

Memorial Service

by W.A. Criswell

The memorial service for Dr. W.A. Criswell celebrated his profound impact on the church and his unwavering commitment to the Word of God.

Duration: 2:34:24

Scripture: Genesis 1:1, Exodus 20:3, Matthew 22:37, John 3:16, Romans 10:17, 2 Timothy 3:16, Revelation 22:18-19

Topics: "Faith In Jesus", "Eternal Salvation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of following certain instructions during worship. He shares a personal anecdote about lending money to a fellow preacher. The sermon then shifts to the message of salvation through faith in Jesus. The preacher emphasizes that anyone can be saved by simply looking to Jesus. The sermon concludes with a tribute to a pastor who had a positive attitude and unwavering dedication to his ministry, even in the face of challenges and illness. The preacher reminds the congregation that although physical things may fade away, the word of God will endure forever.

Transcript

...speak, and I broke down. I set my mother at her for confidence and assurance. Well, my mother was crying, and it just broke my heart.

So I sat down. The other end of the pew sat an old gotter. And he stood up and said, Young man, there's a sign beginning, and from that day until this.

A special time of remembrance and honor to God, Dr. W.A. Criswell. A great loss for the world, but we're so pleased that we still have Dr. Criswell. And he held high the eternal flame of the truthfulness and authority of God's word.

I just preached incessantly on the infallibility and the inerrancy and the inspiration of every syllable of the word of God in the Bible. Dr. W.A. Criswell. And I feel that the preacher will stay true to the inspiration of the word.

That so many problems that you face in the social world will solve themselves. Now, let's join the service live from the First Baptist Church in town Dallas. First Baptist Church in downtown Dallas.

This is where adults, dignitaries, seminary, Criswell College personnel, choir, orchestra, all to give honor to long time pastor, pastor emeritus, Dr. W.A. Criswell. The family will be entering shortly, and we'll be

here just to simply make sure that you know who is speaking. As we step through this historic service and allow you to be a part of the legacy of a man who loved the Lord deeply, served him faithfully through all these years.

We will begin our service of worship, remembrance, and celebration by joining our voices to sing hymn 521. On Jordan's stormy banks I stand, I am bound for the promised land. This is our hope and our confidence in Jesus Christ.

Hymn 521, standing together to our family and to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. On Jordan's stormy banks I stand, I am bound for the promised land. It's an honor to a great man of God, Dr. W.A. Criswell.

The great loss of the world, but we're so pleased that we still have Dr. Criswell's legacy. He held high the truthfulness and authority of God's word. I just preach on the infallibility and the inerration of every syllable of the word of God in the Bible, Dr. W.A. Criswell.

And I feel that if the preacher will stay true to the inspiration of the holy word, that so many of those problems that you face in the social world will solve themselves. Now, let's join the survivors from the First Baptist Church in downtown Dallas. Many in this auditorium, which is filled to capacity, have been here for many years.

Adults, dignitaries, seminary, Criswell College personnel, choir, orchestra. I want to give honor to longtime pastor, pastor emeritus, Dr. W.A. Criswell. His family will be entering shortly and we'll be here just to simply make sure that you know who is speaking as we step through this historic service and allow you to be a part of the legacy of a man who loved the Lord deeply, served him faithfully through all these years.

We will begin our service of worship, remembrance, and celebration by joining our voices to sing Hymn 521. On Jordan's stormy banks I stand, I am bound for the promised land. This is our hope and our confidence in Jesus Christ.

Hymn 521, standing together to honor the family and to worship the Lord Jesus Christ. Hymn 521 On behalf of the family and the great congregation of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, I want to welcome all of you here. And as is our custom week by week, those of you who can, I'd like for you to kneel with us as we go before the Lord in prayer.

Our Heavenly Father, your church is today not in defeat, but in the celebration of victory. As we come this day to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and to honor the life, the mission, the message, and the man, W.A. Criswell. Father, it's in these moments we pray your spirit be real in our midst to bring comfort to the family and comfort to a grieving church.

As we think back, Father, how as a 10-year-old came to give his life to you, that all he longed to do was to have a church on the corner in the heart of the city. And from that simple desire, you took a man and used him around the world to shape this planet for the cause of Jesus Christ. We come, Father, to honor you.

We come to worship, and we come, Father, not as those who have no hope, but we come, Lord Jesus, knowing exactly where the pastor is, safe in the arms of Jesus. Use this hour, O God, to reach the hearts of those who've yet to believe, so that as able, even though dead, yet he speaks. For we pray it all in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen. You may be seated. Dr. Mack Brunson, current senior pastor of the First Baptist Church, leading us in our invocation.

The Bible says, Grace you have received through faith, and that is not of ourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. As we worship together, we thank God for his amazing grace.

Hymn 330, join us as we sing together the first, second, third, and then the last stanza of amazing grace. Hymn 330. Dr. Rick Wells, president of the Crystal College, now speaking.

Milestones, memories. The great fourth century bishop, Athanasius, has come down to us in church history as the father of orthodoxy. One church historian writes that he almost single-handedly rescued the church from the pagan intellectualism of his age.

By all accounts, Athanasius died in January. And many years it was a custom in the eastern churches to celebrate his homegoing on January 18th, which is Almighty. Athanasius was a scholar of the First Bank.

He was a marvelous writer. He was a matchless statesman. He was a very skilled and tireless administrator.

But above all else, Athanasius was a great pastor and a great preacher. And from his pulpit in Alexandria, he rescued the church. On one of those occasions when the homegoing of Athanasius was celebrated, on one of those January 18ths, another of the church fathers named Gregory, who was known to us as Gregory Nazianzen, preached a funeral oration, a panegyric, on Athanasius.

I can imagine, inasmuch as this took place in Constantinople, I can well imagine that the scene there was, in many ways, like the scene here today. Constantinople, the great imperial city, throngs of people in that great church to hear the bishop of Constantinople preach an oration on the great Athanasius. And the emperor would have been there and the empress would have been there, but the church also would have been filled with deacons and with statesmen and other dignitaries and with merchants, shopkeepers, and business people, just like today.

Just as here in this great sanctuary and in other parts of this church facility, in other parts of our city, hundreds and thousands are here to give, um, honor is due. And in doing that, to give glory to God. In his funeral oration, which has been recorded for us, Gregory Nazianzen began this way.

To speak of and to admire fully would be too long a task for the present purpose. And it would be a form of a history rather than a eulogy. Someday I want to write one, he said, that history, but can't do that now.

But he said, we must do what we're doing for three reasons. First, we must do it to satisfy the longings of our own souls. Second, we must do it because it is right to give honor to such a one as Athanasius, as it is right for us to give honor to such a one as Wally Amos Crystal.

And third, said Gregory, we must do it to give testimony to the world. Before I read some of the milestones and tributes that have come, milestones of Dr. Crystal's life and tributes that have come to him, let me read just one word of Gregory's about Athanasius and see if it does not fit today. He was brought up from the first in religious habits and practices.

But he also studied literature and philosophy so that he might not be utterly unskilled in such subjects or ignorant of matters which he was, however, determined to despise. For his generous and eager soul could

not brook being occupied in vanities like unskilled athletes who beat the air instead of their antics. He did not lose the prize, no.

From meditating on every book of the Old and New Testament with such a depth as none else has applied to even a single book, he grew rich in contemplation, rich in splendor of life, combining them in wondrous sort by that golden bond which few can weave. The fear of the Lord, Gregory preached, is the beginning of wisdom. But when wisdom has burst its bonds and risen up to love, it makes us friends of God and sons.

Almost everyone in this room knows the basic facts of Dr. Crystal's life. He was born on a Sunday morning, a cold December 19th in 1909 in Eldorado, Oklahoma, to godly parents. He went home to be with the Lord, as is also well known, this last Thursday, January 10th, in the early hours of the morning.

At the age of 92, or as he would be wont to say, in my 93rd year, he is survived by his wife, Betty, of course, their daughter, Mabel Ann, and sons, Chris Crystal and his wife, Rachel, and Paul Jackson and his wife, Kristen, and five great-grandchildren. As is also well known, he spent his childhood and adolescence in the Texas Panhandle. He was licensed to preach by First Baptist Church Amarillo Church on July 27th, 1927, almost three-quarters of a century ago, gospel.

He always said that he always felt called to preach. In his autobiography, he says, I hardly remember a day in my childhood or my youth when I did not feel called to preach. He just wanted to be a preacher and a pastor of God's people.

He attended Baylor University during those Depression years. He was graduated in 1931. On to the mother of our seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

He was graduated with a Master of Theology in 1934. He was a scholar. He completed a Ph.D. under Hersey Davis in 1919 and wrote a dissertation on John the Baptist.

While he was in seminary, he was pastor of several churches, and at one of those, there was a pianist named Betty Davis. They were married on Valentine's Day, 1935, in the chapel of the seminary. Almost 67 years.

Following his doctoral studies, he went on to pastorates at Chickasha, Oklahoma, where their daughter, Mabel Ann, was born, and to Muskogee, Oklahoma. Then, following the 47-year ministry of Dr. George Truitt here in this great church, on September 27, 1944, he was called by this great church to be its pastor. We've always celebrated, for all these years since, the first Sunday of October as the beginning of ministry here, which stretched for more than half a century.

You know, there are many similarities between Constantinople and Gregory and that oration to Athanasius, but there is one great difference, and that is that almost everyone who is here today, who is listening to the sound of my voice in one of our remote locations, worshiping together, almost everybody here knew him personally, and he touched your life in some personal way. So all of you, offer your own tribute. I, myself, am a Christian because of Dr. Crystal.

I was a lost pastor. And I came to the School of the Prophets, Dr. Patterson, and I sat right up there in that balcony, right there. Dr. Crystal stood right here, and he preached on the assurance of salvation.

He told about standing before the gates of heaven, and the Lord asked you, by what right do you enter my heaven? What would you say? And I had no answer. And as Dr. Crystal would like to say, the balcony

round down, one of the stairwells, and the press of people on this lower floor, a couple of you, a family of you, or just one somebody you come. And that's how I became a Christian.

Maybe it was that wonderful visit you ever had in his study before you were baptized, after having completed that little booklet, joining the church, or maybe it was just putting his hand on your head if you were under me and saying, lad, maybe you were somewhere hopeless and listening on the radio and heard him preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. This is what you've been looking for all your life. You could all offer your tributes.

We can't possibly include them all, but here's some from family and friends. From Ann, anyone who knows me knows my deep love for my father and mother. The funny and humorous times and the many personal ones we had.

But the most important and most gratifying of my life was the moment Jack Pogue and I founded the Crystal Legacy. What better thing could we do than to watch my parents' life work to millions of people every day? He studied every morning of the week, preparing his sermon for us all. At dinner every Saturday night, he said to us, I have it in my head.

Now I must get it in my soul. Jack and I will continue his legacy until God comes. From Chris Criswell, Mom did most all the work in rearing me from a baby.

She made family life possible for Dad to do what God called him and chose him to do. For her, it was a handful. But even though he was so busy, he made time for me.

Every Saturday morning, we would walk nine holes of golf at Lakewood Country Club. Parenthetically, we never rode the cart because the one time we did, he turned it on its side and threw the golf clubs all over the fairway. He could never figure out the point in chasing a little white ball around, so for him it was just exercise and being with me.

Then we would come home and have homemade pancakes. He would take me to church afterwards, to the numerous weddings and funerals he did every Saturday. Then to the YMCA and home late in the day.

He was as often as possible at the breakfast and dinner table and would pray with me at night going to bed. He was always available for me. The effort he put into the lives of people is amazing to me.

His positive attitude and never give up are one of the greatest attributes of his. A plane crash in the Amazon couldn't slow him down. A fainting spell wouldn't keep him from finishing a wedding from a folding chair.

A pastor that tried to destroy this great church didn't stop him. Even sickness and illness couldn't bring him down, at least until God told him it was time to go early last Thursday morning. Every single conversation we had when I would call from Virginia was, we're coming up, we're coming up.

Never a hint of negative words or defeat. Dad couldn't do a lot of things. He never could sing or carry a tune, but he is singing with the angels now.

He was never the athletic sort, but he is talking to the sports heroes now. Being a Southern Baptist preacher, he could never dance. But he is dancing his way down the streets of gold.

But what Dad could do, he did better than almost anybody. He preached about heaven, and he has already met St. Peter and entered through those pearly gates. He knew church history, and he is talking to Luther, Truett, Calvin, and I know for sure that he is having a blast with Spurgeon.

He knew the Word of God, and he is surrounded by Moses, Abraham, David, Paul, and John. Dad loved to evangelize, and he is visiting with people from the Amazon jungle to Alaska, from Israel to England. He loved the people here, and he is talking to all the members of our families who have gone on before us to where he is now.

How much he loved the people, and how happy he is now with them. Above all else, Dad loved to preach and write, and he preached, and he preached, and he preached, and he wrote, and he wrote, and he wrote 54 books. And then he built, and he built, and he built, and after that he expanded, and he expanded, and he expanded.

You want to know where Dad is right now, right this very second, I'll tell you. On his own planet, standing behind a pulpit with a chair behind him, organ and piano and musical instruments surrounding him, and people seated in the pews, and standing in the aisles, he is shouting and preaching at the top of his lungs, and the choir is singing with the musicians playing to the majesty of God. Can you see that? He will all be there one day.

He's preaching God's word, and while among us he preached hell, fire, and brimstone, he is now preaching about only one thing, the glory of God. He is giving glory to God for the great things he has done. He is giving glory to Jesus for the great things he has done, and he is giving glory to the Holy Spirit for the great things he has done.

Can you imagine it, being at this place? Oh, what a place. We will all share one day with Dad. And it goes on and on and on and on and on and on and on forever.

What fulfillment and what a future for Dad and for all of us. My hope is that while we remain here for a little while, until Dad calls us to be with him, we remember the words spoken by my Dad through those 50 years, and memorialize these words here at First Baptist Church Dallas in some way. Words that by the Great Commission we are all obligated to remember.

From that balcony round to this lower floor, down one of these stairwells, down one of these aisles, a family you, a couple you, a one somebody you, on the first note of the first stanza come, while we stand and while we sing. Words can never express my love and unending appreciation for Jack Pogue and all that he has done for Dad over so many years. Thanks also to all those who helped out over the years, the doctors, the nurses, everyone.

Goodbye, Dad. I love you and I will miss you, but I know you are where you want to be, where you have always dreamed of and preached of. I will come to see you soon.

Your son, Chris Crystal. And from Paul, a tribute to Papa. I am to this day amazed by Papa's calm demeanor in our family.

While the rest of us would bicker and struggle over some small issue, Papa does praise God and move on. I wish I could look beyond the little things more often like he could. Over the years he gave me advice and instruction, but if there were only one message he would have me remember and pass on, it would be to always have faith in God and pray continually.

That instruction has not failed me. I will truly miss him, but I celebrate his eternal life with Jesus. And then quoting this from 1 Thessalonians, Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

And this from Jack Pogue. Looking back at Dr. Crystal's ministry and life, I think of the 71st psalm where the psalmist writes, But I will hope continually and will praise you yet more and more. My mouth shall tell of your righteousness and your salvation all the day, for I do not know their limits.

I will go on in the strength of the Lord God, in the attention of your righteousness, of yours only. O God, you have taught my youth, and to this day I declare your wondrous works. Now also, when I am old and gray-headed, O God, do not forsake me until I declare your strength to this generation, your power to everyone who is to come.

These are some of Dr. Crystal's messages in his life. All he ever wanted to do was lay down his soul for Jesus. His message was simple and life-changing.

You are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus. Look! Look to Jesus and be saved. Anybody can look.

A little boy or a little girl can look. A teenager can look. An old man or an old woman can look.

Anybody and everybody can look. Just simply look. Look to Jesus and live, for why should you die? That was the heart and soul of all his message.

In sleep, Dr. Crystal was totally committed to the Lord God during the many, many months that he was ill. He would often talk in his sleep, and one night he preached an entire sermon. Other times he would talk about Jesus, about revivals, about church gatherings and congregations.

He would give invitations to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Once he said to an unnamed person, When I give the invitation, God is going to give us a big harvest. We have to be ready.

Whether awake or asleep, he had his eyes on Jesus and his cross. The pastor was the kindest man I have ever known. He loved everyone, and he always, always had something kind to say.

He would always say to me, I am praying for you, son. He had a wonderful and kind face. As you looked into his face, you could sense the Holy Spirit of the Lord.

Dr. Crystal was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. He had a life-changing impact on everybody he met. His hunger for the Scriptures gave us a hunger for the Scriptures.

His looking to Jesus encouraged us to look to Jesus. His devoting himself to the work of the Lord encouraged us to work for the Lord. And above all, his preaching that the Bible is the inerrant word of God gave us the assurance that the Bible is the literal word of God without error and that we can trust our lives, our souls, and our destiny to the Christ of that gospel.

Thank you, dear God in heaven, for such a devoted and loving measure who had a heart full of love for you and for us. Preacher, I love you with all my heart and soul, and I thank you for living your life in a way that is an example of how God wants me to live my life. Because of what Jesus has done for us, I will see you again someday in heaven.

At that time, we will be together for all eternity. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for so great a salvation, and thank you, Heavenly Father, for putting Dr. Crystal in my life and for the impact he had on me. A long time family friend, Dr. James Simple.

Dr. Crystal was endowed with a remarkable gift. He possessed a brilliant intellect, a pastor's heart, the fire of an evangelist, and the preaching skills of an orator. He was a missionary in zeal and compassionate in heart.

He was equally at home in the halls of learning, dressed in academic regalia, or in a children's Sunday school class, dressed as a cowboy. He was never aloof from his people, and each person was made to feel important in his presence. He moved with ease among the rich and famous, but he never lost the common touch.

Any small favor he received was rewarded with a personal note of appreciation. We shall miss him, and we are not likely to see one like him again. Mr. Billy Graham wanted so very much to be here and simply could not, but in his stead, bringing a closing tribute from Mr. Graham and representing him, Mr. Cliff Arrows and his wife, Ann.

So Cliff, we invite you, and then I'll have a closing word. Thank you, Doctor. I'm indeed honored and privileged and greatly humbled to be able to say a word of appreciation and tribute from Billy and the Billy Graham Association to the family and to this great church.

Dr. Crystal was his pastor, and he always referred to him as his pastor. And a very special way to have done so was well. And he is so sorry that he couldn't be here today, but I'm delighted to share this word from him.

And Mrs. Crystal asked that I read this letter which he wrote to her. Dear Betty, The Lord called W.A. home at the right time. As the Scripture teaches, there is a time to be born and a time to die.

We know that his soul is alive in the presence of Jesus. Of all the people I have known, I believe he was one of the great Christians of the 20th century. God used him in a remarkable way.

Even though I had not seen him in a long time, I already miss him. The Lord has used you too, Betty, in a wonderful way, not only as his wife, but as an example to others and the wonderful thing for so many years. Next time I come to Dallas, I hope to come and see you with the ideal of Christian affection, Billy.

And then to this church family, He would add, It is almost impossible to evaluate the life and ministry of W.A. Criswell. He had a multiplicity of gifts. He had one of the most loving hearts ever known.

His devotion to Scripture inspired thousands of young clergy from many denominations. His preaching was electric in its power. He was anointed by the Holy Spirit in an unusual way.

His counsel and love to me meant more than he ever knew. I have many memories of our times together. In recent years, I did not see him often, but the memory of years past had a spiritual impact on me.

Dr. W.A. Criswell will be greatly missed. Our loss is heaven's gain. And I would just say that for those of us on the team, and the older ones, Bev Shea is 93 in two weeks and will be in his 94th year.

And Billy is already in his 84th year. And I'm the youngest of the three. But I'm so grateful that he touched our lives and will continue to touch our lives.

We feel this is our home as well. And we just want to assure you, the precious family, and all of us on the team of our love, and as we hope to come back to this city in just a few months, the memory and the love and the encouragement that Dr. Criswell always gave to Billy, always. The encouragement that he gave to me as I met with him on several occasions.

His gracious word, his gracious spirit, his love for the Lord will be a great inspiration to us. And the word that I would leave with you from him and from Bev Shea and myself is found in the words of King David to his son Solomon just before he passed away. He was concerning the building of the hospital.

And in 1 Chronicles 28:20, the word to the family, the word to the church, to the college, to all that will be represented is this. Be strong and courageous. Do the work.

Don't be fearful or discouraged by the size of the task. For Yahweh God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.

For he it is that will see to it that all the work is finished correctly. So be strong and courageous. Could we have just a word of prayer together? Precious Father, how we thank you for your word from which we get our greatest strength and courage and faith.

And we thank you for the tributes that have been given, that will be given, the words that will be shared. Thank you most of all from the promise of your word. Be strong.

Be not dismayed. You are our God and we will follow you. So we need not fear.

We can trust you and we commit our way to you. Bless this precious family and this precious church family, we pray. And our hearts as we continue to worship, to celebrate the man we have loved all these years, but most of all to celebrate the resurrection of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ.

For it is in his wonderful name we pray. Amen. We'll hear a voice of Cliff Barrows for the Billy Graham team.

As it was said of the great Bishop Athanasius, we say of our great pastor, In him true wisdom burst its bonds and rose to love. Thanks be to God. Coming now to sing is Dan Beam, longtime staff member with Dr. Criswell and beloved soloist in our church.

Oh, what is well with my soul. It is with my soul I sing. Coming to speak now, Dr. Robert Jeffress, who's the senior pastor of Spadma's Church of Wichita Falls, talking on the leadership of Dr. Criswell.

Mrs. Criswell asked me to speak today on the subject of Dr. Criswell and his role as pastor and puppeteer in this local congregation here. And it is such an honor to be able to do that. The explosive growth of this church under Dr. Criswell's ministry is a matter of public record.

You have it contained in that beautiful program in your hands. And so today, if your permission, I would like to speak from a more personal perspective about Dr. Criswell's ministry. God in his graciousness allowed me to view the pastor's ministry during the 46 years of my life from three very distinct vantage points.

For the first 30 years of my life, Dr. Criswell was my pastor. When I was five years old, he knelt with me in his office right across the street and led me to faith. When I was seven, he baptized me.

When I was 15 and felt God's call to the ministry, Dr. Criswell counseled me. Later, he presided over our wedding ceremony, my ordination service. He conducted the funeral services for my parents.

He has been my pastor, and I will forever appreciate the way he so faithfully pastored me and my family. But then, Dr. Criswell gave me the privilege of serving on staff here for seven years as minister to youth, and I had the opportunity to see Dr. Criswell's genius and his dedication as a pastor from a completely different perspective. He often said to me, he said, Now, son, someday you're going to have a staff, and if you want to know how to run a staff, you watch what I do.

Watch it carefully. Observe everything I do, and then do just the opposite, and you'll be a success. Oh, he sold himself short.

He was a tremendous church builder. And then for these last 17 years, he's been a fellow pastor, a friend, and a confidant to me. I say without Criswellian hyperbole, anything and everything I've learned about being a pastor, I learned from Dr. W.A. Criswell.

And today, in the very few moments, I'd like to share with you just three lessons I've learned from watching Dr. Criswell over six years. The first lesson he taught me by his word and by his example was, creatures' only message is the Bible. Time Magazine, years ago, described Dr. Criswell as a country preacher with a PhD.

Remember that? Dr. Criswell's life and ministry reminded all of us that you don't have to commit intellectual suicide to believe the Bible. He believed the Bible. He believed every word of it was feos nustos.

Remember, Paige, you'd say that so often when we hear feos nustos, God breathed. When I was a student in college and sat in those religion classes and listened to professor after professor talk about the inconsistencies and the contradictions and the errors in the Bible, I often thought of Dr. Criswell and what he had taught me. A steady diet of that kind of instruction led many of my students to abandon their faith.

But because of the strong foundation Dr. Criswell gave me, I was able to keep the faith. And I credit him for that. I will be eternally grateful to Dr. Criswell for what he taught me about the Bible.

He believed every word of it. And he believed that the preacher's task was not just to preach about the Bible, but to preach the Bible itself. One time, Dr. Criswell said, the power of the preacher lies in his thus saith the Lord.

When the preacher stands in the pulpit, he is not to stand up and say thus saith Einstein or thus saith Dr. Sounding Brass or thus saith Dr. Dry as Dust. He is to say thus saith the Lord. And that's what he did.

He preached the Bible. Shortly after he came here as pastor, he announced that he was going to preach through the Bible from Genesis to the maps. He was going to preach verse by verse and chapter by chapter.

Those of you who are long timers here, you remember that. People predicted that the pastor would lose his congregation by doing that. People wouldn't come and hear the Bible, just the Bible they predicted.

But during those 17 years and 8 months, this church exploded. This great sanctuary could not contain the crowds that would come Sunday morning and Sunday evening to hear the Word of God. And when Dr.

Criswell preached the Word of God, he didn't preach it with the cool objectivity of a professor.

He preached it with the fiery fervor of an evangelistic pastor. When Dr. Criswell was a student at Baylor University, he preached in various churches. And early on, he drew some criticism for his flamboyant speaking style.

And this concerned Dr. Criswell. So he went to a speech teacher to ask any suggestions she might have to offer. And so the speech teacher listened to two sample sermons.

And when he had finished, that young redheaded speech teacher dismissed him with her blessings saying, everyone isn't going to like you, but I promise you everyone will listen to you. And how we listened. He taught us that the Bible was the preacher's only message.

And Dr. Criswell taught me that the preacher is to work hard at his job. He's to work hard. Dr. Criswell was the most unbalanced person I have ever known in my life.

He didn't hunt. He didn't fish. Except with Chris, he didn't play golf.

Dr. Criswell had no use for small talk. You seldom found him at the Rotary Club. By his own admission, he could count on one the number of close friends that he had.

Why was that? He was obsessed with his calling from God. He took seriously Paul's instructions to Timothy to pour your life into your ministry. And he did just that.

Who's ever been a church member here knew Dr. Criswell's schedule by heart. From six in the morning until noon, he spent in the study at the parsonage pouring over the scriptures. And then after a light lunch, he would go and do the work of the church and visit the hospitals and go exercise at the YMCA.

By the way, even that was a ministry in a way. Mrs. Criswell heard this story from yesterday. She was coming through town and visited the church, Dr. Brunson's Sunday night, and she sat up in the balcony.

And there was a young, attractive woman whom she described as a yuppie type. And they were introducing themselves and that young woman said this, said, my husband and I moved here from Los Angeles, California. And the reason we are in this church is because Dr. Criswell won my husband to the Lord at the YMCA.

Even in his exercise, he was ministering. In the evening, he would attend the various functions of the church and then return back home to the study for another hour or two in God's word. That was Dr. Criswell.

He poured himself into the ministry. Last Saturday evening, I was going through some old videotapes of various milestones in my ministry that Dr. Criswell was a part of. And I pulled out a tape from over 20 years ago when I was minister of youth here.

I'd asked Dr. Criswell if I could bring some of our ministerial students over to tour his study at the Parsonage and if he would talk to those students. And he graciously accepted. And it was a video of our tour of his study and the words that he had to say to those young seminary students.

And Dr. Criswell made a statement that I will never forget. He said, the preacher ought to know as much about his subject, the Bible. The doctor in the congregation knows about his subject, medicine.

Or the attorney knows about his subject, the law. And that translates into hard work. Dr. Criswell poured himself into the ministry.

The preacher is to work hard at his job. And the lesson I learned from Dr. Criswell was that the preacher is also a pastor. Yes, we know Dr. Criswell was a model puppeteer, a respected theologian, a prolific author.

But first and foremost, he was a pastor of God's people. He had sought and he had found the shepherd's heart. Even though he spent hours upon hours poring over the scriptures every day, he also conducted weddings and funerals.

He also called prospects on Saturday evenings. He also conducted staff meetings. He was involved in every facet of the church's organizational life.

The same Dr. Criswell that might be parsing Greek verbs and might also be putting on a Batman or an Easter Bunny costume in the afternoon to go to children's camp. We all know the story about one Sunday school teacher in this church in the children's division who was talking to her students and she asked a little boy, when were you saved? And the little boy replied, when Dr. Criswell was a rabbit. He was our preacher, but he was also our pastor.

I realize that in the sanctuary today or maybe watching in a satellite location or perhaps at home on television, there may be many of you who may not have known Dr. Criswell personally only from a distance or touched by him through his sermons or through his books. But there's a great throng of us here today in satellite locations who were personally touched by Dr. Criswell. Maybe he married you.

Maybe he counseled you or your children when they were saved, baptized you. Maybe he spoke an uplifting word to you when you were down. Maybe he sent you a note of encouragement in that inimitable scrawl of his that he would send to you.

But in some way, he touched your life personally. Whether you're here today in this sanctuary or you're in one of the satellite locations, if Dr. Criswell touched your life personally as a way of expressing your gratitude to him, would you just stand wherever you are? Yes, I was touched personally by Dr. Criswell's ministry. Mrs. Criswell and Chris Paul, I want you to look around as if you could see the lasting legacy of Dr. W.A. Criswell.

You be seated. Dr. Criswell often asks this rhetorical question. You've heard it a hundred times from this pulpit.

He used to say, why is it that we are not judged by God the moment that we die? And he replied by saying, because our influence doesn't cease when we die. Like a rock in the middle of a pond, a person's influence radiates ripples upon ripples of influence for the generations to come. I'm convinced that Dr. Criswell's influence in this church, in this world, will be felt for the generations to come because he invested his life in God's Word in the hearts of God's people.

The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand forever. God bless you forever, my mentor, father in the ministry, my pastor, Dr. Criswell. Dr. Robert Jeffords speaking and now coming, Dr. Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

I'm profoundly honored today that the family has asked me to speak of Dr. Criswell's vision, the pastor's vision. In the Old Testament, one of the words used to describe a prophet was that word kose, which

meant seer. The wicked king Ammon said to the prophets in chapter 7 and verse 12, Don't prophesy anymore here, O seer, but go to Judah and prophesy there.

So prophesiers, to whom God gave great visions, that certainly qualifies our pastor as belonging to the genre great prophets of old. He was a man and is a man of remarkable vision. May I simply remind you of that which you also know concerning some of that vision.

The early years of his ministry here were, of course, associated with the building of the church. But by the late 1950s and early 1960s, keenest of his literaries began to flow from his pen. In 1957, for example, fearing young people growing up in the churches were being convinced that Darwinism was not just a theory, but an actual fact.

From his pen came Did Man, just sermons delivered right here in this very pulpit. The next year, 1958, five great questions of those was, If a man dies, shall he live again? He began by noting that the warrior was buried with his armor and the American Indian with his bow and arrow, testifying to the universal confidence in life after death. He closed the message by citing that same Job who asked the question, If a man dies, shall he live again? I know that my Redeemer liveth, and on the latter day shall stand upon this earth.

And though the worms destroy this flesh, yet I myself shall see the Lord. And it was in that confidence and that vision that he worked all the days of his life. From 1962 until 1966, five volumes on the Apocalypse, on the book of Revelation, without a single doubt, the greatest testimony in the history of Christianity to preached sermon series in the book of Revelation rolled from the pastor's desk at Swiss Avenue.

And then in 1969, and who could ever forget it, there was the book, Why I Preach That The Bible Is Literally True. So cognizant was he of the growing disbelief that reigned in so many areas, and so aware was he of the downgrade controversy that had sparked much of the activity of the one that he so honored, Charles Adams Spurgeon, that the future of any denomination lay squarely in its confidence and word, Why I Preach That The Bible Is Literally True. But then the Bible wouldn't save you, and so in that very same year, actually the next year, 1969, there came a moment that none of us here could ever forget.

I was standing way up there because I couldn't get a seat. It was New Year's Eve. It was Sunday night, New Year's Eve.

To cite him and remember it, some of my little old ladies say that they could listen to me preach all night. So he said, we will begin 7.30 a.m., and we will preach all night, preaching in the New Year. Finally at 11.30, somebody left, and I got a chair.

But there were very few available. I preached that famous sermon that was later put into print, The Scarlet Thread of Redemption, from Genesis all the way to Revelation. And then in 1979, sensing that there needed to be an answer to many of the problem texts of the Bible, Dr. Criswell published the Criswell Study Bible.

And in 1980, Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors, so that pastors coming after him might have a map and a compass to take them through the way. Then he came to the 1970s, and in those years of the 70s, they were the years of expansion to worldwide ministry. In 1971, Criswell Institute, now Criswell College, was begun right here on these premises.

And Dr. Criswell had a vision for reaching that pastor who committed his life to the ministry during life and had never had to go to seminary. That same year of 1971, the Criswell Foundation was begun so that it would be possible for him to leave everything he had to the work of God through this Criswell Foundation. In 1972, fearing for the education that many young people were receiving, he began the First Baptist Academy.

In 1973, the first meeting of the School of the Prophets right here in this great auditorium as he expanded his ministry to pastors all across the face of the globe. In 1970, the radio station KCBI gave him an opportunity to preach to people at 3 o'clock in the morning. You say, what good did it do? I received a call one day from a woman who said, would you please give Dr. Criswell a message for me? I said, I will.

She said, I can never sleep. I can never sleep. And so she said, I was struggling last night at 3 a.m. and I happened to tune in KCBI and I heard his sermon.

And she said, I responded to his invitation. I received Christ as my Savior. She was one year old and I never knew what I was missing.

She said, as soon as Jesus came into my life, I went to sleep and slept for the first time in many months. She said, would you just tell him thank you? And I certainly did. The Dallas Life Foundation permitted me to minister to those who were homeless began in 1990.

He not only had a vision for the church, he also had a vision for the country. Do you remember when, in the midst of the Cold War, and it seemed as though our nation were about to compromise with Marxism around the world before the days of President Reagan, even he preached that famine, death, end to taunt, warning legislatures everywhere, don't compromise with unbelief. That pamphlet made its way to the halls of Congress.

I have seen it myself in the office of more than one senator. It made it all the way to the Oval Office and, as a matter of fact, became the Reagan plan to set our country back in a place of strength. He had a vision for the nation.

Would you ever forget 1985 over here in the Convention Center when that unbelievable sermon was delivered, whether we live or whether we die? I tell you, the 45,000 who were stuffed in that place last night will never forget it as long as they live. He had a vision for the world, and the world vision was to reach people for Christ. I have in my hand some of that handwritten scrawl that you have spoken of, and with the help of the gift of interpretation of tongues, I shall read you what he wrote.

This is written in 1990, and it is my vision for Criswell College. I want you to hear this. Number one, it is to be dedicated to the inerrancy, fallibility, inspiration, and authority of Holy Scripture.

Truth without error. But this is the part I want you to really hear. Number two, it is to be a school built for glory of God, to magnify the Lord Jesus and his mission and meaning to the world, and especially for the saving of the lost.

This above all else, the saving of the lost. It never happened very many times, but one or two times I saw it when he stood there, and no one came to Christ in the invitation. The most forlorn look I think I've ever seen on a man's face.

He lived to see men have faith in Jesus Christ. And then I would just like to say one final thing about his vision. He had a vision always to be a teacher of preachers.

Hence the school, hence the way that he walked with all of us day in and day out. And so very, very much from him. I remember the day when he called me into the office, and I sat down expecting some learned discourse, and he said, Lad, take off your shoe.

I said, excuse me? He said, take off your shoe. I'm a man under authority, and I believe in pastoral authority, and so I... He said, turn it over. I turned it over.

He said, look at it very carefully. Examined it very carefully. He said, is there anything about the bottom of your shoe that commends itself to your soul? He said, is there any aesthetic value to it? I had no idea what the word meant, but I could tell that the way the question was asked, he meant there was not.

And so I said, no, pastor, there isn't. He said, then you will remember next time don't wash your feet when you're on the platform. Out at our airport in Chicago, we got separated.

I could see him trying to find me because I had his bag. And as he looked around, I said, over here, doc, see, it's me. And he shouted back across the den, it is not me, it is I. I got it right.

Oh, my God. Four hundred people looked at me and thought to say, are you crazy that you can't understand a thing like that? He taught me about the providence of God. As you know, on the platform, we were given very serious instructions.

Everybody keeps his feet on the floor. Everybody keeps his coat buttoned. Everybody kneels to pray.

We've seen the congregation for very apparent aesthetic reasons. And everybody uses a hymn book when we sing. And everybody opens the Bible when we preach.

And everybody gives an offering when the plates are passed. And whoever is on the end takes it up from the platform. So, in the preacher's prayer room one morning, he said to me, lad, I got off without any money.

He said, borrow something from you to give. I took my billfold out, having forgotten that it was one of those rare I actually did have cash on me. I had two crisp one hundred dollar bills in my fold.

He peered over my shoulder when I opened the billfold. As I looked at those two one hundred bills, I heard a deep voice say, lad, you see the gracious providences of God. He said, there is one for you and there is one for me.

I thought maybe I wouldn't give mine. He gave his, and then the man on the end came and stood before me. And Dr. C turned and looked at me until I gave the other one.

He taught me about the providences of God. But in concluding, let me tell you that he taught me about storms. He was greatly agitated one day, I suppose, I hate to admit it.

I went in to see him about something and it was a storm in my life at the moment. And he said, lad, you're all worked up. That was fairly obvious.

I said, well, pastor, who wouldn't be? He said, I wouldn't be. Now he said, I want you to listen to me, son. He said, all your life you'll be in a storm.

Any faithful preacher of the word of God will spend his life in a storm of some kind. You can't do anything about that. All you can be certain of is that you remain personally in the center of God's will.

Now he said, if you'll remain right in the center of God, then he said, hunker down in the old ship of Zion and ride out the storm and enjoy the amazing tender providences of God as you go through the storm. And you know, I saw him do it at time and time and time again. He taught me about storms and on the night of the 10th he sailed into the roughest seas ever sailed.

And while he was making his way through those rough seas, Jack Pogue's voice was the last he ever heard as Jack read, Let not be troubled, you who believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, and if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go to prepare a place, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there you may be also.

And somewhere there along the line, Mr. Pogue's voice receded into the background, and I'm absolutely convinced that he heard a deeper voice that said, Be still, and the sea stopped its raging, and then he heard a voice say, Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter in to the glory of the Lord. Thank you, Pastor, for many things, but most of all for teaching me to ride through the storm. Oswald Chambers, the most widely read devotionalist of the last several generations, once said that giants dwindle into ordinary men when you really get to know them.

But Oswald Chambers never met W.A. Criswell. He was a giant among us. He was an inspiration.

I speak for all the preachers who are here, multiplied thousands, who are not here, but who look to him as that standard bearer. And let those who one day may be prone to rewrite history and seek to temper his influence, let them know that what Charles had in Spurgeon was to the downgrade controversy of 19th century England. He was much more to 20th century American critique.

Many will remember him in various ways, a photo or a Bible, a baptism, a letter, a sermon, a touch. I'll remember him in his pajamas on Saturday evenings when I would go by Swiss Avenue and he would be back in his study and I would go in and share with him what I was preaching the next morning here in this sacred desk and we would talk and kneel at that sofa that was there every Saturday. He'd put his hands on my head and pray for me.

I'm commissioned to speak of his influence this morning. Influence. That word comes from Latin.

Inflow is what it really means. The word picture is that of two rivers. Two rivers merging together.

One a mighty force, a mighty river. The other a smaller stream and as they merge, the smaller tributaries caught up and carried away in the swift current of the mighty river. And so when we speak of someone influencing us, what I'm really saying is that we have been caught up in their flow.

We have all been caught up in his flow. Why was his influence so great? He was not the source of the river and would be quickly to remind us all that that source was the Lord Jesus Christ himself. His river just seemed to have a deeper channel than ours.

It flowed so clear. Its water was so pure. His river was so deep.

And we're all influenced by his love and by his life and we are here today because we've all been in his flow and that's his influence. And so I say, flow, river flow. Flood the nations with grace and mercy.

Send forth your word, Lord. And let there be light. As we think about his influence, we realize that really, W.A. Criswell was our apostle Paul.

Like Paul, he brought an intellectual pursuit that was coupled with a passionate pastor's heart. When we preach, we aspire to learn the languages of the Bible. When we heard him so naturally expound the Greek for over a half a century from this pulpit, he stretched us to move beyond simple sermons or modern motivational preaching where we just took a scripture and lost the time.

To preach the word of God. Paul may have left us half of our new... but W.A. Criswell left us a passionate love for it. And anyone's life has merged with his, has been caught up in his flow.

He influenced us to stand upon the word of God. Yes, he is our Paul. Dr. C., we are caught up forever in your flow.

Dr. Criswell was our Caleb when I became the pastor of this church. He was already in his 80s. Like Caleb, who was at age 85 in scripture, Dr. Criswell was still looking for a new mountain to climb.

He was still looking for that mountain where the grapes of Esau and Western honey flow. Anyone whose life had merged was caught up in the flow of fresh new challenges and fresh new innovations. Yes, he will have been.

Dr. Criswell, we're caught up in your flow. As we go from this place today, we'll not be weary in well-doing. For like you, in due season, we'll reap if we faint not.

He influenced us. W.A. Criswell was our David. King David led Israel, the Bible says, with the integrity of his heart and the skillfulness of his hands.

And if there are two things that distinguish and characterize the ministry of W.A. Criswell, it was the integrity of his heart and the skillfulness of his hands. I've known preachers who had a tremendous amount of intellect but little integrity and are no longer in the race. I've known others with a tremendous amount of intensity and passion and could move congregations but who had little integrity and are no longer in the race.

I've known others with a keen amount of insight and discernment but little integrity and are no longer in the race. He was our David. He led us with the integrity of his heart and the skillfulness of his hands like David led us with the value of relationships.

He loved his family and he loved his friends. In fact, he loved everyone. He had his souls in life but it never entered his mind that anyone would have an evil thought of him.

David and Jonathan had such a relationship. Their hearts were knitted together and would, to God, every preacher have a son like Jonathan, like Jack Pogue, whose hearts were knitted together in ministry. Dr. Criswell, we're caught up in your role and influenced by your life.

Dr. Criswell was our Barnabas. Like Barnabas, he was a constant encourager. Years ago, 25, 30 years preaching in First Baptist Church of Richmond, Virginia.

And after the service, he went to one of the associate pastors there. And as they were eating, the associate pastor revealed to him that they were fellow students at Southern Seminary in Louisville decades earlier. He said, Dr. Criswell, I've never told you this, but I was discouraged.

I'd given up. I was quitting. I went into my dorm room and I packed my bag early on that morning and I packed all of my clothes and I had everything in my suitcase and just as I closed the latch to leave the seminary and leave the ministry, I heard a booming voice.

And I went to my window and I looked out in that morning sun and there in Mullins in the courtyard, you were standing there by yourself with your hands reached to heaven singing, It pays to serve Jesus. It pays every day. It pays every step of the way, though the pathway to glory may sometimes be drear, be happy each step of the way.

He said, I went back to that bed and knelt at that bed and rededicated my life to God and unpacked my suitcase and have been in ministry ever since. He was our boss. Every one of us have a testimony.

Dr. Smith, we're caught up in your flow. Flow, river, flow. W.A. Criswell was our John on the Island of Pats.

Talk about influence. No one influenced Christian pre-millennial thought more in the 20th century than W.A. Criswell. Like John exiled on Patmos, also over 90 years of age, the preacher loved his glorious appearing.

He thought about it. He thought he would be caught up together in the rapture. He thought he'd be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air.

He loved the Lord's appearing. John may have written about the apocalypse, but no single person who ever lived loved our Lord's coming and looked to our Lord's coming more than our pastor. He was our John on the Island of Pats.

He leaves us with a renewed passion for our blessed hope. W.A. Criswell, we're caught up low today. He had two heroes in ministry.

He was with them. W.A. Criswell was our Chrysostom. John Chrysostom of Antioch in Syria was the great patriarch of Constantinople.

He was called Golden Mouth. His oratorical excellence was known throughout the whole world and has been kept alive by church historians down through the centuries. And not since Chrysostom, his hero, has there been a hero known worldwide for his pulpit prowl.

This is W.A. Criswell. Like this hero of his, we have the printed word. Like the hero Spurgeon, we have his 54 books.

But when we come to read the books of these great heroes of the past, it's linear. And we can't tell where Chrysostom, that great creature, inflected a text. Or we can't hear the passion in his voice.

But for the first time in church history, we now have, thanks to the Criswell Foundation, W.A. Criswell dot com. Anywhere, all over this world, can enter the World Wide Web at W.A. Criswell dot com and not just read his text but sit there on that video stream and hear the passion in his voice. Hear the unction that is within him as he preaches the Word of God.

On the day that he died, on Thursday, it began to be spread throughout the world. 57,000 people visited that website. Yes, Dr. Criswell, you are our Chrysostom.

And we caught up in your flow as your influence leads all. And finally, W.A. Criswell was our Spurgeon. Like his world-renowned hero and mentor of the 19th century London, Dr. Criswell was a church with no peer.

Like Spurgeon, he has left us a college. Like Spurgeon, he has influenced the world. One of the first people that contacted me on Thursday morning after his death and had already heard about it was our mutual dear friend in Israel, Zali Jaffe.

Dr. Criswell loved Israel and was greatly loved by the people of Israel. In fact, on one of our last visits together to Israel, Zali Jaffe took us to see Yitzhak Rabin, Dr. Criswell's last visit. Rabin was the Prime Minister of Israel, that great old crusty war general.

It was just a few weeks before he was assassinated. And Dr. Criswell and I sat in Rabin's office and we walked in and it was a bit tense at first. I remember seeing him just whole big and calloused.

And as we sat down, Dr. Criswell leaned over and patted Prime Minister Rabin on the hand and said, Now sweet boy, I want to tell you why we're here. And Yitzhak Rabin crumbled in his hand. And Dr. Criswell went on to expound to him his love and the promises of God concerning his covenant people.

He was influential all over the world. I know our United States Senator, Kay Bailey Hutchison, is here today. He loves you, Senator.

Every time I would come back from Washington, he'd want to know what that pretty girl is working on up there in Washington. Spurgeon, Dr. Criswell left us a great church. Mack Brunson, God's man.

In God's place, at God's time, the mighty river of W.A. Criswell's influence flows now into the 21st century. I look around this auditorium today and I see the leaders of the greatest missionary sending denomination in all of world history. Every one of us could testify today that he is our standard bearer.

That we are everyone caught up in his flow. Morris Chapman, our leader. I remember Morris when Dr. Criswell nominated you at his conference.

Richard Land, our man in Washington. Jimmy Draper, he's out of the country and couldn't be here today. Vines, former president of the convention.

Dr. Jack Graham, he rejoiced at all the success God has given you in this city. Seminary presidents. Dr. Moeller, president of his alma mater, Southern.

And I'm so thankful W.A. Criswell lived to see what God is doing. James Merritt, president of the Southern Baptist Convention is here this morning. James, I want the whole world to know how much he loved you.

And was so proud of you. And him in these last days meant so much to him. Paige Patterson was his boy and we're all caught up in his flow.

And today over 13,000 students are in our 6th Southern Baptist Seminary. Caught up in his flow. You know a lot of people talk about women in ministry today.

But he valued women in ministry decades ago. He built this church with the likes of Libby Reynolds and women. While people are talking about how important it is today he's been doing it for decades.

Dr. Dorothy Patterson is here today. Southeastern Seminary, the fastest growing seminary in the world. What many people do not know is that out of all those thousands of students at Southeastern today 439 of them are women.

Dr. Dorothy Patterson is caught up in that flow as she leads them. There are more women at Southeastern Seminary today enrolled than in any non-SBC Baptist seminary in the entire world. We're all caught up in his flow.

Yes, he's our Spurgeon and so much more. Last Thursday he slipped into the presence of the Lord he loves so much. He preached about that moment often and always with a childlike wonder.

Years ago in a sermon from 2 Kings in his indelible way let me just close words. He put it like this. Think of that ultimate day when God says it is enough and he needs to appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Where is my hope? Speculation of modern theology and theism will not do. Let me hear again the old text. Let me sing again the old psalm.

Let me trust my soul in the same Lord. The lyric in Miller from God. There's a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins and sinners plunge beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The dying thief rejoiced the fountain in his day and there may I though vile as he wash all my sins away. He continued and when that day comes and we enter into his presence the trumpet sounds and there are the patriarchs Abraham and I see no one Isaac and Jacob but I'm not one of them. There are the prophets of the Old Testament Isaiah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel but I'm not one of them.

There go the sweet Israel David and Esau and the sons of Korah but I'm not one of them. There go the glorious apostles of the New Testament Peter, James and John and Philip and Nathanael but I'm not one of them. There go the martyrs of Christ Stephen, Ignatius, Paul and Anarola Tyndale, Hus but I'm not one of them.

And then a great mulch no man can number These These are they who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb Therefore they are before the throne and shall worship and serve him day and night I belong to that great throne of the redeemed Wash and be clean Trust and be saved Look and live Where is W.A. Criswell? Not here but this is the house he lived in. He is that great multitude which no one can number He lived for this moment He preached for this moment It is his mission day and we would not hold him back if we could He is now a part of that great multitude not on his own merits as worthy and noble as they were but because of our Savior's blood And in the words of his favorite hymn Dear dying Lamb Thy precious blood shall never lose its power Till all the ransomed church of God Be saved to sin no more I'm so thankful that years ago My little stream Merged into his river And I came under his influence And went up in his flow Thank you preacher For leading us With the integrity of your heart And the skillfulness of your hands We'll always love you We're caught up in your flow And we'll carry on With a prayer in our hearts And abide in our prayer I'm so thankful that years ago And I came under his influence And went up in his flow Thank you preacher For leading us With the integrity of your heart And the skillfulness of your hands of the great George W Truett and you'd better believe there ain't no one in the world that's up to that. God has his ways my father exclaimed and I tell you that boy is going to be the

greatest successor any great pastor ever had.

How come you're so sure asked the old timer because that boy is my son. Father replied leaning forward gesturing to make his point with a razor still in his hand. Anything you say said the old timer but I don't think I'm today.

When W.A. Criswell drove into Dallas no one had an idea not the committee that called him not the church that called him not the denomination that he would serve not his family and least of all W.A. Criswell had no idea what God would do in his life and through his ministry in this place. It reminds me of an old testament prophet who appeared in the ninth century just out of nowhere maybe from Oklahoma we know he just appeared out of nowhere and there he was his name was Elijah whose name means my God is Jehovah and Elijah's name became synonymous in Israel with the word and the power of God just as W.A. Criswell's name in the 20th century became synonymous with the word and the power of God. In fact when you look at these two men Elijah in the old testament W.A. Criswell in our day you come to understand that in rare moments of human history God anoints a man to a special task and I want to show you something in just the next few moments.

Dr. Patterson up in my office asked me what I was going to preach on what text my text this morning is 1st and 2nd Kings. God first of all for a defender of the faith. Now you read this in 1st Kings 17 verse 1 Venetia Elijah the Tishbite who was of the settlers of Gilead said to Ahab as the Lord the God of Israel lives before whom I stand surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years except by my word.

Elijah just showed up he was there he just appeared evidently according right before Ahab as R.G. Lee would say he was the toad that squatted on the throne of Israel and Jezebel was the adder that coiled up beside him it was a petticoat government. He had the throne but she was the fat. He had the position but she was the power.

He was wicked during the days of solemn. There was introduced into Israel idolatry through all of the many wives that he had married but at no time did the nation come down to as dark a moment as it did under the rule of Ahab and it was Elijah who appeared like a meteor streaking across the inky black darkness of the spiritual night of Israel and he came with this word he came and he said as the Lord the God of Israel lived. He testifies who the true God is in a nation that has forgotten God it needs a man who is a defender of the faith to stand and say there is but one God and it is Jehovah God.

He not only testifies but let me tell you what else he does he comes to the place not only identifies who God is but he testifies his place about his place before God said before whom I stand. I want to tell you something when you get so carried away with who God is you'll be less impressed with everybody else and God needed a man in ninth century Israel who was not impressed with everybody else but would to stand before God and God alone. That's exactly exactly what God did in the nation.

He reached down and he picked up a man who was willing to stand listen before a deity or denomination before kings or council before popes or potentates and say this is the word of God. W. A. Criswell was the great defender of the faith. He would say with Charles Haddon Spurgeon since God wrote it mark its truthfulness.

Come search ye critics and find a flaw. Examine it from Genesis to Revelation and find an error. This is a pure vein of gold unalloyed by quartz or any earthly substance.

This is a star without speck a sun without blot without darkness moon without paleness glory without dimness. Bible it cannot be said of any other book that it is perfect and pure. We of thee can declare that all wisdom is gathered in thee and without a pull of folly.

This is the judge that ends the strife where reason fails. This is the book unattained by any error. Pure unalloyed perfect truth.

Why? Because God wrote it. I charge God with error ease. Tell him that his book is not what it ought to be.

Blessed Bible thou art truth. When God needed a defender in our day he reached down and anointed W. A. Criswell to be that defender. God looks for a defender of the faith.

He also looks for a man and calls a man who will stretch himself out in a straight. When you come to the life of Elijah rarely do you ever think about the tender side of the prophet Elijah and ministry of him appearing for Ahab. We think of him falling down fire on Mount Carmel.

We think of him being carried up and went into heaven and into the presence of God. But rarely do we think about the tender side of ministry. But do you remember when he goes, when Elijah in first Kings chapter 17 goes to Seraphath and there the widow has a little boy, a lad as Dr. Criswell would say, who died.

And one of the most tender verses in all the Old Testament and certainly in the life of Elijah is this. And he said to her, give me your son. Then he took him from her bosom and kept to the upper room where he was living and laid him out on his bed.

You remember what the great prophet did? He stretched himself out on the boy. And you may not understand that unless you're a preacher. Because when it comes to ministry, there are days when it feels like somebody has just given the life out of you.

You give and you give and you give for a man who is willing to stretch himself out for others and give his life to a lost world in ministry. That was W.A. Criswell. And you know, the interesting thing is what is it about a man's heart that makes him so willing to stretch himself out and just give and give and give to the man himself thinks there is nothing he can't give.

I want to tell you a story that Mabel Ann told my wife Susie the other day. It'll give you a little insight into the heart of the preacher. Just a couple of years ago, Dr. Criswell found what he thought was a great treasure.

He had gone shopping at Sam Moons. Now that is not the most discriminating antique in the earth. But he went in there and found two Chinese urns for about \$4.99 each.

And he was convinced he had found the treasure and wanted it for Mrs. Criswell's Christmas or birthday. And he wanted her to put it up on the both of them. So he brought them and he was so excited.

Mabel Ann over and he showed him that Mabel Ann was saying that, look, this isn't quite what you think it is. This isn't nearly the treasure. And he said, no, no, this is a treasure.

I found this. And he said, I want you to wrap it up. And she'd wrap it up and put it up away.

And then he'd call her and say, come bring it to me. Let me in. And he looked at it and he thought this was a great treasure.

And Mabel Ann made an observation that I think will give you as great an insight into the man's heart as anything. And she said this. She said, Dad was always able to see treasure in the ordinary.

The way he made you feel. That whenever you were in his presence, you walked away and it was not that you were so impressed with him is that you were so impressed with how he made you feel about yourself. It was the pastor's heart.

God looks for a man who will stretch out and minister for us. But God also looks for and God calls a man who is willing to fortify the truth for the future. Do you remember in second Kings, that great chapter, chapter two, Elijah knows that he's going to die.

And so he begins to make journey from Gilgal. He goes to Bethel. He goes to Jericho and from Jericho across the Jordan.

Do you remember that it's anything to read this second chapter of second Kings. And he is constantly, Elijah is constantly saying to Elijah, he says, Elijah, please stay here for the Lord has sent me as to Bethel or to Jericho or to the Jordan. Do you remember the words of Elijah as the Lord lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you, Jack, as long as I read that for the rest of my life, you were his Elijah.

You were there by his side. But the interesting thing is what Elijah says to Elijah on this last leg of the journey. He comes to him and he says, ask what I shall do for you before I'm taken from you.

Now, let me tell you something. Men that are dying don't generally think about themselves, do they? What he was thinking of was two things. In each one of those places, Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho.

Gilgal was the place of beginning for Israel. Bethel was the place of the altar of prayer. Jericho was the place of victory for Israel.

But in each one of those places, scholars tell us that there was a school of the prophets there. And he went and he went back to fortify those men with the truth. He went, give them an example.

He went back to show them what it was to be a man of God. W.A. Criswell in our day was God's man to fortify the truth for the future. Just last night over at Dr. Hawkins' house, we were looking at the 1998-1999 pastor's conference down at Dr. Vine's church in Jacksonville, Florida, First Baptist Church there.

And oh, he was in his element. Seven to ten thousand preachers in that place, and he was in his heart with these preacher boys and just pouring out his life experiences with them because he wanted to ensure that the next generation would have a solid foundation on the word of God. And it changed lives.

It marked the next generation. In fact, I've got a letter I want to just share that was sent to me just the other day. This was a letter that was written to Dr. Criswell earlier this year.

I don't know if you remember me or not, but I'm the Presbyterian pastor who came to First Baptist Church in 1954. Under your ministry, I became a Baptist. For the past 31 years, I've been working with Jerry Falwell at Liberty University and Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.

Thank you for your faithfulness to teach and for the word of God. Thank you for your faithfulness to proclaim the word of God in truth. Also, thank you for being filled with the Spirit and letting the word of the Lord speak through you to me.

At a time of deep need in my life, you spoke to me through the word of God. I will always be grateful for your life. Sincerely yours in Christ, Elmer Tate.

He wanted to fortify that next generation. But you know, God calls a man who will be obedient until God calls him home. They make their way down to the Jordan, which is symbolic of crossing over.

And as I've shared, Elijah looks at Elisha and he says, for you, and you thoughts of what Elisha said to him. He said, I want a double portion of your spirit. Dying men don't normally think about themselves.

I shared with the congregation this Sunday morning that you know what consumes your thought in life will consume your thoughts. I believe in death. You're consumed in life with money and with material things and with possessions that, let me tell you something at the, you're going to think about who's going to get there, hang all your playthings and do with it what you know would.

You're loomed with a success. And at that moment of death, there will come the harsh reality that no one is there for you. But look at the man of God here.

In the moment that he knows he's about to be taken, up, he thinks, what can I do for someone else? And how can I minister to that next generation? And so he says to Elisha, ask me what I can do for you before I go. It's amazing to me. I have prayed not for the position, not for the fame, not for the power, not for the popularity, but just to be a man of God like him.

My last real conversation with the preacher was two weeks ago. He was on some medication for the pain. His mind was clouded just a little, that great mind that was always so amazingly clear.

I walked into the room and Jack shared with me, he said, who I am. Probably did not know the day of the week or all of those kind of things. But I walked over to his chair and it was obvious he did not know who I was.

But with all the strength and all the vitality of life, he looked up at me and took my hand and he said, oh, are you here for the revival? And I said, preacher, I pray so. You see, here was a man in the last days of his life. His mind clouded by medication and yet mine had been so saturated down through the years with the things of God that on his heart was the fact that he wanted God to bring revival to his people.

That was W.A. Criswell. Now let me ask you something. Are you ready for the revival? Is there anybody in this place or listening to me who's never trusted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Is there any one person here who's never confessed Jesus Christ as your Lord? What better moment? What better time? What better hour? The Word of God says that today is the day of salvation and now is the acceptable time.

And maybe through all that's been said and through this great life that's been lived out before us, God is speaking to your heart at this moment. You say, what do I need to do to know his God? All you need to do is just receive him. That's the good news of the gospel.

That in this very moment, your sins can be lifted and that that weight of guilt can be lifted. That you can live with a security that your future is safe in the hands of Jesus Christ. Just by in this moment, just

opening up and saying, Lord Jesus, I invite you into my life.

I receive you as Lord and Savior. To as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God. You say, but now wait a minute, he did that but he died.

Oh listen, his crystal blue eyes that twinkled like the stars in the dark firmament may be shut in death, but they're closed just a moment. That great booming voice that would crescendo and reverberate around this preaching palace may be silenced in death, but only briefly. Those hands that reached out to sinners and pleaded with people to come to Jesus Christ may have fallen in death, but let me tell you something, only for a moment.

Say, how do you know? I know because of the word of God and let me tell you something, the grass may wither and the flower may fail, fade, but the word of our God will stand forever and ever and ever. ...by the Church of Dallas and Orchestra. Celebrations and prayers are with the family of Dr. Criswell and the entire family of First Baptist Church in Dallas.

Thank you for being a part and may God continue to bless the memory and legacy of one of his most active servants. This is Christian Radio. That's Selah with It Is Will, Adam Myrick on your Voice for Hope.

It's at 28 on this Wednesday afternoon and we thank you for joining us for an afternoon that has been certainly one that will not be soon forgotten by those of us that have been a part of this. You've been enjoying a really a worship service in a way, remembering the earthly life and legacy of W.A. Criswell from the Sanctuary of First Baptist Church.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/2/SID2429.mp3>

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