

# Studies in 1 Corinthians 15 1 Cor 15:50-58

by William MacDonald

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*The sermon discusses the importance of understanding dispensational truth and how it applies to our lives, including the present dispensation of grace and the second coming of Christ.*

**Duration:** 37:53

**Scripture:** Romans 6:23, Romans 7:21, 1 Corinthians 15:57

**Topics:** "Eternal Salvation", "End Times"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses several important truths from the New Testament. The first truth emphasized is the person of Jesus Christ, highlighting the mystery of His divine and human nature. The sermon then moves on to the topic of the end times, explaining the concept of the rapture and the separation of believers and unbelievers. The preacher also emphasizes the liberating truth of salvation by grace through faith, contrasting it with the futile efforts of people trying to earn their salvation. Lastly, the sermon touches on the importance of understanding dispensational truth, which refers to God dividing human history into different periods or administrations.

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## Transcript

Where is your victory? The sting of death is sin. The strength of sin is the law. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain through the Lord. Last week we were talking about some of the truths of the New Testament that are precious to us and helpful to us in studying the Word also. Remember we talked about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that was the first one we mentioned, because that's the most important.

Christianity is Christ. And we talked about the marvels of his person. Actually, the person of Christ, enfolding God and man, is something that the human mind can't take in.

Only the Father can really understand the Son. That's why the Bible says, no man knows the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever he will reveal him. No one knows the Son but the Father.

No other qualifications there. And then we mentioned another precious truth, and that's the truth of salvation by grace, through faith and apart from the deeds of the law. What a wonderful, liberating truth

that is.

When you think of people in the world today struggling to get salvation instead of receiving it as a free gift from God. It's really wonderful. To think that the work has been finished, and that all we have to do is receive it.

And then we talked about the marvel of assurance of salvation. If assurance of salvation, if salvation is a gift, then I can know I'm saved. If salvation depends on me in any sense, well, I'll never know that I'm saved.

Because I'll never know whether I've done enough good works or the right kind of good works that million questions arise. And there's no peace and no assurance in any way of salvation apart from the free grace of God. And then we talked about the marvelous truth of the eternal security of the believer.

The man in Ukraine, in the Ukraine who has offered to translate the New Testament commentary into Russia, Russian. And we got a letter from him the other day, and he's having a real problem. The commentary teaches the eternal security of the believer.

And he would like to remove two places where the eternal security of the believer is taught in the commentary. I said, two places? Two hundred places? It's woven all through the New Testament. So anyway, I had to write to the dear brother and tell him that his job was to translate, not to edit the material.

Then we talked last week about our position in Christ. What a wonderful thing it is. I don't think we really appreciate this half as much as we would.

That when we're saved, God sees us in Christ, accepts us in his beloved Son. We're complete in Christ, we're seated with Christ in heavenly places. It's a positional truth, but it's a wonderful truth.

Really a wonderful truth. It's not how we look at ourselves or how other people look at us. It's how God looks at us that counts.

And when God sees us in Christ, there's nothing more you could ask for. You couldn't have a better standing before God than that, could you? God sees my Savior, and then he sees me in the beloved, accepted and free. Then we talk about the truth of the two natures, and that's a wonderful truth.

Romans chapter 7. I'm so glad that the Bible teaches that after I'm saved, I still have that old nature. I have a new nature, the life of Christ. These two are in constant opposition to one another, and the struggle will go on till I get to heaven.

No teaching in the Bible of perfection, that we ever reach perfection down in this life. And yet the truth of the two natures is presented in such a way, it doesn't mean I want to go out and sin. It's the very opposite.

I don't want to go out and sin because of that new life that is within me. Then, of course, and I maybe should have had this one closer to the front, the Bible is the Word of God. And really, that's enough to sweep us off our feet when we think of it.

That book you're holding in your hand, it's God's message to you. It really is, it really is. It's the Word of God, and as given in its original document, absolutely God-breathed and perfect.

Perfect. And for all practical purposes, the translations, or any good translation of the Bible, is the Word of God. This morning, I'd like to speak for a little while to you on dispensational truth, because I think this is very, very important.

God divides human history into various dispensations. Now, when you become a Christian and study the Bible, you have to get used to some big words, don't you? Dispensation. Another word for it is stewardship.

Another word for it is administration. And probably that's the easiest one for us to remember. We had the Bush administration previously.

Now we have the Clinton administration. And what it really means is that there's a period of time where certain policies are followed in the history of this country. Well, God has his dispensations, too.

God has his administration, too. And there are periods of time in which God tests man with regard to sin and responsibility. He puts man in different rules, gives them different laws, and then see how they behave.

You know the answer to this question. How do they behave? Well, every dispensation ends in failure. I think the easiest way to think of it is in connection with a household.

First of all, a couple gets married. Well, that's a dispensation when a couple gets married. I mean, they're living together.

It's a new situation for them. And certain policies are followed in the home. Then a baby comes into the home.

Well, it's a new dispensation. But that baby comes because life takes on a completely different complexion, doesn't it? That baby really just transforms that household in many ways. And then the baby grows up and goes off to school.

Well, a different administration, different rules. And then the baby graduates from high school. He's not a baby when he graduates from high school, but he graduates from high school.

Well, it's a different administration, too. The parents don't put that young man under the same rules as he was under when he was 10. Different administration.

And then, of course, he goes off and gets married. And once again, it's a different administration. The first dispensation, of course, was the dispensation of innocence.

When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, said, all yours friends, you may eat all the fruit of the trees, but this one tree, don't you eat of that. The day you eat of that, surely not. God was testing them.

The situation could hardly have been better for them. Everything was perfect. You know what happened.

They fell into sin. Fell into sin. Every dispensation of God's dealings with man ends in sin, in rebellion, failure.

So, that introduced another dispensation, called the dispensation of conscience. Man had a conscience now. He experimentally knew the difference between good and evil.

And questions would come up in his mind. May I do this? Should I do this? And the conscience was waving back and forth, telling him what to do. God tested him under conscience.

No good. No good. And God finally got so fed up, he had to send a flood on the earth.

Then, after the flood, God ushered in a new dispensation. That's the dispensation of human government. Say, how do you get that? Well, he said to Noah after the flood, whoever sheds man's blood, by man will his blood be shed.

And that implied the formation of human government to carry that out. In other words, God didn't mean that families would settle their disputes among themselves. He didn't mean that.

He didn't mean that there would be blood feuds among families. He meant that there would be a constituted authority that would carry out the death sentence. We call that the dispensation of government.

And after that, he introduced the dispensation of promise. When Abraham came upon the scene, and Abraham, to him were given these marvelous promises of God. In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

It's really tremendous. And after the dispensation of promise, the dispensation of law. That's really, that's what takes up most of the Old Testament.

Until the resurrection of Christ, actually, in the New Testament. The dispensation of law. God said, well, I'm going to give these people ten commandments and see how they react.

And he did, beginning in Exodus chapter 19. And from there right on to the resurrection of Christ, you have the dispensation of law. And the people foolishly said, anything you say, Lord, we'll do it.

What a foolish thing. So he gave them the ten commandments, and they say, in effect, Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. Not one man of Israel ever kept those ten commandments.

Not one single man. Just the Lord Jesus Christ, God the God-man. And then God ushered in the dispensation of what we call grace.

That's the dispensation we live in today. It's also called the church age. God said, well, look, I tested them under law, and they were a total failure.

Now I'm going to test them under grace. And I'll do all the work for them. I'll provide my son to die for them in the cross of Calvary.

And all they'll have to do is accept him by faith, and I'll save them. Would you think that? You'd think everybody would respond to that, wouldn't you? As a matter of fact, only a very few people do. I wonder if the disciples asked Jesus, are there few that be saved? And the answer to the question is, there are few.

The natural heart of man doesn't like the grace of God. It doesn't give him any ground for boasting. There's no boasting under salvation by grace through faith, is there? There's no boasting.

If you could get to heaven by your work, you'd have plenty to boast about. And that's what man likes, that idea. It caters to the old, evil nature of man to make him think that he could do something to be saved.

But now the Lord Jesus did all the work on the cross of Calvary, and man doesn't like it. Very few, relatively speaking, respond to God's wonderful offer of mercy. Are things getting better in this dispensation? Well, they certainly aren't.

How's this dispensation going to end? It's going to end in failure. It's going to end in failure. And then, of course, the seventh dispensation would be the kingdom, when the Lord Jesus comes back and reigns upon the earth for a thousand years.

We call it the millennium, the kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And he's going to reign over the earth, and sin is going to be put down, and the desert's going to rejoice and blossom, and it's going to be a wonderful time. Wonderful time.

But people born in that period will be born with an old, evil, corrupt nature, and they'll need to be saved, and not all of them will be saved. And at the end of the thousand years, the devil's going to come forth. He's going to go to the far corners of the earth.

He's going to gather an army and come up against Christ at Jerusalem, trying to keep them from reigning. And, of course, that dispensation will end in failure. Not because of Christ.

He gives them a very wonderful situation, but this man is essentially no good at all. And, of course, there'll be the new heavens and the new earth, and sin will be forever put away. You say, why is it? Why do you go through all of that? Why are the dispensations important? Well, they're important for your whole study of the Word of God.

I've often said, I don't think I could understand my Bible if it weren't for the dispensations. For instance, why are you here today? Why weren't you here yesterday, the Sabbath? God gave the Sabbath, one of the ten commandments. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, didn't he? The Sabbath is Saturday.

What are you doing here today? You say, we're in a dispensation. Well, that's exactly right. That's why you're here today.

If you were a Jew living under the law, the Sabbath would apply to you. But it doesn't apply to you. You're absolutely right in being here today, the first day of the week, the Lord's day.

I think it's very important. Why don't you offer animal sacrifices? Didn't God tell the people and the old tasters to bring the lamb for the Passover and so on? Remember, that was a different dispensation. It doesn't apply to us today.

Very, very important, I think, to see it. One of the great, I think it's one of the great keys for understanding the Word of God. God himself doesn't change, but his methods change.

God is immutable, and he himself never changes, but his methods certainly do change. I think it's important for us to remember that, however, that God's way of salvation is the same in every dispensation. Man has always been saved by faith in the Lord.

Man is being saved today by faith in the Lord. Man will be saved in the future by faith in the Lord. The way of salvation never changes.

In the Old Testament, they were saved by faith in whatever the Lord revealed to them. Whatever the Lord, they believed God, and he counted to them for righteousness. Today, we have the gospel.

We believe the gospel. God saves us. In the future, they'll be the gospel of the kingdom.

We'll be preached. They'll believe God's word, and they'll be saved by faith. Very important to remember that.

One final truth I'd like to go over with you this morning that means so much to me, and that's the second coming of Christ, the rapture, the rapture. Why is it? Well, first of all, it's the next event in God's timetable, isn't it? God has a timetable, and his trains always run on time. They never fail, and the next scheduled event is what we know as the rapture.

That rapture word, rapture, comes from a word meaning to catch away, to snatch away. Of course, rapture is used in another sense in the English language. My heart is filled with rapture.

Well, that's another use of the word, but when it's used of the coming of Christ, it means a catching away, a snatching away. And the Bible tells us that not only is the next event, but it may happen at any moment. And you know, what a motivation this is for people of all ages to be saved.

It may happen at any moment. In other words, a person might be young and have a good blood count, and have strong lungs, and be in the very prime of health, and yet he should be in a hurry to be saved because the rapture could take place. I mean, humanly speaking, the danger of him dying before midnight tonight is not very great.

You know, humanly speaking, most of you young people aren't worried about dying before midnight, but look, the Lord could come, couldn't he, before midnight. As far as the Bible is concerned, he could come at any moment. No one knows the time of his return.

It's amazing to me how many people, professed preachers, come out with dates for the coming of the Lord. Look, if the Bible says anything, it says we don't know when he's going to come. So, if you hear someone setting a date for the coming of the Lord, just forget it.

Just forget it. It isn't right. It isn't right.

And generally, you'll find that man to be a false prophet. That doesn't mean he's a wicked man, because some people set dates, really, in all good conscience before the Lord. They really want the Lord to come, and in their anxiety for him to come, they set dates.

It's foolish to do it. It's foolish to do it. And it brings dishonor on the name of the Lord, and on his word as well.

So, pay no attention if a book comes out and says that Jesus is coming in November 1994. What was it, Matt? Well, anyway, our friend on KEAR says 1994. What's going to happen at the time of the rapture? The Lord himself is going to descend from heaven.

I often think about that, don't you? You have the Lord Jesus coming down from heaven to take his blood-bought people home to be with himself. It never says he comes to the earth. He just comes to the air.

And there'll be three sounds to be heard at that time. You know what they are? Three sounds. The Lord himself is going to shout.

That'll be something. The archangel is going to speak. And God is going to sound a trumpet.

God is going to sound a trumpet. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. The voice of the archangel with the trumpet of God.

You say, what's the significance of all those things? Frankly, I don't know. The archangel is associated with Israel in the Old Testament, and some people think that the voice of the archangel summons those believing Jews from the Old Testament period to go home with the Lord. I don't know.

Well, that's wonderful to think of that. The Lord is coming, and you'll hear, if you're a believer, you'll hear these three sounds. I'm not sure you'll hear them if you're an unbeliever.

You might not be tuned in to the right frequency. The bodies of all true Christians who have died will be raised. Some will be raised from the ocean.

Some will be raised from the earth. Wherever their body was disposed of, they'll be raised. That's marvelous.

The graves are going to yield up their ancient charge. And they're going to be reunited with their spirits and souls. You see, those who have died in faith, their spirits and souls are in heaven right now.

So, if the Lord Jesus comes today, the spirits and souls of all believers are going to come with him, and their bodies are going to come, and they'll be reunited at the time of the rapture. In other words, they'll be complete personalities, spirit, soul, and body. But something else wonderful happens when the Lord Jesus comes, and that's that living believers are caught up from the earth.

And in that moment when they're caught up, they're changed. We shall be changed. What happens? A lot of wonderful changes take place.

We get our glorified bodies, just like the resurrection body of the Lord Jesus. What will that be like? Well, we don't know what it's going to be like. But there won't be any warts or wrinkles or birthmarks or anything like that.

And it'll be a body that will be sinless, you know. That's wonderful. We shall be changed.

I don't think any of us realizes today how much wonder is involved in those words. We shall be changed. It's something to really think about.

Well, those who've died in faith and the living believers will go up together. At perfect timing, you know. One won't have precedence over the other.

In other words, we might tend to think, well, we who are alive and remain of the coming of the Lord, we will precede those who've died. No, no. Paul says that's not going to happen.

We're all going to go up simultaneously to meet the Lord in the air. I often think of that when I go to a cemetery and think of all of the believers that have been buried down here at Chapel of the Chimes, quite a few of them, and how those graves will open, the bodies will rise and go to be with the Lord. And then they'll go back to the Father's house with Jesus where he's been preparing a place for them.

Isn't that what you read in John chapter 14? Let not your heart be troubled. If you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions.

If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Wonderful, isn't it? And I've often said, and I say again, if that much joy were poured into us now, our poor bodies would burst. We couldn't take it in. Couldn't take it in.

We have to have a changed body in order to do that. So we go back to the Father's house, believe it or not, and we're going to be forever with the Lord. Now, if you think that's marvelous, think about this.

It all takes place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. I mean, a lot of fast things take place in life, but nothing as fast as this. That's why some of us believe that the rapture will be secret.

The Bible doesn't use that word secret in describing the rapture, but some of us believe it will really be secret because, I mean, if it takes place, just blink your eye. It's all over. How would the world ever know anything about that? They wouldn't.

They'd have no way of knowing about that. And that's what the Bible says. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet shall sound, dead shall be raised incorruptible, we shall be changed.

But else, all unbelievers will be left behind here on the earth. This is really a time of separation. You might say the separation of the sheep and the goats, although that's not what it really is technically in the Bible.

It is like that, the separation of sheep and goats, a separation of the good fish and the bad fish. It's marvelous that that discrimination will take place at the coming of the Lord, that discernment will take place. The Lord knows who are here.

Those are the ones he takes up with him. And all believers are left behind on the earth. And you can just let your imagination run wild on that one.

How would you like to be left tomorrow on the earth with nobody but unbelievers? I'm sure I'd like that, wouldn't you? That'd be pretty horrible. I know some pretty gross unbelievers. And to spend time with them here on earth, I think I'd rather be in Santa Rita.

When you say, maybe I could be saved. If Christ came today and I was left behind, I could be saved tomorrow. I'm sorry, bad news, friends, bad news.

If a person has had a valid presentation of the gospel in this life, and Christ comes, he will not be able to be saved. You say, where do you get that? I get it in 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. And we might just turn to that. I think it's good for us to see it there.

It's very, very clear, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2. The Bible really doesn't mince words. This is the time, incidentally, when the Antichrist, after the rapture, the Antichrist appears in the scene. And it speaks about him in verse 8. It says, and then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of his mouth and destroy with the brightness of his coming.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan with all power, signs, and lying wonders. And with all unrighteous deception among those who perish. Notice, because they did not

receive the love of the truth that they might be saved.

Who's this talking about? Talking about people who lived before the rapture, and they did not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved. What's going to happen to them? Next verse. Move on.

And for this reason, God will send them strong delusion that they should believe the lie. What's the lie? The lie is that the Antichrist is God. What's the lie? The Antichrist comes in the place of Christ.

He's a false messiah. And this passage of scripture says that if you hear the gospel today, and you don't accept it, and Christ comes tonight, tomorrow, you'll believe the Antichrist is God. Or in the days ahead, you'll believe that the Antichrist is God.

Notice verse 12. That they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. That's the answer to the question.

Now, it's possible there are people today in the world who've never really had a bona fide presentation of the gospel. It's quite possible. And they can be saved.

They can be saved. Will the gospel be preached after Christ comes? Yes, the gospel will still be preached. After Christ comes.

And if they've never had a bona fide presentation of the gospel before that event, they will still be able to be saved. But if a person hears the gospel, knows what's involved, and has experienced the Spirit of God tugging at their hearts, and they know they should be saved, and yet they hold back and refuse to trust that if Christ comes, it's too late. We are living closer to the coming of the Lord than any other generation in the world's history.

Aren't we? The Thessalonians looked for the Lord to come in their day. They turned to God from idols to serve the true and living God and to wait for his Son from heaven. They were really looking for the Lord.

Well, we have a lot more reason to look for him today, don't we? And when we see the way things are going in the world, certainly our hearts beat just a little faster. Because there are so many events and conditions in the world that make us think that his coming is near. Of course, the greatest is what's happening in the nation of Israel.

It's the greatest event that makes us think that the coming of the Lord is near. The very fact that Israel exists as a nation today, that's important. But I see other things.

I can see how the world is being conditioned for the tribulation period. Things that would have shocked you out of your wits years ago don't bother you at all today. Would you believe when I was a boy, the newspapers wouldn't print a picture of a dead body? They wouldn't.

That was considered a no-no. That was too shocking. Most people today are shock-proof, aren't they? And your television is a constant parade of violence, immorality.

I can't believe it. I can't believe what's going on today. The sudden decline in moral conditions in our country.

There are words that are used today, every day in the newspapers. And they were words that when I was a kid, you just didn't mention them in polite society. Having to do with immorality.

You didn't say that word. Say it today, I don't think anything about it. So I really believe that the devil is working over time today to condition people so that when the rapture takes place, they won't think too much about it.

They won't think too much about it. It'll be hardened. We can do it.

That's what some of the people in San Francisco said after the earthquake. We want the world to know that we can handle it. That type of attitude.

Almost a defiance of God. And I think of this when I think of the coming of the Lord. How emotionally and mentally and morally people are ready for what follows.

Now, I think it's good to mention to people that when we talk about the rapture, we're not talking about the end of the world. A lot of people confuse that. You know, even the newspapers speak about the coming of Christ.

I read it in the magazines, even secular magazines. But when they use the expression, they're thinking of the end of the world. The coming of Christ, the rapture is not the end of the world.

And I think most people here would be aware of that. It will be followed, first of all, by seven years of trouble upon the earth. Seven years of trouble upon the earth.

And it's during these seven years that the Antichrist appears. Who's he going to be? He could be in the world right now, for all we know. I personally think he's going to be a Jew.

Because I think he'll have to have fake credentials linking him with David. I don't think the Jewish people would ever accept a Messiah who wasn't descended from David. And I don't think this man will really be descended from him.

I think he'll have a fake genealogy showing that he's descended from David. The Antichrist. He'll arise during the Tribulation period.

The last half of the Tribulation period, the last three and a half years, are known as the Great Tribulation. The worst time of trouble the world has ever known or will ever know. And it's during this time that the Battle of Armageddon takes place.

And then, of course, at the end of the Tribulation, the Lord Jesus returns to earth and he, what's the first thing he does? He destroys his enemies. He destroys his enemies. They'll need a bigger museum for the Holocaust in those days, don't they? He's going to destroy, put down all insubordination.

And then he's going to reign over the earth for a thousand years. A millennium. The kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ here on earth.

And at the end of his kingdom, the heavens and earth are going to be destroyed by fire and new heavens and new earth will be set. And that's when the judgment of the wicked dead takes place. It's described in the Bible as the judgment of the great white throne.

Just think of that. Every unbeliever down through the history of the ages will stand before the Lord at that day. And he's going to open a book and he's going to look, see if their name is written in the book, called the Book of Life.

And if their name isn't found there, and it won't be, they're going to be sent to the Lake of Fire. That's the end of the wicked dead. Because their names are not found written in the Book of Life, they will be pronounced guilty.

How do you get your name in the Book of Life? Custody and saving. It all comes back to that, doesn't it? It all comes back to the gospel of the grace of God. The coming of Christ is a very precious truth to those who know and love the Lord.

But it should strike terror into the hearts of those who are not saved. So we pray. I think this morning we should pray for our president, vice president, our governmental authority.

Pray for our police in view of what's happened here in the past week in Hayward and for Tom and Angelo in a special way. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the wonderful way in which you take us aside and you reveal your whole plan for the human race with us.

We thank you most of all today that many of us have just accepted the Savior as our Lord and Savior and we've received eternal life as a result. We pray for those who are still outside of Christ that they will think seriously about it and make their election and calling sure. We do pray for our president today and for the vice president, for the Supreme Court and for the Congress, the Senate, for all of those who are in authority over us, for our governor and local authorities as well.

Lord, in this day of increasing darkness, how much they need you. We pray that many of them might turn to you in their desperation and trust you. We pray for the police force too.

We think of incidents here recently and we just ask your special watch care over Angelo and Tom that you'll keep them in the hollow of your hand and that it might be manifest that they belong to you by your guardian care of them. But we pray for all the police too, even if they do not know you, that you will watch over them.

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