

Crisis-02 Crisis of Consistency

by Stephen Olford

Christians can struggle with sin due to the dualism between their old and new natures, but they can overcome their sinful tendencies by choosing to live a Spirit-centered life.

Duration: 51:29

Scripture: Luke 2:49, John 4:34, Galatians 5:23-26, James 4:17

Topics: "Faith And Works", "Worldliness And Sin"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the crisis of consistency in the lives of believers. He begins by referencing James 4:13-17, where James warns against making plans without acknowledging God's will. The preacher emphasizes the importance of having a belief that behaves, meaning that faith should be accompanied by actions. He also highlights the dangers of worldliness and the need to resist conforming to the ways of the world. The sermon concludes with a reminder that failing to do good when we know we should is considered sin.

Transcript

For those of you who may have just joined us, I am pursuing a series I am entitling The Crises of the Christian. The Crises of the Christian. And last night we dealt with the crisis of identity and discovered that we are the object, or we are the objects in the plural, of God's justifying, sanctifying, and glorifying grace.

And that all things intermingle for that good, that we might be conformed to the image of God's Son. God has a great purpose for our lives. We do have an identity in Jesus Christ.

Now we move in the sequence of teaching to the crisis, I am calling it The Crisis of Consistency. The Crisis of Consistency. Many have said, well now, if that is true of my life, then why is it I sin sometimes? Why is it I am not consistent? What is there in my life that gives me a proclivity, a potential to fail, to sin? The Crisis of Consistency.

And to help us understand this mystery, and yet to claim the mastery, I want us to look at two specific passages of the Word of God. Turn with me to James, the Epistle of James. James chapter four.

I love the Epistle of James. He is my kind of man. Faith without works is dead.

I love the title of a little commentary to this epistle, A Belief That Behaves. A Belief That Behaves. And James in chapter four and verse thirteen says some very trenchant thing.

James four thirteen. Come now, you who say today, tomorrow, we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy, sell, make profit. Whereas you know not what will happen tomorrow.

For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead, instead you ought to say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this and that. If the Lord wills, underscore that, we'll come back to that.

That's the thrust of my message tonight. If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. But now you boast in your arrogance, and all such boasting is evil.

Therefore, now here is the dominating theme. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it or does it not, to him it is sin.

As a kind of backup to that passage, I want you to turn back to the epistle of Paul to the Galatians. The epistle of Paul to the Galatians, and we'll break in if we may at verse sixteen. Galatians five and verse sixteen.

Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary one to another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sophistry, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like. Of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in times past that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another. May God add his blessing to the public reading of his word.

Turn back to James chapter four and the closing verse of that chapter. Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. Have you had a problem, a crisis of consistency? Somehow or other you thought once you trusted Jesus Christ, once you received the Holy Spirit as God's gift to regenerate you and to indwell you and to fill you, you'd never sin again.

And somehow or other it hasn't worked out that way. And the biggest problem, the biggest crisis you have encountered up until this moment, having discovered your identity in Christ, is that you're capable of sinning. You're capable of sinning.

Some years ago a famous preacher who's now in heaven wrote a book called The Sins of the Saints. His name was Dr. Herbert Lockyer. I bought that book and read it and was rather taken aback because of the catalogue of sins that he said Christians commit day by day.

And it made me begin to do a new study on this whole matter of this proclivity, this propensity, this potential for sin that we find in all of our lives. And unfortunately many evangelists and preachers, they

preach that if you come to Christ it's all solved. You'll never have another problem.

You'll never have another testing. You'll never have another failure. You'll never sin again.

Never sin again. I remember a man once coming up to me and saying that he hadn't sinned for several years. He said, I've reached a point in my life when I do not and cannot sin.

I said, introduce me to your wife. That nailed him. That nailed him.

You know as well as I do that it's possible to take your eyes off the Lord Jesus. And the moment you do, just like Peter walking on the waves, master of the waves, master of the winds, but for one moment he took his eyes off the Lord Jesus and what happened? He sunk. And cried out, Lord, save me.

And Jesus saved him. Not one moment, not one moment can we live a Christian life without his power by his indwelling Holy Spirit, right through until the end of the journey. Until the end of the journey.

Yes, it's possible for Christians to sin. And that's why this text tonight is a text I want you to study with me in context with that backup passage from Galatians. Because in our text we have two words, good and sin.

To him that knows to do good, and does it not, it is not. To him it is sin. And to use a good colloquialism, a good Americanism, which isn't good English, how come? How come that there's good and sin in the same person? How come? I want to talk about the mystery of indwelling sin in the believer, the misery of indwelling sin in the believer, and the mastery of indwelling sin in the believer.

It's all in our text here. First the mystery, secondly the misery. But hallelujah, the mastery.

And for all of us here, tonight there's a fork in the road. Either to be a fraud, or die to self and live to God. And we're to reach for that mastery in Jesus Christ, the star.

All right, let's look at the passage together. To him that knows to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin. Now these words were not addressed to unsaved people.

Paul addresses the same thing in chapter seven, but in shorter version, James addresses this to you and to me as believers. That it's possible to sin. And that seems to be a mystery.

There's a mystery of what we call dualism. There's good, and yet there's evil. I can be a saint, and yet I can sin.

And I believe the verses we read in Galatians helps us to understand this. So if you've got your finger there, perhaps you might like to turn back, but don't do it necessarily. You may want to concentrate, because I'm going to actually quote the verses again.

Paul says, This I say, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit lusts against the flesh. And these are contrary, one to another.

Here's the mystery of it. Here's the dualism of it. There's good, and yet there's sin.

I'm a saint, and yet I can do wrong. And if we're led by the Spirit and controlled by the Spirit, says Paul, we shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. I want you to notice two things about this dualism.

The fact that in me, that is in Stephen Alford, there's an old nature, yes, that can sin. But there is the new nature that can overcome the old. And these two are at loggerheads.

There's a battle that goes on all the time, all the time. Now Paul spells it out, and spells it out in no uncertain terms. It's a dualism which first of all, what he calls, polarizes, or I call it, polarizes the believer's life.

Polarizes. There's a pull this way, and a pull this way, a pull this way, and a pull this way. Have you had that tug of war? Listen again.

The flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary one to another. Have you had that tug of war in your life? Have you? Have you? It's a tug of war between two tremendous principles here. One, the self-centered life, and two, the Spirit-centered life.

There's no fork in the road, and you can choose to live for self, or you can choose to live for God. The self-centered life, the Spirit-centered life. Look at the self-centered life just for a moment.

It's ugly. It's ugly. The works of the flesh are manifest.

And then he outlines them. They fall into three categories. One, there are the sexual sins.

Look at them. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, and on and on. I don't want to spend time on this, but I need to just say this.

After the sixties of the sixth revolution, into the seventies, and now into the eighties, something's happened to our pole country, which is unbelievable in this generation. Publicized by television, and radio, and the press, and all kinds of magazines that we find in the airports, supermarkets, and the rest. We are a sex-satiated society.

I can begin to tell you of the sex corruption in the lives of politicians. Some have fallen as stars to the earth. But not only that, unbelievable sex corruption amongst physicians.

We're still amongst psychiatrists and psychologists. I'll go further. Now amongst preachers.

Preachers. I was speaking a little while ago at a preacher's conference on the need for fidelity and purity and holiness and integrity in the ministry. It's one of those times when heaven came down and glory filled our souls with a sense of the majesty and purity and holiness of God and the standard that should characterize a man behind the holy desk.

I gave an invitation and there was a tremendous breaking and repentance and confessing of sin. And six men came to me that night and said that the next Sunday they would have to resign from their pulpit. One man was living, living in sin with six members of his choir.

It's a sad day. It's a sad day. When I have to tell you that even in our schools with our boys and girls, and I'm not talking about secular schools, I'm talking about Christian schools, eighty percent of all boys by the age of fifteen have had active sex.

About seventy percent of the girls. Sexual sins. Sexual sins.

But there are the spiritual sins too. Look at them. Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, all within the religious dimension.

Let me mention just two there. Idolatry. Idolatry.

I've never seen so much idolatry in the Christian world as in recent years. Idolatry, idolatry signifies anything that comes between me and God. You know, I can even make an idol of the Bible.

It's called bibliolatry. And worship the Bible instead of my God. You say, how can that happen? It can happen.

Mainly amongst fundamentals. All fundamentalists have to watch that constantly. The Word of God is the self-revelation of Himself, and if it doesn't lead me to the very heart of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, even though it's His inerrant Word, it can't be even idolatry.

We worship our churches. We worship power. We worship faith.

We worship celebrityism. And there isn't a single person in this place tonight who hasn't his or her celebrity. Watch it.

Watch it. Watch it. Because one of these days, that celebrity is going to collapse like big names you know already.

And thousands are going to be dragged down as well. Let me name another one. Witchcraft.

Do you know what that word literally means? That word literally means drug-taking. Drug-taking and is associated with sorcery. The New Age movement, which is a little bit of Eastern religion and mysticism, a good deal of it, not so little, mixed up with all kinds of new ideas in this country, a mixture that we call syncretism, and with a whole, whole jargon of evangelical language, is absolutely sweeping our country.

And I'm absolutely amazed, amazed how many Christians are caught up in it. Are caught up in it. Not only in our churches, but also in our seminaries and amongst Christians generally.

And we're being caught up with this kind of witchcraft of the New Age movement, which teaches, I am God. I am God. It's back into the Garden of Eden.

We shall be as God. I am God. I'm a little Christ.

Therefore, I am all I want to be. All I need to do is somehow or other visualize the God I want my life to be, and then actualize it. Visualize it, actualize it.

Visualize it, actualize it, by plugging into that impersonal force. And do you know who that impersonal force is? Satan. Satan.

Spiritual sin. Bringing it right up to date. But the Bible's always up to date.

Notice the social sins. Envy, murders, drunkenness, reveling. You say, does that apply to me? Could that apply to me? Tell me, have you ever been envious or jealous of somebody else's dress or car or home or voice? Murders? Have you engaged in the assassination of characters? If any man hates his brother, he's a murderer.

You don't have to pull a gun, you only have to hate. You only have to hate. Drunkenness.

Have you ever seen somebody drunk with pride, popularity, position? Just hasn't to be the liquor. Reveling. Do you know that's a word we need to study? It means lewdness and loudness.

Never have we been in such a loud society. Not in all the history of the world. As now.

Do you know that 80% of all young people will be, listen, up to 80%, 80%, 80%, it's easy to remember, 80% deaf. Just with the way they listen to loud music today. Everything's loud.

Everything's loud. The pollution of noise is one of our greatest problems. And it's affecting society.

Sending us mad. Driving us nuts. Self-centered living.

Is that possible in a Christian's life? Yes, says Paul. Yes, says James. Yes, says James.

And that's the big down pull. That's the big gravitation pull on the one side. Then on the other side there is the Spirit-centered life.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, against which there is no law. Here is a nine-dimensional configuration of the life of Christ. It's really all of the Lord Jesus in His totality, living in me by the Holy Spirit.

And the Spirit-centered life is the life that's occupied with the Lord Jesus, so that every moment of our lives we're saying, to me to live is Christ. For me to live is Christ. Christ living again His life in me and through me.

The Spirit-centered life. And so you have this pull. Self-centered.

This pull. Spirit-centered. To do good, and yet I sin.

And so we find that polarization. The dualism of the polarized life. But it does more than polarize us, it pulverizes us.

This dualism paralyzes the believer's life. The flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary. And so we find ourselves not only polarized, but paralyzed.

How many of you have made resolutions at Keswick? And on Friday night you yield your life and you say, Lord, anywhere at any time, at any cost. And tonight you're in this place and you've done nothing about it. How many of you have said, I'm going to build the altar of my quiet time, and I'm going to meet with God, cost what it will.

If it's breakfast or Bible, it'll be Bible every time. It hasn't happened. How many of you have said, I'm going out to be a living witness for Jesus Christ, and like D. L. Moody, after he was filled with the Holy Spirit in that remarkable fashion, away there in the city of New York, having been a great evangelist up until that time, but God made him in a new way.

He said, I make a covenant with my God that I'll never lay my head to rest upon my bed until I've spoken to somebody about Jesus Christ. Every day. Whether they come through into full salvation doesn't matter, it's a link in the chain.

And so many of us, so many of us dodge our responsibilities to witness because every time we witness isn't a conversion. That isn't God's way. We're to witness.

We're to witness. Witnessing isn't a gift. Witnessing is an anointed lifestyle, and we should be witnessing day by day.

And we're determined to do it, in a meeting just like this. But we haven't. We haven't.

Something's pulverized our resolution. The dualism that polarizes. The dualism that pulverizes.

This is a mystery. It's a mystery. Ultimately it's going to be all wrapped up in a person called the mystery of iniquity.

But a little of it is right in our hearts. It's a mystery. This, this contradiction, this contradiction, this identity of consistency.

Instead of being consistent, we're not. We're not. But supposing we choose to go on that way.

Supposing in the fork of the road we say, okay, that's how it is, that's how it is. There's the flesh there, there's the spirit there, there's the good there, there's the sin there, and this battle is going on, and I will continue as an inconsistent Christian. From the mystery of indwelling sin, we move to the misery of indwelling sin.

Look at the text. Turn back again to James 4, and look at the text, and notice three things about this misery. I want you to notice it's the misery of a worldly life.

It's the misery of a worldly life. The language here is obviously about the world. Go to now, you who say, let's go to such and such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain.

Somebody asks, what's wrong with that? What's wrong with that? What's wrong with travelling? What's wrong with gaining? What's wrong with buying and selling? What's wrong with doing what James is condemning? I'll tell you. Because God is left out. God is left out.

That's worldliness. A worldly life. And you know, Christians can live worldly life.

John the Apostle in his epistle tells us what the world is. That which is not of the Father. That which is not of the Father.

Where the love of the Father doesn't fill your heart, the love of the world fills your heart. And what is the love of the world? It's the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. Do you know what that means? Worldly affection, worldly attraction, worldly ambition.

And I want to tell you folks, in case you didn't know it, that America is not known for Christianity of the New Testament. America is known for Christianity, listen carefully, of America. There's all the difference between the Christianity of the New Testament and the Christianity of America.

Do you know what the Christianity of America is? Worldliness. Worldliness. Worldliness.

You ask, you ask mysteries who've been on the field for quite a while, when they come home, to describe their cultural shock, even after a period of some five years. It can be even less than that, some five years. Heather and I have had the glorious privilege of having a son and daughter-in-law who've been mysteries

for eight years in East Africa, not far from Nairobi, under the banner of AIM, At-Risk Valley Academy.

And I want to tell you, I've wept in my heart, and I've wept visibly, as I've heard these two young people come home, and describe the shock, the shock of stepping into so-called Christian homes of people who said, we'll pray for you, we'll stand with you, we'll give to make that possible, that mystery work that you're doing. And they've come home to find couples of their own age, with beautiful homes, with candlelight meal and silver, with drapes, two or three cars, yacht, holiday. And have sat here an entire evening, go by, without one question about their mystery life, one question about praying, one question about the oppression and tremendous pressure of the mission field.

All they talk about, money and possession. We're a worldly lot, a worldly lot. And that's what happens if we take the wrong fork in the road.

That's not only the mystery of this indwelling sin, it's the misery of it, worldliness. Do you know what happens with worldliness? It damps, it deadens. I love that story, with a touch of humor, that dear Vance Havner used to tell when a friend of his, a wealthy man, invited him to come to New York City.

I like the story because it's about New York City, where I spent fourteen wonderful years, at Calvary Baptist Church. Chairman of my Board of Elders, and his dear wife, I hear tonight, Tex Irwin. Those were romantic years, tremendous years.

And I know what they say about poor old New York, bad apple, but I tell you we found a few good bad apples too there. But Vance Havner was brought to the great city of New York for the very first time, and this rather wealthy man took him on an entire tour, all around Manhattan, all the big shops in Fifth Avenue, up Rockefeller Center, and you know, all the places you so very well know in this part of the country. And after a very so-called exciting but wearisome day, they came to the end of it, and this dear man looked into the eyes of dear Vance Havner, I can almost see him now, he's in heaven, possibly hearing what I'm saying.

Why shouldn't he be? Elijah and Moses knew what was happening in heaven, and you know, the man said, well what did you think of it? What did you think of New York? Vance Havner replied, well, I guess I haven't seen anything that I want. In fact he said, I haven't seen anything I can't live without. Here's a man who had conquered worldliness.

Conquered worldliness. You know what Paul says? I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies as being sacrificed, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your spiritual mode of worship, your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world, but be transfigured, that's our word of last night, be transfigured by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Don't let the world squeeze you into its own mold.

The misery of a worldly life, but worse than that is the misery of a wasted life. Look at the text, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow, for what is your life, if even as a vapour that appears for a little while, just a little while, and then vanishes away, and then vanishes away. I'm seventy-one years of age, and it doesn't seem I've even lived yet, and yet that's the span.

Most of us here are fairly well on. There are younger people here, but I want to tell you, don't bet on that, don't bet on that. Life is very, very short.

I wonder, are you wasting, are you wasting your life? Are you wasting your life? Are you wasting your life? One only has to be put on a death of illness, as I described on the very first night here at the welcome time, with two weeks to live, two weeks to live, to realize how short life was. I'll never forget having surgery at Mayo Clinic in 1948, and my sweetheart, then an engaged girl to me, having to be taken from Chicago to Mayo Clinic to hold my hand, because they didn't expect me to get through. And I thought to myself, where's life gone? Where's life gone? Where's life gone? I was in the heat of my ministry at Calvary Baptist Church, enjoying every moment of it, when suddenly, suddenly I was seized with a complaint known as paroxysmal tachycardia that precipitated my having to leave.

The church wonderfully conferred on me ministry emeritus for life, but I wasn't allowed to go back. The doctor said, no, you can't. God knows what's going to happen to you tomorrow, next week, next month, next year.

Tell me, is every moment counting? Or is the vapor beginning to disappear, just like a palm that hangs on the trees as you go out for a game of golf, and you hit the first few balls, and suddenly it's all gone. It's burnt off. It's gone.

Forever. Forever. What is your life? But I think even worse than worldly and wasted life is what James talks about as a willful life.

He devastatingly says, but now you rejoice in your arrogance, your boastings, all such rejoicing is evil. What is he saying? He's saying, instead of saying, if the Lord will, if the Lord will, you're boasting of what you're going to do. You are taking it into your own hands.

You're taking the fork of the road, and you're going to live as a fraud. You're going to live for self. It's a willful life.

You're going your own way. Such rejoicing, such gloating, such arrogance, he says, is not good. It's not good.

God has a way of handling arrogance and willful life. You say, I couldn't care less. And you know, it absolutely makes me chill all down my spine when I talk to some preachers who've taken their own way, and some Christians, and some young people who say, well, I know what you said, and I hear what you say, and I knew you said it with an excited and high-pitched voice tonight, but really and truly, I couldn't care less.

I tell you something. I tell you something. Boast not.

God will meet you. God resists the arrogant. God resists the proud.

This omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God sets himself up against arrogance and pride and crushes it. And some disaster can happen in your home. Some disaster can happen in your family.

Some disaster can happen in your business. And God says, I'll allow it, because I won't allow people to be willful. They are born, they are created, and they are redeemed to be obedient to my will, not their will.

The misery, the misery of an inconsistent life. We're talking about the identity and consistency of Christian living. And there's a crisis to be faced here tonight.

How can I be consistent even with this mystery of indwelling sin, even with this misery of indwelling sin? I know I've been pulled in a worldly fashion. I know I'm wasting my time. I know I'm willful.

I'm choosing my own way. Is there an answer? Is there an answer? Hallelujah, there is. And so I close tonight with a third aspect of our text, for that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.

Ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that. To him that doeth to do good, which is God's will, and doeth not, does it not, that's sin. But what's the alternative? There's the fork of the road, willful living, now that here is dying to self and living to God.

Here, here's the fork in the road. And I want you to look at it. Two main points.

First of all, the recognition of God's will. The recognition of the divine will. You know, my dad was a wonderful, wonderful preacher, wonderful missionary, and a glorious father.

I have every respect and a holy, awesome reverence for my father, now in heaven. Dad never wrote a letter. Dad never made a statement throughout all those years on the mission field, and even when he was a sick man and eventually was taken home to glory, where he didn't start a proposal with the words, D.V. Whether he was writing to me in a letter, or whether he was saying, well, I think we ought to do this.

And then he would put in just those two words, D.V. Now, if I were to ask you to lift your hands tonight, I'm not going to because we want to move quickly to the close of this meeting. How many of you know what D.V. stands for? D.V. I wonder whether you know. I wonder whether you young people would even know.

Do you know what D.V. means? Just what James talks about here. Deo valente. Deo valente.

Do you know what Deo valente means? If the Lord will. The Lord willing. Literally, the Lord willing.

I'm going to play golf tomorrow. How do I know? Only if the Lord will. I'm going to buy or sell.

I'm going to go to this city or that city. Only if the Lord will. And that's what James is attacking here.

We've got to recognize that God lives. God rules. God claims our lives.

He has a will in the universe. You say, would all this happen in China? Yes. Would all this happening in Lebanon? Yes.

Because God is so great that He can turn everything, even the wrath of man, to praise Him. And while He does not cause these things, He permits them at times in order, in order, in order that the nations of the earth will recognize that God is, God rules, and God claims our lives. There's a psalm we often quote.

It's the great psalm of Martin Luther, A Mighty Fortress is Our God. The closing words of that psalm says, Be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am God.

And the verse is misinterpreted most times because it isn't a quiet little word to Christians, Be still, rest in Him, so to speak, though that can be implied. What God is saying is this, Shut up! That's the Hebrew. It's the same, same terms used by the Lord Jesus when He said to the waves and the winds, Be still! And they were still.

Be still and know that I am God. God has a will in the universe. And even though nations are blind to that fact, it's still a fact.

But alas, alas, Christians are blind. And tonight I'm calling for a recognition of the divine will. But more importantly, as I close, the resignation to God's will.

Not only the recognition of it, that's one thing. But the resignation to it, that's another thing. It's one thing to recognize the will of God, it's another thing to surrender to that will.

To say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that. In my judgment, no passage of the word of God tells us how to resign to that divine will, like the words I quoted just now and with which I conclude. I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service, your spiritual mode of worship.

And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transfused by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove, that you may test, that you may flesh out in terms of everyday life, what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Now, they're not three wills of God. This is the description of the one will of God.

It's good and acceptable or pleasing and perfect. I want you to look at that just for a moment. I'm calling you tonight to surrender your life to God's will.

God's will is profitable. God's will is profitable. It is good.

We turn full circle. All things work together for what? Good. It's profitable.

It's profitable. There is nothing good that God could ever wish for your life that's not wrapped up in that will. Not wrapped up in that will.

I remember preaching at Calvary some years ago, and God's Spirit came down. I gave an invitation, and many came forward. And I saw a lady, young lady, come all the way forward to the very front seat of that church, and she couldn't even stand.

She had to sit down. She was weeping inconsolably. And I made my way and sat alongside of her and said, Can I help you? She said, Pastor, Pastor, I want to yield everything.

I want to yield everything to God. But I have a fear. I have a fear.

I said, What is it? What is it, young lady? What is it? She said, I have a fear that God will take advantage of me. You know, I loved her candor. She said it as she felt it.

Do you know where I turned her? Right to this step. His will is good. It's good.

It's good. It's profitable, but it's more than profitable. Notice, it's pleasurable.

It's the pleasing, acceptable will of God. It's the sweet will of God. You know, there's nowhere in heaven and nowhere on earth that you can be happier than in the center of His will.

And the old chorus is still true. Trust, say it with me, trust and obey. For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

It's a pleasing will. But we come full circle. Listen, it's a purposeful will.

It's the perfect will of God. And that word actually in the Greek means, it means something for the present. It means something for the future.

It's something for our experience now, but it's something also eschatological. It means the unfolding, the perfection, the maturing of all. What we were talking about last night, being conformed to the image of Christ and coming into all the wonder of God's full redemption for us.

It is profitable for us. I close by telling you what the Lord Jesus thought of that will. As a boy of about twelve years of age, taking his vows to be the son of the law.

You remember how, in the busyness, both Joseph and Mary thought He was with one or the other, and they, supposing Him to be in the company, found that He wasn't there, and they went back, found Him answering questions by the hundreds from those doctors of the law. They said, why have you treated us this way? And He, as the son, looked up and said, didn't you know that I was about my father's business? The will of God. At the service of His ministry, while He was talking to that prostitute woman who longed to know clean life, the disciples came back.

They were far more interested in sandwiches than souls. And when they looked amazed that He talked to this woman, He said this, My meat, My meat, My food, that which I feed on, is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. But to Me the supreme moment is in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He's measuring up to that awful, unbelievable, paradoxical death, where He, the perfect, immaculate Son of God, was going to be made sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

And as He sweated, as it were, great drops of blood, He prayed, Father, can this cup pass from Me? Can this cup pass from Me? If it can't, not My will, but Thine be done. And that's where He conquered sin, to celebrate it at the cross with a cry, Finished! Finished. Finished.

Resignation to the will of God. Resignation to the will of God. One thing, to recognize that will.

Another thing, to surrender to that will. Resignation to the will of God. Tonight I'm asking you, are you prepared, in the language of Romans 12, 1 through 2, to dedicate your life to the will of God, then to demarcate your life by the will of God, not conformed to this world, but transformed by the indwelling life of Christ? Are you prepared? Listen, to demonstrate that will of God, to demonstrate that will of God, not only by showing that it's good and acceptable, but perfect, not only that it's profitable and pleasurable, but purposeful in your life.

Dedicate, demarcate, demonstrate the will of God in your life. There's a fork in the road. You can be a fraud and end up as a fraud, or you can die to self and live to God by stretching out for that star of the will of God in Jesus Christ.

Lord, I surrender all. Let us pray together. As I said last night, we're going to have a quiet moment of reflection.

We're going to sing a hymn we've chosen for the week, which happens to be on the will of God tonight. And as we sing that hymn, I'm opening the altar once again each night for those who may be here even for one single opportunity, but some who may have been challenged by that searching word this morning, or perhaps have thought through what I had to say last night, or what God has said specifically to you tonight, and you said, oh listen, he's really hit it. There's been a mystery in my life I haven't been able to

work out, good and evil, sainthood and sin, and somehow or other I haven't been able to put it together.

I see now that that tension is there and will be there for the rest of my life, but, but, but, if I choose to live for self, it's going to be worldly, wasteful, and willful. But there's a mastery. I can be consistent.

I can be consistent by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit if I yield to the will of God. And tonight, I want to do that. And I'm so glad I'm doing it.

I want all the angels to know about it. I want all the demons to know about it. And I want everybody in this place to know about it.

And I'm going to step forward in the closing hymn, and I'm going to stand for an act of dedication and prayer at the front of this holy place where we're met together, where God speaks to hearts. And I'm going to invite you to come, even as we begin to sing. And if there are any doubts in your mind, you want prayer, you want some more Scripture to undergird what I've said, we have a whole bunch of experienced men and women who'll be glad to talk with you, including myself.

O Lord, have your own way right now in my life, in all of our hearts. Get glory to your name in a harvest of true response to the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For your dear name's sake, amen.

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