

Bearing the Image of God

by Steve Gallagher

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life surrendered to God, sowing to the spirit, and glorifying Him through our lives.

Duration: 26:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:16-17, Romans 8:9, Galatians 6:7-8, Ephesians 2:8-9, James 1:22, 1 Peter 3:3

Topics: "Image Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes that the purpose of life is not about feelings or blessings, but about glorifying God. He shares the story of Watchman Knee, a man who endured 20 years of labor camp and indoctrination in order to break him. Despite the harsh conditions, Watchman Knee remained faithful to God. The speaker also highlights the suffering of Jesus Christ, who faced the curse of God and darkness in Gethsemane but ultimately triumphed over it. The sermon encourages listeners to persevere in their faith and trust in God's plan, even in the midst of trials.

Transcript

The following sermon was recorded during a Pure Life Ministries chapel service in Dry Ridge, Kentucky. Please feel free to make and distribute complimentary copies to your friends. Other resources are available by visiting our website at purelifeministries.org or by calling 1-888-PURE-LIFE.

Let me just start off by saying that Jesus Christ came to this earth. He left His heavenly home and He lived on this earth for 30 years and then He went into ministry. And He ministered for three years, three and a half years probably, and suffered.

And then He went to Gethsemane and faced the fact that He was about to have the curse of God upon Him. And it was so dark and overwhelming to Him. At that moment He could not see past it to the glory that was on the other side of it.

What I'm trying to say is this, that that was not the end of it. That was not the end of it. And Him being at the right hand of the Father is not the end of it.

There's something else. The work is incomplete. And what I mean by that, I mean in one sense it was complete at Calvary, but now what He's doing is because of Calvary He was able to purchase men's souls.

And by being able to purchase their souls with His blood it enabled Him to live in them and through them. And to reclaim the image of God that fell when man fell in the garden. And men, God wants to live through you.

He's not looking for hypocrites. He's not looking for people that know how to keep the Christian tradition. And who mentally assent to the fact that Jesus Christ lived and died and all the nice little story.

He's not looking for people who just kind of have joined the Christian movement and just kind of sing the songs and read the books. He's not looking for that. He's looking for people who are willing to allow Him to live His life through them.

You have to decide if you are going to be one of those people. And during your time here we hope that that will be made very real to you, exactly what the offer is. So you can count the cost and you can make a decision, not just some flippant decision, but a real decision deep down buried in your will.

A decision of your will, not emotions, not a head knowledge decision, but a decision of your will that you are going to allow Jesus Christ to reign as Lord over your life and in your heart. And live His life through you. You're going to be brought to the point to make that decision if that's what you want.

You're not going to continue on as a hypocrite. You're going to make a decision and you're going to go one way or the other and you will never be the same again after being in this place. I'm just telling you that.

You're not going to be able to go back to business as usual. Now there's a couple of things I want to share. You know these verses.

This came to me by accident today, but I want to share it because it's part of this whole thought that I'm having here. It's kind of capping off what everyone else has shared. Do not be deceived.

Anytime you see that, you better sit up and take notice and tell yourself that the devil is going to do everything in his malignant will or abilities or whatever to deceive you on this matter. Anytime you see that, do not be deceived. Know for a fact that the devil is going to try to deceive you on that.

And there's other places where he says that, but right here he says, God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. That is just a spiritual law, just like the law of gravity.

It just happens. It's not, does God love you or not? It has nothing to do with that. It doesn't have anything to do with what your claims are.

It's just a spiritual law. It's like, you know, if you humble yourself, he will exalt you. That's a spiritual law.

Okay, so that's the law, but that's not what I'm trying to get at here. For the one who sows to his own flesh will, from the flesh, reap corruption. Now that word I've been studying for several days.

The Greek word is phethora, something like that. And it's, you know, I don't want to get into it too much, but I want to say this. That the word is sometimes used as destruction and sometimes corruption.

I'm sure some of you have destruction there in your translation. You're just looking at me with blank looks. I'm in the, huh? Galatians 6, 7 and 8. But anyway, I can just tell you, some translations say destruction.

Because this word carries the meaning of both. And here's what I'm getting at here, and I'm still not there yet. When you sow to the flesh, you're reaping corruption.

But this is an eternal principle. We know that because then he turns around and says, but the one who sows to the spirit will, from the spirit, reap eternal life. So you're going to have a process going on based on your life.

Let me put it to you this way, men. If Jesus Christ is Lord of your life and is dwelling within you. Then you are going to be doing things to sow to the spirit.

You won't be able to help yourself. Because God is dwelling within you, and that's the way he lives. And so you're going to be doing things that, you know, perpetuate a life in God.

That will go on and on and on. And by the same token, if you are in the flesh. Then you are going to be sowing deeds to the flesh.

And you're going to be perpetuating this endless, eternal, corrupting influence. And this is hell. That it's going to get worse and worse and worse.

You'll be out in outer darkness. And you will turn into a devil. The best picture I've ever seen of it is Lord of the Rings with Gollum down in that cave for 500 years.

And by the time he emerged out of there, he was this hideous thing. Just gone. And that is hell, right there.

It's a picture of hell. If you sow to the flesh, and that's your lifestyle. Sowing to the flesh, and that's what it's been, men.

That's what it's been. But if that continues, then that is going to go on and on and on. And get worse and darker and blacker.

Forever and ever and ever. Okay, but that's the negative. But I want to say something positive.

There's a verse in 1 Peter 3. This has to do with women. Okay, so all the women sit up and take notice. All three of you.

But this is just, again, this is just a spiritual principle, okay? This is a spiritual principle that's applicable to all of us. Now, he just makes some points here about outward behavior. You're dormant.

Did I tell you where I'm at? 1 Peter 3, verse 3. Your adornment must not be merely external. Braiding the hair, wearing gold jewelry, putting on dresses, and looking good. Well, that's not exactly in there, but I just thought I'd add that to you.

You know, you better have something more than your outward. Because you could be in a fire tonight and lose your looks, and then where are you going to be? But let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God. Men, this is applicable to you also.

A gentle and quiet spirit which is precious in the sight of God. Now, here's what I'm getting at. Do you see that word up there? With the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit.

Imperishable quality. That is the same Greek word as what we saw in Galatians 6, 8. If you sow to the flesh, you will from the flesh reap corruption. You know how you put a negative on the front of a word, a prefix, and it makes the meaning opposite.

You know, you have believer, you have unbeliever. You have godly, you have ungodly. You have corruptible, you have incorruptible.

That's what this is right here. All right, are you with me? I know this is pretty tough stuff for you guys. I know, you've got to use your brain and everything.

Jack's just looking at me like... Here's what I'm trying to say, guys. Just in the same way that, you know, if you live your life in the flesh and you sow to the flesh, that corruption is going to be your destiny forever and ever. And it's going to get worse and worse and worse.

Because that's what the law of sowing and reaping. You sow a little tiny seed and it grows into a plant, right? And, you know, there's a harvest that comes from just a little handful of seeds. But by the same token, if you sow... And here, you know, he's using a gentle and quiet spirit.

But I could just say anything about sowing to the spiritual life, you know. If that's your lifestyle, Jesus Christ is dwelling within you. And he is living his life through you.

Then what's happening is something eternal is going on there. Imperishable. Incorruptible.

That is going to be your life forever. Jesus Christ dwelling within you and glorifying God through you. And that glory is going to go up into heaven with you.

Is this making sense to you? I mean, this just kind of came to me sitting there singing and everything. Oh, man, I'm telling you, we haven't even tasted what it's all about. You live in your feelings and, well, I don't feel very spiritual today.

Well, join the crowd. I never feel spiritual. If I had to go by my feelings, forget it.

I would have packed it in a long time ago. I can just tell you that. I want to end this talk with, I just want to tell you two little stories.

Two books that I've just finished reading. One is Amy Carmichael. I just finished reading her life story for the second time.

Jeff's reading it right now. And this dear woman, she was just a young girl. I think she was 20 years old and God called her to the mission field.

And she ended up in India. And she ended up basically starting an orphanage there. And the main thing they were doing was rescuing these little girls, six years old, five years old, ten years old, that were being sold into prostitution at these hideous, dark, evil Hindu temples.

And that was her life. And for 30 years, she lived there in India. Never went home to England.

When she left England, she never went back again. For 30 years. Now, you would think that God would repay her by just doing some tremendously special, wonderful, marvelous, carnal thing.

Like setting her up with a nice fat salary and a nice house somewhere. Amy, you've done such an awesome thing. I'm just going to set you up.

I'm going to bless you. I'm on to some of you. I just want you to know I'm on you, man.

And you would think that. That's the way the human carnal mind would think it would be. And sometimes it is that way.

But I want to tell you what happened. She was about my age. And some workers had left a hole uncovered.

And she stumbled into that hole and broke her leg, I think it was. And she's over in India. This was back in probably the 40s that this happened.

And no, no, it had to be like the 20s. And anyway, she didn't get the right kind of care. Everything just went bad.

Everything got worse. She ended up spending the last 20 years of her life an invalid in bed. And then you would think, well, I'm sure it was okay, though.

Because she could just really just be in the heavenlies with the Lord. Hallelujah. But she said because she couldn't sleep and she was out of it most of the time.

And she was very open about it. Just how hard it was. The hardest thing about it was she felt like she was no longer connected to God.

But I want to tell you something, man. People that went into her room felt like they were sitting there with God himself because she was so full of Jesus. She wasn't feeling anything.

But that's not the point, and that's not what it's about. It's about God recapturing the image of God and living out that life of God through a person. It's not about feelings.

It's not about blessings, although sometimes both come. But it's really about glorifying God through your life. The other story I'll tell you is Watchman Nee.

I just finished it last night, probably the fifth time I've read that book. And Watchman Nee got saved as a young man, and he's over there in China, all kinds of upheaval. There's, I mean, just chaos going on across that country.

And then the Japanese invade, and there's hardships and famines. And then World War II is over with. Then the communists come in.

And through the midst of this, this man is bravely fighting through to get a Chinese indigenous church established that was not centered around the missionaries but was their own thing that they had with God. And he did it, and those churches were powerful. God was there in a mighty way in those churches.

They were called the Little Flock. And there was several hundred of them across China. And then the communists came to power.

And in 1952, he was arrested, and he was about my age. And I'm just, what in the world is going to happen to me? You know? May have to face this, but he was, I think he was 48, 49. And he was arrested

by the Chinese, the communists, and put in a labor camp.

And this labor camp had one purpose, to break him. And he would spend eight hours working in harsh conditions, and then eight hours of indoctrination meetings, and then eight hours to sleep, rest, eat, you know, do everything else. And then it would start over again, seven days a week, 52 weeks out of the year.

This went on for 20 years. One of God's favorite sons. And people who were doing time there, I didn't mean to go on so long, but, you know, I just felt like God wanted me to share this stuff with you guys.

There were people, guys who went in, you know, did time there and came out. And the two things that I remember, one man said that he saw Watchman Nee, and he weighed less than 100 pounds. And I think Watchman Nee was six foot or six foot two, one or the other, right around there.

And he weighed less than 100 pounds. The other one was a man who was in the cell block he was in at one point, and would hear him every morning, early in the morning, in his cell by himself, singing songs that he just made up, songs of worship, just like you heard us doing here for a few minutes. That's why we do that.

You know, guys, we're trying to break you out of singing these rote songs and thinking that you're really worshiping God just because you're singing some words or having an emotional experience. We're trying to break you out of that and teach you what it means to worship God from the heart. Not because someone's singing a song that you know the words to, but because you know it's the right thing to do.

And that's what Watchman Nee did in the last 20 years of his life, and he finally, I think, 72, yeah, so maybe he was 52, 72 years old, he finally died there, just forgotten in some communist prison camp. But people who saw him said he was so full of Jesus. This is Christianity, man.

You better make sure this is what you want, what you're signing up for. The Bless Me Club is down the street. Not literally, but it's not here, I can tell you that.

If you want the Bless Me Club with all their falsehoods and lies, this is not the place. This is where you're going to get Christianity. And that's, you better make sure that's what you want, because you're going to get the real thing here, and you're going to face it, and you're going to have to make a decision.

Do I really want to be a Christian, or am I going to go back out and live for the devil? Because there's not going to be any more mixing the two. This is serious. It's sobering.

But I want to tell you something, man. I hope I'm not making it sound too negative, because it's a wonderful life. It's a wonderful life.

I've had 20 years in this ministry, and it's been hard. But I wouldn't trade it for anything. I'm telling you the truth.

I would not trade it for anything. I am so grateful. I'm so grateful that I didn't have some panty-waist life of smoothness, that, you know, just everything went my way, and I was blessed here and blessed there, and got everything my flesh wanted.

Thank God that Christianity is not like that. Thank God that there's something of substance to it. There's something of courage and valor and honor and character.

That it means more than that kind of superficial garbage. There's something real and lasting that is imperishable, and will be with the true children of God forever and ever. Hallelujah.

Hallelujah. Lord, I just thank you that you are willing to dwell inside men, women, even those of us who have been terribly corrupted by sin. You are so willing, more than willing, to wipe the slate clean, to cleanse the temple, and to come in, the King, come into this temple that was once full of sewage, and your blood is just set loose inside that temple, and by the time you set foot in there, it is sparkling clean.

Hallelujah. And you want to live out your life through us. I don't understand it, Lord.

But there it is, and that's the truth of the gospel. And all I can do is thank you for it, Lord. Thank you, thank you for the privilege.

I don't understand it, but thank you for the privilege, Lord. And I pray, God, that you'll win the hearts of every one of these men. Win their hearts, Lord.

The devil has been lying to them for a long time. And they have believed the lies because they wanted to believe the lies. But they've gotten to the place where they're tired of paying the price.

And I pray, Lord, that you will just reveal the cross to every one of these men, that they will see it for what it is, see the reality of what it means, and that they will embrace it and say, Oh, God, it may be a hard road, but there is no other options. I pray that you'll get that into every heart and soul, Lord. In the name of Jesus.

Amen.

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