up a very steep hill. And David is very small.

The weeds were over his head. And the other boy, they were up to his neck. So, we were going up this hill.

So, I carried the little boy on my shoulder. And we got off the top of the hill. And here's Mark down here coming through the weeds.

And David said, look, we got up here ahead of Mark. And I said, yeah, but he's coming up on his own. Someday you'll come up on your own.

You came up on Dad's back at this time. And that's the way it is. When we first accept Christ, the Lord carries us on eagle's wings.

But that only lasts so long. Then you've got to learn to walk. And you don't point back to some time when you were, quote, saved.

Except to orient you toward life. Now you've got a lifetime of learning to walk. And the Lord will let you down.

People experience this. They can't understand what in the world happened to me. Everything was fine.

It was great. I was blessed. And now I've got a load on my back.

You know, God's teaching you to walk. So you can make it by praying and not being carried on His back. But you won't grow.

Then you're an infant. And God has kingdom tasks that are ahead of us. He's creating rulers and priests and judges and all kinds of things for the ages to come.

And they don't happen by being carried on God's back. Does that make sense to you? You see that? You've got to come through the weeds on your own. All right.

He says, the old has gone, the new has come. Well, that takes time. And it happens a piece at a time.

All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. Now notice this. This is where I'm going.

That God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. Now, in 1 John, the second chapter, it says an amazing thing. I wonder if we really realize it.

It says that Christ died not for our sins only, referring to the church, but for the sins of the whole world. It was in 1 John 2, maybe the second verse. He died not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world.

So in God's sight, there was one sacrifice made, one sin atonement made, and it was made for everyone on earth. So potentially, everyone is forgiven. But you can't take advantage of the atonement unless you put your faith in it.

God requires that you accept it and put your faith in it. Okay. Most of us here, probably every person in this room, understands that.

That we have our sins forgiven by accepting this sacrifice for sin made on the cross. When we accept it, as it says here, God does not count our sins against us. Now, that's the basic salvation message.

He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. By saved, it means when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, that day is the day of God's wrath. God has never exercised His wrath against the rebellion of the fallen angels or mankind.

It has not been exercised as yet. And when Jesus comes, it's going to be the great day of God's wrath that the Catholics call the disarray. And that will be some day indeed.

I mean, it will make the flood of Noah look like a Sunday school picnic. Now be warned, because that day is coming. In the church, we've got the coming of the Lord as like a church picnic.

It is not. It's called in the Bible the great and terrible day of the Lord. And it's been buried under doctrine until the Christians don't understand that the coming of the Lord is the day of God's wrath.

That's important to know, because it should affect your view of the future. OK? Now, to be saved means that in the day of God's wrath, you will not be put in the fires. You will not be destroyed by God's anger.

God's hand of protection will be on you. That is the fundamental meaning of salvation. It's like somebody was drowning and you threw him on a lifeline and pull him up on board and he didn't drown.

It doesn't say anything about growth. It doesn't say anything about where you're going. It doesn't even say anything about you're going to heaven, actually, scripturally.

It doesn't say anything. Just like you haul a guy up in the boat and he laid there coughing up water and he says, Thank you for saving me. That's what salvation is.

It's being saved in the day of God's wrath. And it's available to every human being on the earth. Anyone God is willing that all men come to repentance, change from their wicked ways, accept Christ, be baptized in water, and God's statement is, You will be saved in the day of the Lord.

OK? Now, there's another whole message in the New Testament. And this is what God is talking about today and He wants you to know about it. And it has to do with the church.

The church. Now, the word church, the very word itself, means called out. It's a calling.

Now, the Bible says not many mighty, not many noble are called. That's different from saying God has chosen all men, wants all men to be saved. This is a different issue.

When God reaches down into mankind, He's willing that all be saved and Christ shed His blood that all might be saved. But in addition to this, God from the foundation of the world, according to the New Testament, chose people to be members of an entity called the church. Now, the church is not a denomination.

It's not a building. It's made up of individual people. And the fact that you are here this morning probably is a pretty good sign that you have been called to be a member of the church.

Now, once you're called to be a member of the church, we're not talking about saving you from the wrath of God. We're not talking about that at all. We're talking about something altogether different.

We're talking about the fact that God is going to deal with you night and day. Not about getting saved from wrath, but about becoming a member of the church, of the priesthood. That does not come by an initial statement of faith.

It does not come that way at all. It comes as you choose to present your body a living sacrifice. As you choose to deny yourself and follow Christ every day.

Not so you'll be saved. Not so you'll go to heaven. But so you'll be living unto Him who died for you and rose again so that He can make you a brother, as it says in Romans 8.29. A son of God.

A royal priest that He can use you to, as Paul says, to do the ministry of reconciliation. To tell the people in the world how to be saved. You see, it's a different thing.

God is, if you're here, and if I ask for a show of hands, I dare say everyone in here would put up his hand he's accepted Christ. And I'm not talking about that. You're already there.

I'm talking about that God wants, this is the burden of the Lord today. He wants you to deny yourself so that you can do as it says here, that you no longer live for yourself, but for Him who died for you and rose again. Do you see how that's not the same as being saved? Being saved is by faith in the blood of the cross.

You believe, you're baptized, you shall be saved. This is talking about becoming a new creation. And you become a new creation so that you may fulfill the roles that God has outlined for His church.

Which is to be a royal priesthood is one big part of it. And that verse is in 1 Peter 2, verses 9 through 12. What I'm saying, I said I won't try to cloud up the simple thing with words.

What I'm telling you is you're here this morning, I pray in my office. I don't know what I'm going to preach on until I pray Sunday morning. Most 999 times out of a thousand I don't.

One time I may. But ordinarily I don't, and I don't know who's coming. I'm telling you what God is saying to you this morning.

He wants you to quit, what shall I say, saying you're saved in a religious sense. That's not the burden here this morning. He wants you to become the role He has for you in His kingdom.

And we don't all have the same role. And I'm not talking about being a pastor or anything like that. I'm talking about the roles that God has for you in this world and in the world to come.

God has a destiny for you. He has a specific destiny for you. And if you do not deny yourself, if you don't live for Him who died for you and rose again, you'll never find it.

And let me tell you something, it will be given to another. And that's the meaning of the parable of the talents. If you don't deny yourself and set yourself aside that Christ's will may be done, how many believe that Christ's will needs to be done in the United States? Do you believe that? It isn't going to come by complaining about the political parties.

It isn't going to become about as you fret yourself. It isn't going to come about as you write an email to the president or to the governor of the state of California and call him Governor Blackout or whatever. That isn't going to change anything.

See? That isn't going to change a thing. The only way that you're going to help Governor Davis, and you need to pray for him, can you imagine what it's like for him to wake up on Easter Sunday morning, and say, Oh God, Lord, if there is a God, help me do something about this. It isn't as simple as it looks to us here.

You need to pray for him. But the way that you're going to help him, and I'm going to help him, and President Bush, and the president of China, and all the PLO terrorists and everybody else, because you see, God died for them also. So don't get sucked into this thing, Oh, he's an Arab.

There's a lot of very nice Arabs. Yes, there are. And I've seen some, and they're gentle, sweet people.

So don't get sucked into that. That's Satan's business is to stereotype. Say he's an Arab, kill him.

Or he's a Jew, kill him. Or whatever it is. That's Satan's business.

God only looks at individuals. He doesn't look at classes of people. He looks at individuals.

He doesn't look at an Arab terrorist. He looks at Abdul to see what Abdul is doing, and hopefully to get him to a place where he can learn something about Christ. Well, you get that frame of mind, because the newspapers whip us up into a frenzy, and the military industrial complex whips us into a frenzy, and everybody's whipping us into a frenzy, and there's some poor... I remember I was walking down from the Mount of Olives, and there was an Arab shepherd, old guy about my age.

He was up there with his sheep. And as I was down, he took a look at me, and I took a look at him, and I broke out into a big grin, and he broke out into a big grin. There's a good dude up there.

I'm not a terrorist. We need to get off of that. The only way we're going to help the Arabs and the Jews and everybody else that's got problems is by living under Christ.

When you live under Christ, He'll show you what to do. Whether it's to go to missionary or pray or mind your business or whatever it is, you will be an asset in this world. God knows it needs assets.

Agreed? The only way you can do it is by denying yourself and presenting yourself unto Christ for His purposes. Oh, don't you love it? Probably not, but anyway. 1 Peter 2.9-12 Alright, but you are a chosen people.

What does that mean? It means that God chose you. Didn't He choose everybody? No, He didn't choose everybody. If everybody's a priest, you don't have anybody to serve.

No, He chose His church. And that's the meaning of the word church. Not to be saved, but to help other people.

Hello? We made religion a very self-serving thing. Fire insurance. I'll accept Christ, then I won't go to hell, I'll go to heaven.

In the meanwhile, I'll get my vacation trailer and resign from life. If God has chosen you, His finger's on you right now this morning and He's saying to you, I want you to stop living for yourself and start living for Me. That's what He's saying to you.

That's what He's saying to us this morning. I want you to stop living for yourself and live to Me. And if you'll do that, I'll make Myself known to you and I will use you and you'll have fruit.

And if you don't do that, I'm going to take your talent away from you and give it to somebody who will. I don't want any other guy's talents, but I tell you, that's what the Lord said. I didn't make it up.

Royal priest, you are a royal priesthood. Well, what in the world does that mean? He's not talking about getting saved. He's not talking about that Christ came to forgive your sins.

He's talking about that God chose you from the foundation of the world, the Bible says. God chose you. He called your name at that time.

And He said, you, you are going to be My priest. Okay? Now, we're not going to be a priest over other Christians. Other Christians, there's only one priest for Christians.

Who is that? We don't have any other priest. Just Jesus is our priest. We're not priests over one another.

I'm not a priest over you. That's why I don't wear any fancy clothes. Because I'm no different from you.

And neither is any other minister. Amen? We are all brothers. No one among us is rabbi or anything else.

That's what Jesus said. Well, then how can we be a priesthood if we don't have anybody to priest? Because there are people in the world who are saved who are not chosen. Well, how do I know whether I'm chosen or not? Don't worry about it.

Pray. And if you want to be chosen, guess what that's a sign of? That you're chosen. Otherwise, you wouldn't want to be.

Really? Yeah. Our desires come from God. Works in us both to will and to do is good pleasure.

You are a holy nation. Now, what does that mean? That you can't chew bubble gum. The word holy means that you've been called closer to God than other people.

That's the meaning of holiness. Think of God with concentric circles going out. And those are levels of holiness.

And the closer God draws you. Holiness is a choice of God. And you have to live to match that.

But it comes from God originally. You are a holy nation. You are.

He's talking here to Gentiles. Peter's talking to Christian Gentiles. Peter the Jew is talking to Gentiles.

A people belonging to God. You're not like the world. You're not of the world.

I start off in John 17. I'll try to get there some other time. But John 17, I'll tell you what it's about.

Because I had that burden. It's about the priesthood. John 17 is about the priesthood.

He says, I'm not praying for the world, Jesus said. I'm praying for you that the Father gave me. That's you.

And he's saying to you this morning, he wants you to respond. And don't think of yourself as a religious saved person to go about your way. Once you're called of God, you have no other calling.

You may work at a profession. You may work at a trade. You may work at whatever you work at.

But that is no longer your calling. You are called to be a saint. And the word saint means holy one.

God has called you out from mankind to reveal His glory. To this world. And that's why He said, let your light so shine among men that they may see your good works.

Not hear religious blather. What do you think of that term? I mean, a lot of religious talk about, you know, come to my church and join the Sunday school. That isn't what He said.

He said, they want to see you being honest, upright, truthful, faithful. And when men see that, they will glorify God. If you don't believe me, try it.

This country doesn't need more religion. It's got religion, religion, religion. What it needs to see is somebody that is doing good works.

And then people will glorify God. That's what Jesus said. The church is supposed to be a light among men.

And we light it, not by telling them about religion, but by how we behave. If you're not true to your wife or husband, how can you go out and preach religion? You fell down in the number one thing. If you're not true to your kids when they have a need, how in the world are you going to go out and preach religion? Your kids will say, you're the biggest phony that I ever knew.

And a lot of Christian kids say that because they can see that their parents have got a lot of religious talk. But that's what it is. And it lasts in church.

And after church, forget it. And so naturally, the kids are disillusioned. If it doesn't work in your own house, you don't have it.

You're a religious Christian, but you're not a member of the priesthood. Amen. Thank you very much.

Alright, now, he said, a people belonging to God, that's the church, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, see he's writing here to Gentiles, Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Dear friends, I urge you. Now remember, he's talking to Gentiles here. He doesn't consider them Gentiles anymore.

He doesn't consider them pagans anymore. He says they become part of the family of God. Because Israel is God's priesthood.

And we become members of Israel, not of the Jewish race, but of God's Israel, by His choice. You are aliens and strangers in the world. Now that's hard in America.

That's hard in America. And some people join communes for this reason. They go into communal living, and that's understandable.

That's understandable. There's probably a lot of marvelous Christians in communal living. In monasteries, or convents, or whatever.

God calls some people that. But we, the rest of us, we have to live in the middle of it, and still be an alien and a stranger. We're not part of this world.

He called us out of this world. We're an alien and a stranger. We're a stranger here.

This world is not our home. The earth is our home. Because we're coming back here with Christ to rule here.

And to serve as priests. A ruling priesthood. Royal priesthood.

But the spirit of the world, money primarily, that's the power of Antichrist. Education. We get educated far beyond our intelligence.

You know one reason we don't have miracles in our country like they do in other more primitive societies? We're too educated. Education causes pride. Know what it says? Knowledge puffs up.

That means the more you know, the prouder you get. Doesn't have to be that way, but there's a tendency. And so we don't see the miracles here like there are in third world countries.

Where miracles are common. I mean, even turning water into wine and the trees singing hymns. And missionaries waking up in the morning and their clothes are all pressed and clean.

And walking on water and everything else. To us it sounds like that could never happen. It happens.

But we're so educated we don't see it. Abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul. That's called denial.

You deny yourself. You deny yourself. Why should I? I'm saved by grace.

Well, if that's your attitude, you're just in religion. You haven't even started. You've got to get acquainted with Jesus.

Jesus today, not 2,000 years ago. Jesus today. Jesus right now.

Live such good lives among the pagans. That's the people around you. Who don't know the Lord.

They're pagans. Live such good lives among the pagans. That though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

That's it, people. That is the difference. There's two messages in the New Testament.

One is the message of basic salvation. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. The other one is this thing that Paul was after and had not attained to the end of his life.

He said, I do not count that I've attained it. What's he talking about? Being saved? Nonsense. He's talking about coming to live in the power of Christ's resurrection.

And to share in his sufferings. That's not the same message. It's not the same thing.

One is addressed to the whole world. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. The other one is addressed to the church.

And if you're truly a member of the church, and I rather suspect you are, you wouldn't be here. If you've been chosen of God to be a member of the church, then what I have said this morning, you will hear it. You will understand it.

Whether you accept it or not is a decision you'll have to make this morning. And the decision is, shall I continue to live for myself saying I was saved ten years ago, and now I'm waiting to go to heaven? Shall I do that? Or shall I believe that Christ has called me to be a member of His body, of His church, of the wife of the Lamb, and therefore I am called to be a saint, a holy one, and therefore every minute of every day and night I am looking to the Lord Jesus. Every decision, every thought, every problem, every detail is being brought up to Jesus.

Praying without ceasing doesn't mean you stay on your knees and don't work. It means that your life is a prayer unto the Lord. You're living in Christ.

And if you die in Christ, then when He comes, you will have no fear of the day of wrath, because the people that die in Christ will be caught up to meet Him at His coming. Caught up to meet Him at His coming. Revelation says the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

I'm through now. I'm just telling you something. If you will live in Christ, deny yourself, live for Him who died for you and rose again.

If you will begin to do that, you will have in you the spirit of prophecy. And then you will know when these things are about to come to pass. That's why Paul said concerning the day of the Lord, that day will not overtake you as a thief.

But all the religious people, they do not know. They stay up at night to watch the 11 o'clock news to find out what's going on. I'll tell you something, pray at 9 o'clock and you'll get the real news.

And then you can sleep and then you'll be able to pray in the morning. You want to know what's going on? Get the spirit of prophecy. And you get that by giving your life to Jesus.

Shall we stand? Stand if you want. Arrange for a little music for us. I'm not going to drag this out, but there may be someone.

I know there's someone because I didn't tell Audrey what I was going to preach about. And she came up with the same thing in prophecy. God has been dealing with someone in this place.

I don't know who it is, but you'll know if it's you. God is dealing with you about something. He wants a closer walk with you.

There's things that God is asking of you that He wants you to bring to Him and not just tough it through. And if you're here this morning, I want you to come up to the altar and tell the Lord about it. Because once you go out, you'll be caught up in the Easter traffic.

Your minds will be a million miles from God. Right now, if there's something that I said, because I did pray at the beginning, God would speak to your needs. And I don't know what they are.

You're the only one who knows what they are. If God has spoken to your need this morning, don't go out that door. Because once you go, that little sense in yourself that you need to touch God will be gone.

It will go. Now. Now.

Right now. If God is speaking to you about things in your life that you have not been working out with Him, you've been doing it yourself, figuring out what I was saying and everything, not realizing that Jesus is putting these things into your life to get your attention. And He will.

He will solve your problems. Believe me. He'll take care of the details until there's no more details to take care of.

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