

Wonders of Creation Redemption - Part 5

by William MacDonald

The sermon emphasizes the importance of willing sacrifice and trust in God's provision, and encourages listeners to surrender their lives to Him daily.

Duration: 45:34

Scripture: Genesis 22:1-14, Exodus 3:11, Exodus 4:10, Jeremiah 1:6, Luke 9:62, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 12:1-2

Topics: "Redemption"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the struggle for existence that many people face in their lives. He emphasizes that our lives should be focused on eternity rather than being consumed by worldly pursuits. The speaker highlights the importance of offering our lives to Jesus as a reasonable response to His amazing love and sacrifice. He also emphasizes that if Jesus is truly Lord, then He deserves our complete surrender and obedience. The sermon concludes with a reminder to seek God's will each day and find peace and purpose in knowing that everything that happens is part of God's plan.

Transcript

Thundering waters left down here, I looked at it, and it seems very lonely. And the price has been reduced to \$3.99. If that doesn't do it, aren't it, I don't know what will. This being my last meeting, I'd certainly like to express my thanks to all who have worked so diligently in connection with this conference, I realize how much work it takes behind the scenes, people serving the Lord, without any acknowledgment at all.

But he is a good record keeper, and everything done is unto him will be rewarded. This morning I'd like to speak to you on the subject, which is willing sacrifice or squirming sacrifice. Willing sacrifice or squirming sacrifice.

Would you turn, first of all, please, to Genesis chapter 22. Genesis 22. Familiar passage to all of us.

Genesis 22, verse 1. Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham and said to him, Abraham, and he said, here I am. And he said, take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you. So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey and took two of his young men with him and Isaac, his son, and he split the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

Then on the third day, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar off and Abraham said to his young men, stay here with the donkey. The lad and I will go yonder and worship and we will come back to you. So Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac, his son, and he took the fire in his hand and a knife and the two of them went together.

But Isaac spoke to Abraham, his father, and said, my father, and he said, here I am, my son. And he said, look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? Abraham said, my son, God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering. The two of them went together.

Then they came to the place of which God had told him and Abraham built an altar there and placed the wood in order and he bound Isaac, his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. The angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham.

And he said, here I am. He said, do not lay your hand on the lamb or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son.

Of course, when we read a passage of scripture like this, we think of the amazing faith of this man, Abraham. But think of Isaac for a minute. Isaac was about 25 years old at this time.

And he could have overpowered the old man easily. And yet he allowed God to bind him with a rope and to lift him up and place him gleaming in the light. The knife was ready to turn over to Hebrews chapter 12.

Someone there that day, standing right near the altar, it wasn't Abraham, but the angel of the Lord in a pre-incarnate appearance. Since we're surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight of the sin which so easily ensnares us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endures across. The sacrifice of Isaac was pointing forward.

That's willing sacrifice. Now, let me just read you some verses rather than turn to them on the other side. Exodus chapter 3, verse 11.

Moses said to God, Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? Exodus 4.10. Then Moses said to the Lord, Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since you have spoken to your servant, but I'm slow of speech and slow of tongue, squirming. Jeremiah 1.6. Jeremiah is speaking. Then said I, Ah, Lord God, behold, I cannot speak, for I am a youth squirming.

Let me just read one more verse. Luke 9, verse 62. Jesus said to him, No one having put his hand to the plow.

C.S. Lewis said that when the Lord brought him in, he brought him in kicking and screaming. The most reluctant convert in all of England. And many of us can identify with that.

Many of us can understand exactly what he meant by that, because that was our experience as well. For years we had gone astray like sheep who wanted nothing more than our own way. Stomping our feet, we shouted defiantly, we will not have this man to reign over us.

We were determined that no one was going to direct our lives or interfere with our plans and ambitions. We didn't desire God or a knowledge of his ways. We were only happy when we could forget God, but

only sad when we remembered him.

We wanted pleasure, and we were convinced that God didn't want us to have it. We looked on God as the cosmic spoiled sport, and we wanted the approval of our relatives and friends more than the approval of God. We wanted self to be on the throne.

We looked upon the Lord as a meddling. And gradually our peace was shattered. It must have been that someone was praying for us.

Without any desire on our part, we began to meet Christians who wouldn't mind their own business. And they insisted on talking to us about God, and about Jesus, and about heaven, and about hell, and about sin, and salvation. And it didn't matter whether we were at work, or whether we were in a shopping mall, it seemed we were coming face to face with Jesus Christ everywhere.

We'd turn on the radio at random, and then we'd hear it again. Somebody would pass us a track, or we would see Jesus saved printed on a rock by the side of the road. Some mention of God, or heaven, or hell, everywhere we turned.

It seemed that religion was everywhere. It was as ubiquitous as a telephone booth. And then open warfare erupted.

And we could say with Major Andre, against the God who built the sky, I fought with hands uplifted high. Despite the mention of his grace, too proud to seek a hiding place. We asked him to leave us alone.

Like Saul of Tarsus, we were kicking against the goads. In one sense, we were fighting against the Lord. In another sense, we were running away from him.

It didn't make sense. In our insanity, we were trying to flee from the God who is everywhere. Everywhere at once, at the same time.

I think F. W. H. Myers captured our predicament in his wonderful poem, The Pound of Heaven. Some of the words he uses are rather poetic or literary, but I'll try to translate it afterwards. He says, I fled him down the nights and down the days.

I fled him down the arches of the years. I fled him down the labyrinths and ways of my own mind. And in the midst of tears, I fled from him.

And under running laughter, up thisted hopes, I sped and shot, precipitated. A downed titanic blooms of chasmed fears from those strong feet that followed, followed after, but with unhurried chase and unperturbed pace, deliberate speed, majestic instancy they beat, and a voice beat more instant than the feet. All things betray thee who betrayest me.

And of course, the picture is of this man running breathlessly from God. He's running over the mountains and he's running down into the valleys and he's running across the plains and his heart is pounding under the terrific pressure of this chase, and God is following with just steady steps the hound of heaven, unperturbed and saying, you betray me. It was all so irrational.

We were fighting against our own best interests. We thought the Savior wanted to rob us of pleasure. In one sense, God is the greatest pleasure lover of all.

We were looking for it in the wrong place. The Lord was trying to tell us in his presence his fullness of joy, and in his right hand there are pleasures forevermore. He only wanted us to enjoy true pleasure.

We thought that his will was bad and undesirable and horrible, and actually it was good. He wanted to save us from the sins that were dragging us down to hell. He wanted to give us eternal life as a free gift.

He didn't come to steal and kill and destroy. He came to give us life, and we were running from him and we were fighting. He stood at our heart's door in sunshine and rain and patiently waited an entrance to gain.

What shame that so long he entreated in vain. I never think of that without thinking of that painting in St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Christ standing at the door.

Hoffman. Christ standing at the door. And there he is.

The door is overgrown with ivy, and there's only one handle, but it's on the inside. And how much that picture tells. I often think of a story Ernie Tatum told me years ago.

At one time he had a broadcast in Canada. I think it was called Young Canada Bible Hour, something like that. And he was broadcasting the gospel for young people, boys and girls in Canada.

And it was a face work. He was just looking to the Lord to provide the needs of the broadcast. And one night they were getting ready to go to bed and the telephone rang.

And there was a lady on the phone. They didn't know her. And Brother Tatum, she said, I'm down here at the railroad station.

You don't know what a blessing it is in my life. And no matter what he did to discourage her, she came and she greeted them. She came in briefly, had a very brief.

When she was leaving, she pressed an envelope into Ernie's hand. And that's a picture of us, isn't it? That's a picture of us. The Lord wanted him to come in.

And here we're squirming, and we don't want him to come in. And we leave him standing outside the heart's door. And we don't use any other friend.

Doorbells are interesting things, aren't they? They excite your curiosity right away. They ring and you rush to the door to see who's there. But not so with the Lord Jesus.

And so we raced around trying to find pleasure here and there. And he was offering us water, which if we drank of it, we would never thirst again. All the pleasures of this life left us thirsty.

We were drinking at broken cisterns. And as we stooped to drink, they fled. The water fled and mocked us as we wailed.

What it really boiled down to was that we wanted our sins more than we wanted Christ. It was a definite choice to be made there, and we knew what we wanted. And of course then there was a matter of our church, the church we belonged to, and the thought of leaving that church and what friends think if we trusted Christ as Savior.

Or maybe I should be more blunt and just say frankly, we were ashamed of Jesus. Ashamed of Jesus. Can it be a mortal man ashamed of thee, ashamed of thee, whom angels praise, whose glory shines through endless days? That's exactly... There were moments when we actually weakened.

When we thought, well, maybe we should. Maybe I should trust the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe I should accept him as my Savior.

After all, we had everything to gain and nothing to lose by doing that. But then our friends' faces would rise up. What would the fellow students back at high school... We could hear their snide remarks.

We could hear their jesting. We could see the looks on their faces and just the thought of it sent chills down our spine. We could never bear to listen to their belittling remarks.

But by this time, conviction of sin was deepening in our lives. Day and night, God's hand was heavy upon us. Our moisture was turned into the drought of summer, as David said.

And if we tried to plead our basic goodness and the fact that we really had never done a lot of the more sordid sins of the flesh, the Spirit of God would come to us and reveal our inner life to us. He'd reveal our thoughts and he would show us that what we were inside was a lot worse than anything we had ever done. That was a terrible revelation.

That really troubled our spirits. And when we should have been sleeping, we were wide awake. Profanity to us.

It was terrible. But you know, with hypocritical skill, we tried to hide it from our relatives and friends. We didn't want anybody to know what we were going through at that particular... what good actors we were.

Squirming, squirming, squirming. And yet we were just... Although it didn't show in the... And confusion. We were a tangled mass of contradictions.

Like Lewis. C.S. Lewis again. We felt the steady, unrelenting approach of him whom we so earnestly desired not.

Steady, unrelenting approach of him whom we so earnestly desired. Then at last came the day of... We faced the glorious victor, Prince Divine. And we held out our hand to shake his hand and he said... And we knew it had to be unconditional.

And we said, Nay, but I yield. I can hold out no more. I think by dying love compelled and owned.

Actually it happened in a meeting when the Christians were singing Charlotte Elliott. Just as I am without one plea, that thy blood was shed for me, that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God. Just as I am in waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot, to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God.

Just as I am though tossed about with many a conflict, many a doubt, fightings within and fears without, O Lamb of God. Just as I am poor, wretched, blind, sight, riches, healing of the mind, yet all I need in thee to find, O Lamb of God. Just as I am thou wilt receive, will welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve, because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God.

Just as I am thy love unknown has broken every barrier down. Now to be thine and thine alone the chase was over. The hound of heaven had caught up with us and we lay panting at the foot of the cross, weak

and helpless.

And it no longer mattered what our friends thought of us, only what God thought of us. And in that moment it dawned on us that our enemy and pursuer was actually our very best friend. And our fears had been groundless and in fighting against him and in running away from him we had only been afraid.

What a wonderful change. The war was over and now we had peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. We were now on the winner's side.

And those irritating Christians who wouldn't mind their own business, all of a sudden they're the excellence of the earth in whom we found all the wonders of God and redemption. If I could quote Lewis just once more, he said, Who can duly adore that love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape. That's beautiful.

Who can really adore a love that will take a person like that, struggling and looking every way for an escape route and bring him in. But you know, although there was peace, although there was peace, another battle had just begun. We had trusted the Lord for the eternal salvation of our souls.

Now we face another question. Would we surrender our lives to him? We had accepted him as savior from sin. But would we accept him as Lord of our lives? Could we trust him to manage our lives down here? And once more, our stubborn will shifted into high gear.

We knew what we should do, but we weren't prepared to do it. We knew that divine logic pointed to full surrender, but that might interfere with what we had planned. An idyllic marriage, good-looking children, a profession or an occupation that would yield a good income, a reputation for success in the community, a better than average house in the suburbs with hot and cold folding doors, comfort, security, pleasure, and oh yes, some time to serve the Lord.

To all appearances, the world was our oyster. Everything was going our way and our relatives clucked as they thought of how successful we were. What they didn't know was that there was a churning going on inside of us.

In a very real sense, we felt we were spinning our wheels. A lot of activity and no progress. Most of our lives just spent in a struggle for existence, thinking more of time than of eternity.

And there was a deep disquiet in our hearts. We felt we were chasing shadows and under the surface we were struggling with some of the great facts of the Christian. We were struggling with this fact that the offering of our lives to the Lord Jesus is the only reasonable response we could make to a love so amazing.

If the Son of God died for us, the least we could do would be to turn our lives. When we heard him say this is my body given for you, the only proper response we could make would be if Jesus Christ is Lord, we struggled with this fact. If Jesus Christ is Lord, then he has a right to all.

And he is Lord. We struggled with this fact. If the Lord Jesus purchased us at Calvary, and he did, at an enormous price, may I just pause to say the price he paid was too much.

We weren't worth it. And yet he paid that enormous price for us at the cross. If he did that, and if I take my life and use it the way I want to use it, private ownership makes us thieves.

We're taking something that doesn't... We struggled with this fact. If I can stake my eternal salvation on his word, why can't I trust him to guide my life down here? And this tremendous struggle was going on in our lives. We were squirming sacrifice.

We were afraid. Certainly it couldn't be as glamorous and scintillating as the career we had carved out. We were afraid that his will might imperil our security.

He might ask us to live by faith with no visible means of support. We might be on welfare. We might.

And then of course we were afraid that it might mean the mission field. We often prayed that he would send others to the mission field, but never ourselves. The mission field meant snakes, spiders.

It meant giving up the comforts of home. It might even mean dying in a foreign land. And then we were afraid of the unknown.

Our imaginations ran wild. We conjured up scenarios that represented fear, not faith. And we dueled with God.

It never dawned on us that the Lord could have options for us that we didn't know anything about. That he could have a wonderful life for us that we couldn't have thought of in a million years. Options in which we could find fulfillment.

Options which would make us deliriously happy. Finally we realized the folly of it all and the Holy Spirit removed the blinders from our eyes. And we saw that the God of infinite love wants nothing but the very best for his people.

We tumbled to the fact that his will is good and acceptable and perfect. And we did something that we had never done before. We got down on our knees and we said, Lord Jesus, I have already accepted you as my Savior.

I'll go anywhere. I'll do anything. I'll say anything.

We thought of the words of C.T. Studdard and died for me. And when the time came that we gave him our lives, we gave him what we couldn't keep anyway. Poor is our sacrifice.

We offer what we cannot keep. How could we do less than give him our best and live for him completely? But as time went on, we learned another painful lesson. We learned, yes, we had laid our bodies on the altar of sacrifice, just like Isaac there on that altar in the land of Jenoa.

We went back the next day and the wretched thing was crawling off the altar. We began to have second thoughts about it. And we learned that that crisis of commitment had to be followed by a process of commitment.

And we learned that every day of our lives we had to come before the Lord and bow before him and say, Lord Jesus, I rededicate myself to you for the next 24 hours. We came to him every morning for an exchange of wills. And we began, on a daily basis, to kneel on our beds and say what Bishop Taylor Smith said.

Every morning of his life, that dear man of God got down on his knees by his bed and he said, Lord Jesus, my bed... If you don't take any other notes in this whole conference, but that my bed... We realized that we had to come with that wreathing sacrifice crawling off the altar. We had to come to him every morning for an exchange of wills. As Anne Grannis so vividly describes it in her little poem, she says, I want my life so cleared of stealth that my dear Lord may come and set up his own furnishing.

And since I know what this requires, each morning while it's still, I slip into that secret place and leave with him. He always takes it graciously presenting me with his in any task there is. Get on your knees.

And then as we did this, we realized a peace in our lives and we found a real reason for our existence. We were humbly conscious that God was working in us, but humbly conscious, and that he was working with us and that when our lives touched other lives, something happened. And we went through the next 20... And looking back, we realize how Theodore Monod captured the story of our squirming sacrifice in his lovely poem.

He said, Oh, the bitter shame and sorrow that a time could ever be when I let the Savior's pity plead in vain and proudly answered, all of self. Yet he found me. I beheld him bleeding on the cursed tree, heard him pray, forgive them, Father.

And my wistful heart said faintly, some of self and some of thee. Day by day his tender mercy, healing, helping, full and free, sweet and strong and ah, so patient, brought me lower while I whispered, Lord, less of self, higher than the highest heavens, deeper than the deepest sea, Lord, thy love at last grant me now my soul's petition, none of self. I wonder where we are today in this little scenario.

I wonder if there's someone here who's still fighting against God as far as the salvation of his soul. Still running away from God and the hound of heaven coming and following with unperturbed pace saying, you betray me, the conqueror. I wonder if there's someone here in the conference today and this other struggle is going on.

You have turned your life over to the Lord for salvation. He is your Savior and you're sure of eternal salvation through faith in him. But you can trust him to save your soul for all eternity but you don't dare turn your life over.

And he's saying, look, I would make reason dizzy if I were you. Maybe there's somebody here and you're a believer and you've just settled down into a rut and you don't daily rededicate your life to the Lord. You don't come daily to him for an exchange of will.

A willing sacrifice while we stand before the Lord. Jesus Christ be God and thine. Let me just close with this short little verse.

Jesus, Lord and Master, love divine has conquered. I will henceforth answer, yes, free from Satan's bondage. I am thine forever.

If the Lord is speaking to some heart here today and you'd like to talk to us afterwards, do feel free to make it known. We can't read your mind but we'd love to be able to sit down and talk with you and perhaps even pray with you. Lord, we think of the folly of our hearts how too long we ran away from you, fought against you, despised the mention of your grace.

Too proud to seek a hiding place. Forgive us. Thank you for each one here at the conference who knows you as Savior.

We think of the struggle that goes on in our lives even after salvation. How you struggle with us. You want us to turn over control of our lives to you.

And we squirm on the altar to an end that we might indeed bind the sacrifice. That we might live in a state of continuous revival with you at the helm. Now we're going to be parting and we pray that you'll go with us and pray that the fragrance of your word will go with us and the impact of the word of God of peace who brought again from the dead the Lord Jesus.

That great shepherd through the blood of the... to do his will. Working in you that which is well pleasing in sight through Jesus Christ.

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