

# Spiritual Insights 01 Heb 12:16

by William MacDonald

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of being careful not to trade spiritual privileges for physical gratification, and to trust in God's protection and guidance in life.*

**Duration:** 33:12

**Scripture:** Isaiah 45:3, John 11:9, 1 Corinthians 2:14, Hebrews 12:14-16

**Topics:** "Spiritual Insights"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of Esau from the book of Hebrews. He emphasizes the danger of sacrificing important values for a moment of physical gratification, using Esau's decision to sell his birthright for a single meal as an example. The preacher warns the audience about the consequences of such choices and highlights the importance of maintaining holiness and grace in one's life. He also references other Bible verses, including Isaiah 45:3 and John 11:9, to further emphasize the need to walk in the light and seek the treasures of God.

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## Transcript

And I'll keep you a few minutes later. You can't all leave because I'm double parked behind some of you. The first one is in Hebrews 12, 16.

Hebrews 12, 16. We'll all turn to that. Is it alright if I go to quarter past? Okay.

If any of you have to leave, feel free. Hebrews 12, 16. It says, follow... Well, I'm going back to verse 14.

Follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God. Lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.

Lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his own birthright. I'd just like to take those words first of all and see what we can get from them. Esau, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright.

That teaches me that it's possible for one moment of physical gratification to barter some of the best values of life. It's possible for one moment of physical gratification to barter life's best values. Let's think of what Esau did.

He came in from the field. He was hungry. And Jacob was cooking that day, and Jacob was cooking a dish of red bean soup.

I don't know what we have that's comparable to it. But when Esau asked for some of it, Jacob said, sure, I'll give it to you if you'll give me your birthright. What was the birthright? Well, the birthright was a valuable spiritual privilege.

It was a spiritual privilege that belonged to the firstborn. It meant eventual headship in the tribe or family, and it meant a double portion of the inheritance. But primarily it was a spiritual thing.

And at that moment, Esau considered the birthright worthless. All he could think of was the pangs of hunger that he was sustaining at that minute. And what he said to himself is, what good is a birthright to a man who's dying of hunger? His hunger was so overpowering that he was willing to give anything for it.

And so to pacify just one moment of physical hunger, he gave away the birthright, something of enduring value. His hunger was back in a few hours, but the birthright was gone forever. So he made the awful bargain.

And you know, it's possible for us men and women to do that today. For instance, here's a man who has maintained a good testimony for years. He has a fine family, and he's respected in his local church.

And when he speaks, he speaks with authority, spiritual authority. His service has the blessing of God upon it, and he's just a model believer. And then comes a moment of temptation as it comes to everybody.

A moment of fierce passion. It seems that he's just going to be consumed by the fires of temptation. And in that moment, nothing seems to be important but the gratification of that temptation.

He has a life and testimony to maintain, but it seems that he abandons the power of rational thought, and he's willing to give everything for a sinful alliance. That's really what it means here. And so he takes the insane plunge, and for one moment of passion, he exchanges the honor of God, his own testimony, the esteem and respect of his family, the power of a sterling Christian character.

He thought the one dish of red bean soup sold his birth. And I want to tell you, people are doing it today, too. Alexander McLaren says, He forgets his longings after righteousness.

He flings away the joys of divine communion. He darkens his soul. He ends his prosperity.

He brings down upon his head for all his remaining years a cataract of calamities, and he makes his name and his religion a target for the barbed sarcasms of each succeeding generation of scoffers. That is exactly what David did. David really had everything going his way, and just for that one moment of passion, he brought down on his name and his religion a target for the barbed sarcasms of each succeeding generation of scoffers.

He sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. What a very solemn verse that is, and what a warning for us from the word of God. Okay, turn back, please, to Isaiah, chapter 45 and verse 3. Isaiah, chapter 45 and verse 3, says, And I will give thee the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord, which call thee by name, am the God of Israel.

Now, if you'll turn back to verse 1, you'll see that these words were spoken to Cyrus. They were spoken to Cyrus, incidentally, king of Persia, long before he ever lived. That's one of the wonders of the prophetic

word.

Here's a Gentile conqueror who's mentioned by name long before he ever lived. I'll go back to verse 1. Thus saith the Lord to his anointed Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him, that I will loose the loins of kings to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut. I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight.

I will break in pieces the gates of brass and cut in thunder the bars of iron, and I will give thee the treasures of darkness. Now, God is saying here to Cyrus that wherever his armies marched, they would be successful. In opposition, gates of brass would be smashed down.

And when he says, I will give thee the treasures of darkness, that means I will give you tremendous spoil from these countries that you conquer. But let's take those words out of context tonight. I will give thee the treasures of darkness and apply them in a spiritual sense.

There are treasures in darkness. And what this verse says to me is that there are spiritual treasures discovered in the dark times of light that you never find in days of unrelieved sunshine. There are spiritual treasures discovered in the dark nights of life that you never find in days of unrelieved sunshine.

God can give songs in the night. The poet has said, in many a rapturous minstrel among those sons of light will say of his sweetest music, I wrote it in the night. And many a rolling anthem that fills the father's home sobbed out its first rehearsal in the shade of a darkened room.

And you know, that's true of a lot of the hymns that were written in this book. A lot of those hymns were written in tears and in anguish and in heartache. As God gave people the treasures of darkness.

There is darkness in life, what somebody has called the darkness of life's inexplicable mysteries, the calamities, the catastrophes, the sudden and unexpected experiences which with all our cleverness we haven't been able to ward off. And life is dark because of these things. And a cloud has come over us.

There are disappointments and injustices and misconception of motives and slander. These are the things that make life dark. You say, can any good come out of that? Yes, God says here, I will give thee the treasures of darkness.

Humanly speaking, none of us would choose these times in life. And yet the benefits from the darkness are incalculable. Somebody wrote, like all men, I love and prefer the sunny uplands of experience when health, happiness and success abound.

But I've learned far more about God and about myself in the darkness of fear and failure than I ever learned in the sunshine. There are such things as the treasures of darkness. The darkness, thank God, passes.

But what we learn in the darkness we possess forever. I will give thee the treasures of darkness. And you know, God is giving his people the treasures of darkness right now in some parts of the world.

Maybe some here are learning the treasures of darkness as they go through the valley with the Lord. Okay, Matthew chapter 18 and verse 15. Matthew chapter 18 and verse 15.

A very familiar verse, but a verse that sometimes, I'm afraid, we skip over. It says, Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. If he hear thee, thou

hast gained thy brother.

Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. Someone has said something that has bothered me or offended me. I'm hurt.

And the Bible says go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. But instead of doing that, I start brooding. I start thinking of all the things he said to me.

I think of all the mean ways in which he treated me. I go over all the details in my mind and pretty soon the gastric juices begin to build up in me. And before you know it, they're sulfuric acid.

When I should be sleeping, I'm resurrecting all of the sad things that went with the incident. All the unpleasant parts of it. And the pressure is building up in the boiler.

And the Bible says go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. But I don't want to. It's too hard.

So I try to think of some way I could get the message across to him anonymously. Or maybe I hope that something will happen to him to teach him a lesson. But it doesn't.

It doesn't seem to happen. And I know what I ought to do. I ought to go and speak to him, but it's just too traumatic.

And I just can't summon up the courage to do it. And by this time, it's hurting me more than it's hurting him, right? People can tell by my glum appearance, by the way I do my work, that everything is not right. And my mind is off in another hemisphere.

And I'm just too preoccupied. And the Bible says go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. But I refuse to do it.

By a tremendous willpower, I have refrained from mentioning it to any other soul. I haven't gone to anybody and gossiped about it. I've kept it all to myself.

But that's very, very hard for me. And pretty soon, the pressure becomes unbearable. And so I decide to tell just one other Christian, just for his prayer support, you understand, just to get his fellowship in prayer.

The Bible said go tell him his fault between thee and him alone, but I've gone and told somebody else about it now. But instead of getting the sympathy that I expected, he says to me, why don't you go and tell the fellow himself? And that really hits me hard. I expected to get sympathy from him, and he says go and tell him directly.

And so that does it. I decide to bite the bullet. I decide to go and talk to the man himself.

And so after rehearsing my speech, I go and talk to him. I obey the word of God, and I go and tell him his fault between me and him alone. And he takes it surprisingly well.

He said, oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know that I had hurt you, but I really am sorry, and I want you to forgive me. And we get down, and we end the interview on prayer, and we get down, and we get up, and we're better friends than we ever were before.

A great load has been lifted from my shoulders. The sulfuric acid is all gone, and my stomach quits churning. My metabolism returns to normal, and I kind of hate myself for not having obeyed the word of

God sooner.

Isn't that a little cross-section of what life is like? We know what we ought to do from the word of God, and we fight against doing it, and when we finally do it, the thing works out wonderfully well, doesn't it? Go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. And if we just obey the Lord, everything will work out right. Okay, 1 Corinthians 2, verse 14.

1 Corinthians 2, verse 14. It says, But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The natural man in this verse is the unsaved man.

And it says he doesn't receive the things of the Spirit of God. He thinks they're foolish. But it goes on to say something else.

It says, Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. This verse of Scripture tells me that the unsaved person, first of all, is disinclined to receive the word of God. But it says more than that.

It says he cannot understand them. And please underline that in your mind. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

This verse is very helpful for a Christian in evaluating the scientists and philosophers and sociologists and psychiatrists and psychologists of this world. As long as they speak in their own field, that's all right. But the minute they get over into the spiritual realm and talk about the word of God or talk about the things of God, I don't listen to them.

Why? Because they can't know them. I would just say this man has three earned graduate degrees. Doesn't make a bit of difference.

Doesn't make a bit of difference how many graduate degrees he has. He cannot understand the things of God. That's what the Scripture says.

When they start intruding into the spiritual realm, I write them off as unqualified. And so I'm never really surprised when they grab the headlines with something that disproves the Bible. Or when they get up in a classroom and start attacking the word of God or the Christ of God.

I expect that. And I disregard it. In one of his delightful essays, F.W. Borum calls these people second-class passengers.

You know, in the old days when they had these liners crossing the Atlantic, there aren't so many of them now, but they had various classes on the liners. They had first class. If you were in first class, you were up in the cabins right on the top deck.

That was very expensive. And then they had second class. That was a little bit down.

And you stayed on this deck. And then they had third class. That was called steerage.

That was the cheapest there was. Third class. That's the way we always traveled.

There was an old preacher, James McKendrick, came across once to this country, and they said to him, Mr. McKendrick, why do you always travel third class? He said, because there isn't any fourth class. If

there had been, he would have traveled it. But F.W. Borum calls these men of the world second class passengers on an ocean liner barred from going up on the first class promenade.

He says, let me read you what he says. Scientists and philosophers as such are, so to speak, second class passengers, and they must be kept on their own side of the barrier. They are not authorities on the Christian faith.

The fact is that we have a faith which cannot be shocked by the contempt of second class passengers, and which derives no real support from their corroboration and patronage. Of course, sometimes there are scientists and philosophers who are Christians, and in such a case, Borum says, and I think this is very good, he says, when I find a Christian in one of these sciences, I always discover a first class ticket peeping out of his pocket. And as I stroll the promenade in his delightful company, I no more think of him as a scientist than I think of Bunyan as a tinker.

We are fellow passengers, first class. I think this is very helpful to young people in school today. The forces of godlessness have really taken over the campuses today.

I guess you know that. And if somebody tries to speak out for the Lord, there's a vicious counterattack in many cases. But it's good for Christian young people going to schools and colleges and universities to know that when these men in the classroom, unregenerate men, when they intrude on the spiritual realm, they're talking about something they don't know anything about, because neither can he know them because they are spiritually deserted.

We hear of young people going to schools and colleges and losing their faith. Of course, I think there's a question whether they ever really had genuine saving faith in the first place. But there's no need to lose faith with these men.

My experience is that most of these men are moral cowards. And if somebody really stands up to them and opposes them from the word of God, they back down. Robert Lee says, men may be critical and scholarly and scientific knowing all about rocks and molecules and gases, and yet be utterly incompetent to sit in judgment on Christianity or the word of God.

It's a good thing for us all to remember. Let's go back to our verse now. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them because they are spiritually deserted.

Neither can he know them. Another verse we'd like to look at tonight is in John 11 9. The Gospel of John 11 9. I have to go back to the previous verse. Verse 7. Then after that saith he to the disciples, Let us go into Judea again.

His disciples saith unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee, and goest thou thither again? Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. I'm always challenged by some of these verses of Scripture where the disciples say something to the Lord Jesus, and he answers them, but on the face of it, his answer doesn't seem to have anything to do with what they said.

To me, one of the great joys of Bible study is getting the continuity of thought. The Lord said, Let us go to Judea. And they said, Judea! Of all places to go, that's the one place you don't want to go? That's where the opposition to the Lord Jesus was most intense.

It still is, incidentally. If you go to Israel today, the opposition to the gospel is worse in Jerusalem than it is in Haifa, or worse in Jerusalem than it is in Nazareth, or worse in Jerusalem than it is in almost any other place in Israel you can name. It centers right down around there, and it's bitter.

And I personally believe that all the hosts of hell are camped there today in preparation for the arrival of the Antichrist. Well, it was the same in Jesus' day. And here the Lord said, Let us go back to Judea.

And the disciples are thrown into panic. They said, Judea! Jesus said, Aren't there twelve hours in the day? What did he mean by that? It doesn't seem to answer the disciples, does it? Aren't there twelve hours in the day? Well, actually, it's a wonderful verse when you start to think about it. The Lord Jesus was speaking about the working day, the days of daylight.

And he was saying, in effect, that when a person is yielded to God, every day has its appointed program. And nothing can interfere with that outside the will of God, apart from the will of God. That is, the Lord Jesus, that next day was all planned for him by his Father.

And if he went to Judea, the Jews couldn't kill him until his work was done. What the Lord Jesus is really saying here is that we are immortal until our work is done. That's wonderful, isn't it? So even if he went back to Jerusalem, the Jews wouldn't be able to kill him.

Nothing can hinder the accomplishment of God's purposes in our lives when we're walking for him. Now, this should be a great help to us in our own Christian life. It should give peace and poise to our lives.

If I'm living in the will of God and following reasonable rules of health and safety, nothing can happen to me before the time and apart from his will. You know, a lot of Christians go through life worrying. They worry about the food that we eat.

They worry about the water that we drink. They worry about the air that we breathe. It seems that in our society, death is always knocking at the door, isn't it? Well, this verse tells me that anxiety is unnecessary.

Don't have to worry. Just burn out for God and he'll take care of all the details. Yeah, but you could get cancer.

Sure, you could get cancer, but not apart from his will. And incidentally, if we really believe this, it will save us from second guessing. We say, if the ambulance had only arrived 15 minutes earlier.

You don't have to say that. The ambulance didn't arrive 15 minutes earlier. It was all controlled by the Lord.

You say, if he had only taken a different airline. Doesn't help at all to say that. He didn't take a different airline.

He took the airline. He was in the will of God, wasn't he? That was all part of the program by him. You say, if the doctor had only detected that growth sooner.

You don't have to say that. There are 12 hours in the day. God has his appointed program for every one of us who belongs to him.

And it doesn't make any difference when the doctor discovers the growth. You say, oh, if a cure were only discovered sooner for that particular trouble. We can all go through that.

A person in my family died. At that time, they didn't have penicillin. You could forever try to live your life over.

It doesn't accomplish anything. I think that if we really believe this verse, it saves us from second guessing. Our lives as Christians are planned by infinite wisdom.

Infinite power and infinite love. And it's a perfect timetable for every one of us. Do you believe that? I believe that.

It's a perfect timetable for every one of us. And God's trains all run on schedule. Perfect schedule.

And I just love to see the peace and the poise in the life of the Lord Jesus. When they said to him, don't go to Judea, they'll kill you. He's saying, in effect, they couldn't kill me.

He said, but they eventually did. Yes, when the hour came. But the hour hadn't come here.

It was within the permissive will of God that he should be taken and should be killed at a later time. But he knew until that time he was absolutely immortal. I think that's a wonderful thing, a wonderful truth with which to garrison our hearts in days when everybody's worrying.

In fact, listening to the radio doesn't help or the TV because they're always bringing up all these threats to our health. Well, the thing to do is to live our lives and live them wholeheartedly for the Lord and just know that we are in the center of his will. Shall we look to the Lord in closing prayer? Thank you very much for your patience.

Father, we have told it out now. We'd just like to pray it in. We think tonight of our young people who are in schools and colleges and being subjected to the blasts of ungodly men.

We pray, Lord, that they might maintain their spiritual balance and realize that these men of the world really can't understand the things of God and they're not to be listened to at all when they get out of their own field. We think of Esau tonight, Lord, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. We think of the tremendous temptations that face each one of us in this world.

We know that this world is just a great monstrous system of temptation and we know how temptation oftentimes comes in like a flood and at that moment nothing else seems so important in life and oftentimes we're just tempted to gamble away everything in the way of our testimony, just for the gratification of physical pleasure. We pray, Lord, that we might learn from Esau and the disastrous consequences. He was a profane man and for one morsel of meat he bartered away one of the best values of life.

We pray, Lord, that you'll keep us by your mighty power. We thank you, Lord, tonight that you do give the treasures of darkness. We think of the very little that we've ever gained from the sunshine of life, but we think of all the valuable lessons you've taught us in the shade of that darkened room.

And so as we do go through the darkness, Lord, we pray that we might be good students learning the lessons that you would have us to learn. Father, we think of how differences come in between us and other believers and how we allow these things to build up in our hearts and minds and they keep us from sleep and they drive us frantic. And we pray that we might hear your voice tonight saying to us, Go, tell him his fault between thee and him alone.

We pray, Lord, that you'll give us the grace to do it every time, not going and gossiping to someone else about it, but going to the individual concerned and just telling him his fault. And finally, Lord, we just thank you for the assurance that we're in your hand, that you're planning our lives with perfection and that there are 12 hours in the day for every one of us and nothing can happen to us apart from your permissive will. So we pray, Lord, that we might just spend our lives wholeheartedly for yourself, leave our lives in your care, following reasonable rules of safety and health and knowing that you'll keep us by your power until our work is done.

Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever. Amen. Thank you.

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