

# Expository Preaching Outlines

## *Volume Six*

**Stephen F. Olford**

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version of the Bible

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# Introduction

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“The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

( 2 Timothy 2:2 )

The sermon outlines that follow are my response to this apostolic injunction. This divine principle of preserving and transmitting “the whole counsel of God” ( Acts 20:27 ) is part of the total ministry of every true preacher/pastor. It behooves him to pass on to others what has been tested and tempered in the fires of biblical preaching. Paul could say to the Ephesian elders, as he gave his last farewell, “I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you” ( Acts 20:20 ).

I have to confess that for years my sermon outlines were personal and precious to me. This was my private treasure of biblical expositions which were only made public from the pulpits I served in the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. Needless to say, much of what I preached was captured in notebooks, tape recordings, and fertile memories! But several providential happenings changed all this.

First, **there was the biblical mandate** —“Teach others also” ( 2 Tim. 2:2 ). This was an inescapable challenge. I was besieged by preachers from all over the world to establish what is now known as the Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching in Memphis, Tennessee.<sup>Intro-1</sup> Our stated purpose is “to equip and encourage pastors in expository preaching and exemplary living, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the end that the Church will be revived and the world will be reached with the saving Word of Christ.” We are an “oasis” for parched and pressured preachers and lay leaders who long for “times of refreshing ... from the presence of the Lord” ( Acts 3:19 ), along with practical teaching and training in the skills of anointed expository preaching. What God has accomplished through transformed lives and ministries has more than confirmed the biblical mandate.

Secondly, **there was the practical material** —“The things ... you have heard ... commit ... to faithful men” ( 2 Tim. 2:2 ). I have long put to rest the misguided notions that everyone must be original. Sure, God never makes duplicates; He only makes originals. But God is God. You and I have to depend upon the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, and the holy saints! And even though we urge every preacher to “be diligent to present [himself] approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” ( 2 Tim. 2:15 ), most men with high formal training, as well as the bi-vocational preacher, welcome help both in exegesis and the exposition of God’s Word. Anyone who has a library can pull down a commentary and follow a scholar’s exegesis of a text; but that is a far cry from expounding the emerging truth and setting it out in homiletical “preaching form.” Indeed, years of intensive training and listening have proved this to the hilt.

No one brought this to my notice with such succinctness as the scholarly Dr. Charles Ryrie. I was in his study in Dallas a number of years ago. At the time I was the senior minister of Calvary Baptist Church in New York City. We were engaged in profitable “preacher talk” when I espied a newly-bound book on his shelf that looked rather familiar! I pulled it out and opened it—and what do you know? It was a bound copy of my expository outlines sent him by my secretary week by week over a period of several years! Of course, I was humbled, and expressed my surprise. “Stephen,” he said, “that is the most valuable help you can give a pastor. In these weekly outlines that appear in your Sunday bulletin you provide the bridge between exegesis and exposition. Keep on doing it.” I needed no better commendation!

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Intro-1 The Stephen Olford Center for Biblical Preaching houses the international headquarters of Encounter Ministries, Inc., P. O. Box 757800, Memphis, TN. 38175–7800. Telephone: (901/757–7977); FAX: (901/757–1372); (E-mail): [olford@memphisonline.com](mailto:olford@memphisonline.com) .

So I offer these sermonic outlines with the prayer that God will enable you to **adopt** and then to **adapt** them to your style of preaching, under the anointing of the Spirit of God. If the blood, sweat and tears that have gone into these preaching outlines cause you to become a true expositor of God's Word, I shall be more than satisfied, and I know that God will be glorified.

Stephen F. Olford

## Bibliography

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**Philip Brooks**, *Lectures on Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House). The first chapter of this book is worth its weight in gold. It deals with the concept of truth through personality, or what I like to term "incarnational preaching."

**Charles W. Koller**, *Expository Preaching Without Notes* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House). In my judgment, this is the best work on expository preaching by an American scholar. It is only 129 pages, but packed full of helpful material.

**D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones**, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House). While this is not a dissertation on expository preaching, as such, it is a "must" for any man who aspires to be the mouthpiece of God. Lloyd-Jones holds the view that preaching is "the highest and greatest and most glorious calling." You will never be the same after reading this book.

**G. Campbell Morgan**, *Preaching* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Co.). A brief, but beautiful, treatment of the essential elements of expository preaching.

**Haddon W. Robinson**, *Biblical Preaching, the Development and Delivery of Expository Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House). Biblical in its premise, practical in its purpose, and motivational in its power, it distills what older masters of preaching have said while adding dimensions of restatement and relevance that are both challenging and contemporary. *I warmly* commend it.

**C. H. Spurgeon**, *Lectures to My Students* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House). An incomparable book on the subject of preaching. You ought to read it at least once a year.

**James S. Stewart**, *Heralds of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House).

**John R. W. Stott**, *The Preacher's Portrait* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmann). In his inimitable style John Stott takes a fresh look at some of the words employed in the New Testament to describe the preacher and his task. It is another "must" in your reading.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. Here is a fresh look at the art and aim of preaching. It is biblical in its background and burden, practical in its realism and relevance, and spiritual in its truth and thrust. I recommend it.

**Douglas M. White**, *The Excellence of Exposition* (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc.). In my introduction to this book I say that preachers will find something in these pages to guide, guard and gladden them in their great task of heralding the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**Faris D. Whitesell**, *Power in Expository Preaching* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Co.). This is another biblical approach to expository preaching and has a fine bibliography on many other books that you may wish to secure.

**A. Skevington Wood**, *The Art of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House). Wise words from a scholar and master.

## For Further Reading and Research

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**Unger, Merrill F.**, *Principles of Expository Preaching*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Webber, F.R., *A History of Preaching in Britain and America*, 3 vol., Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee, Wis.

Wiersbe, Warren, *Walking with the Giants*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Listening to the Giants*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Mich.

\_\_\_\_\_ and Perry, Lloyd M., *The Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching and Preachers*, Moody Press, Chicago, Ill.

# Overview of Sermon Outlines for Volume 6

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Volume 6 is a treasure of truth for pastors and laymen alike. The subjects and series provide variety and vitality for morning worship, evening witness, Bible class sessions, and even personal study.

In the first quarter the emphasis is on Christ and His cross. In brief, it is a study in Christology.

The second quarter continues the theme of Christ, but accents a course on “the blessed hope” of the believer.

The third quarter deals with problems that all men and women face and God’s answer to them through His Word. This is followed by four messages on “Truth for Youth.”

The last quarter offers six studies from the life of David entitled “God’s Man,” and then wraps up the year on “The Christ of Christmas.”

It is Jesus first and Jesus last! We open and close the year with Him as the center and content of our preaching. So, once more, “Preach the word!... Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” and God bless you!

This is precisely what we have sought to do in these expository outlines. So “Preach the word! ... Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry” and God bless you!

## *Note:*

The outline on the following pages provides an overview of your sermon and may be reproduced and inserted in your church bulletin. The members of your congregation will profit from having it in front of them as you preach and may take it home with them for reference during the week.

Hearing your sermon and reading this outline will reinforce the content of your message in the minds and lives of your congregation.

## Abbreviations

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The following is a list of abbreviations used throughout this volume in the Bibliographies:

CC	Cornerstone Commentaries
CCL	Classic Commentary Library
EB	Expositor’s Bible. 1888–1905. Reprinted—Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1943.
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957–1974

# First Quarter

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### \* NEW YEAR'S SUNDAY

Henceforth Unto Him 2 Corinthians 5:14–21

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Christ Our Mind Isaiah 26:1–4  
Christ Our Prize Hebrews 12:1–4  
Christ Our Strength Isaiah 40:25–31  
Christ Our Lord Colossians 1:9–18

### \* SPIRITUAL SECRETS

The Secret of Tragedy 2 Kings 6:1–7  
The Secret of Misery 2 Kings 4:38–41  
The Secret of Energy 2 Kings 4:1–7  
The Secret of Victory 2 Kings 6:8–18

### THE CROSS OF CHRIST

The Centrality of the Cross 1 Peter 2:13–25  
The Claims of the Cross Matthew 27:27–32  
The Crime of the Cross Mark 15:1–15  
The Christ of the Cross Isaiah 53:1–12

## One Sermon

### ONE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** NEW YEAR'S SUNDAY

**SUBJECT:** Henceforth Unto Him

**READING:** 2 Corinthians 5:14–21

**TEXT:** "... He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again" ( 5:15 ).

### Introduction

What a text for a new year! When Paul wrote these words he was thinking back to that moment in his life when old things passed away and all things became new. This experience was so revolutionary that he employs unusual language to describe this spiritual transformation. As we study the context we discover that the expression “Henceforth Unto Him” implies:

- I. The Termination of the Self-Life ( 5:14–15 )
  1. The Extinguishing of the Old Self( 5:14 )
  2. The Relinquishing of the New Self ( 5:15 )
- II. The Introduction of the Faith-Life ( 5:16–17 )
  1. The Faith-Life Accepts a New Conception of Man ( 5:16 )
  2. The Faith-Life Accepts a New Creation of Man ( 5:17 )
- III. The Operation of the Christ-Life ( 5:19–21 )
  1. There is a World to Reach ( 5:19 )
  2. There is a Word to Preach ( 5:19–20 )

## Conclusion

What a motto to motivate our living and serving. May God grant us, each one, to say and to live from this moment and forever “Henceforth Unto Him.”

## ONE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** NEW YEAR’S SUNDAY

**SUBJECT:** Henceforth Unto Him

**READING:** [2 Corinthians 5:14–21](#)

**TEXT:** “For the love of Christ constrains us, because ... if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” ( [5:14–15](#) ).

## Introduction

What a text for a new year! When Paul wrote these words he was thinking back to that moment in his life when old things passed away and all things became new. This experience was so revolutionary that he employs unusual language to describe this spiritual transformation. As we study the context we discover that the expression “Henceforth unto Him” implies:

### I. The Termination of the Self-Life

“For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” ( [5:14–15](#) ). The meaning of that word “constrains” is both powerful and precious. The Greek denotes the thought of being “confined within the limits of a certain course of action which never deviates from one set

purpose.” This is how the love of God motivated and actuated the Lord Jesus. He could say, “... I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I *straitened* till it be accomplished? ( Luke 12:50 , KJV ). This is our word. For Him, it meant the path of the cross, even unto death, that He might be raised to the glory of God the Father.

In like manner, this is how Paul interprets this word. Compelled and impelled by the love of Christ, there had to be:

### 1) The Extinguishing of the Old Self.

He says, “we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died” ( 5:14 ). When Paul viewed Calvary he saw Christ not only representing his sin, but also his old self-life. This is why he could say, “I have been crucified with Christ ...” ( Gal. 2:20 ).

This is one of the greatest discoveries we can make. When Jesus died at Calvary He not only died for us, but we died with Him. This means the termination of the self-life. Any attempt on our part to return to that life is a repudiation of our union with Christ in death. Indeed, it is an insult to the very Christ who died that we might be saved from our old corrupt nature.

#### 1. Illustrate

### 2) The Relinquishing of the New Self

“He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them and rose again” ( 5:15 ). When Paul declares “I have been crucified with Christ” he does not end it there but goes on to say, “it is no longer I who live, but *Christ lives in me*; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” ( Gal. 2:20 ). While the old self—which represented his past life—was extinguished at Calvary, the new self—which represented his redeemed personality—had to be yielded to Christ in order to complete his response to the constraining love of Christ.

Even though we have been crucified with Christ we still possess our individual personalities. Calvary does not obliterate the real “you” and “me.” Having been delivered from our old selves, the question arises as to what we are going to do with our new selves? Paul gives the answer in the passage before us. He says, “... those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” ( 5:15 ); in other words, *Henceforth Unto Him*. We cannot kneel before the cross and recognize the wonder of the self-giving of the Lord Jesus without exclaiming:

*Love so amazing, so divine,*

*Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

John Calvin, the great theologian and reformer, came to this point in his life when he looked into the face of his Master and cried, “Lord, I give Thee everything; I keep back nothing for myself.” “Relinquishing implies a giving up of something desirable and connotes compulsion or force of necessity” ( *Webster’s New World Dictionary* , 1951).

## II. The Introduction of the Faith-Life

“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” ( 5:16–17 ). Paul shows in these

two verses how his determination to live for Christ, rather than self, found expression in a faith-life. The judgment he had formed concerning the death and resurrection of Christ had effected such a transformation in his outlook that his view of man had totally changed.

Paul's experience can take place in our lives, for in these words of the apostle we learn that:

### **1) The Faith-Life Accepts a New Conception of Man**

“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh ...” ( 5:16 ). To be united to Christ through His death and resurrection is to gain new standards of judgment and new ways of looking at things. Paul had ceased to judge men by outward appearances and circumstances of life, such as color, wealth, rank, culture, or knowledge. The one question that mattered to him was whether man, by his own act and choice, had become a new creation through the death and resurrection of Christ.

To strengthen his argument, Paul affirmed that even his judgment of *Christ* had been totally altered by his understanding of what had happened at Calvary. Before, Jesus was nothing more to Paul than a man who was born in obscurity, lived in restricted surroundings, and died a humiliating death; in fact, because of this evaluation of Jesus, he dismissed Him as an imposter and persecuted His followers. But after Saul's conversion on the Damascus road, ail was changed. Jesus was now the Redeemer of all men for “... He [had] died for all ...” ( 5:15 ). From now on all men were equal—irrespective of color, class, or creed. Without distinction, all men needed a Savior; therefore, all men must be included in his redemptive concern.

### **2) The Faith-Life Accepts a New Creation of Man**

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” ( 5:17 ). Here the apostle reaches a climax. The regenerating experience that had taken place in his life could take place in others. God had prophesied through His servant, Isaiah, that a day would dawn when men and women would become new creations in Christ Jesus. Isaiah 43:18–21 reads: “Do not remember the former things, Nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing.... This people I have formed for Myself; They shall declare My praise.” So in the words of Professor R. V. G. Tasker it is true to say: “Each man regenerated by the Spirit of God is a new creation, and a world in which such new creations exist is potentially at least a new world” ( *2 Corinthians* [ *TNTC* ], p. 88). In this new world there are no personal discriminations or racial tensions, for we are “... all one in Christ Jesus” ( Gal. 3:28 ). No thoughtful man or woman can understand this truth in our contemporary world and not be persuaded by the relevance and validity of our gospel. This is the essence of our Christian faith—a faith that accepts a new conception of man and a new creation of man because Jesus Christ has made all things new.

## **2. Illustrate**

### **III. The Operation of the Christ-Life**

“... all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” ( 5:18 ; see also vv. 19–21 ). When a person has experienced the termination of the self-life and the introduction of the faith-life, Christ becomes central in all his actions and conduct. The phrase that sums up the supreme operation of any Christian is what Paul terms here “the ministry of reconciliation” ( 5:18 ). This is the purpose for which the Lord Jesus came into the world. From the cradle to the cross, and from the cross to the crown, He was (and is) concerned with one great operation: *reconciliation*. Very simply, this involves two things:

#### **1) There is a World to Reach**

“... *God was* in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” ( 5:19 ). Here are word which cause us to pause in “wonder, love, and praise.” No one can finally interpret them since they relate to “the ultimate paradox of the atonement.” We just have to believe that when the Lord Jesus hung upon that cross “... *God was* in Christ reconciling the word to Himself ...” ( 5:19 ). For this to happen, the Lord Jesus, who knew no sin, had to be made sin for us, “... that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” ( 5:21 ). From the divine perspective, God did everything to break down the enmity and hostility of sin which separated man from God. But you and I also play a role in this ministry of reconciliation. Our task is to reach a world that has been reconciled to God through the death of His Son. This is the meaning of the Great Commission when Jesus said, “... All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” ( Matt. 28:18–20 ). No one can claim to know a Christ-centered life without a passion to reach the world with “... the ministry of reconciliation” ( 5:18 ).

### **3. Illustrate**

#### **2) There is a Word to Preach**

“... God ... has committed to us the *word* of reconciliation. Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” ( 5:19–20 ). We have a message that is distinctive and dynamic. Paul was so convinced of this that he could face the proud metropolis of Rome and affirm: “... I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” ( Rom. 1:16 ). It is the message of a Savior who died, who lives and reigns to change men, to change society, and to change the world. One day this gospel is going to effect a universal transformation; but, in the meantime, it is God’s purpose to effect individual transformations. God always starts from center to circumference. It was Samuel Zwemer who said, ‘The man who goes out to change society is an optimist, but the man who goes out to change society without changing the individual is a lunatic!’”

### **4. Illustrate**

We have been constituted ambassadors to entreat men in Christ’s stead to be reconciled to God. As Professor Tasker reminds us: “An ambassador is a title both proud and humble.” This is highly significant because, as ambassadors for Christ, we must be characterized by divine authority and humility when we preach the Word. An ambassador is not a man who communicates his own opinions or speculations, but speaks with the authority and name of his government. We have nothing for which to apologize. Our message comes from God Himself, and so with apostolic boldness we are to preach the Word with confidence and courage, yet with divine humility. We are told that ambassadors are usually chosen for their dignity and diplomacy; therefore, we must plead with men “... by the meekness and gentleness of Christ ...” ( 2 Cor. 10:1 ). These two qualities are the distinctives which are lacking in our preaching today. It is bad enough to lack the authority of Christ, but even worse to fall short of the humility of Christ. Can we imagine anything more compelling and persuasive than to allow God, through us, to beseech men and women, in Christ’s stead, to be reconciled? This is the highest concept of service in a world fast hurrying to destruction. This is the operation of the Christ-life, and no one can know a Christ-centered life without this burden to reach the world and to preach the Word.

## **Conclusion**

We have seen, then, what is meant by our motto for the year, “Henceforth Unto Him.” It implies the termination of the self-life, it invites the introduction of the faith-life, and it involves the operation of the Christ-life. What a motto to motivate our living and serving in this coming year! May God grant us, each one, to say and to live from this moment and forever “Henceforth Unto Him.”

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... When an immigrant comes to America, before he can become a citizen he must renounce all his commitments and allegiance to his former homeland and pledge 100 percent allegiance to America. Then and only then will the U.S. Government grant him citizenship. That's the way it is with Jesus. When you accept Christ as Savior and Lord you renounce sin, self, and Satan completely. You can't "split time" by serving Satan part-time and Christ part-time.

From *Sermon Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 3/87.17).

### **2. Illustrate**

... In the Salvation Army, and in every place where he was known, Commissioner Samuel Logan Brengle was loved. No name is more revered among Salvationists than his, for there has been no soldier more saintly nor officer more spiritually effective than this quiet-spoken prophet of God. His biographer, Clarence W. Hall relates that shortly after Brengle had had a deep experience of God he "walked out over Boston Commons ... weeping for joy and praising God ... I was filled with love for all His creatures. I heard the little sparrows chattering; I loved them. I saw a little worm wriggling across my path; I stepped over it; I didn't want to hurt any living thing. I loved the dogs, I loved the horses, I loved the little urchins on the street, I loved the strangers who hurried past me, I loved the heathen—I loved the whole world!"

Taken from *They Found the Secret* by V. Raymond Edman. Copyright © 1960 by Zondervan Publishing House. Used by permission.

### **3. Illustrate**

... When the noble Bruce, hero of Bannockburn, died his heart was extracted and encased in a silver casket by the Black Douglas and carried with the army. Douglas died fighting the Moors. Before he fell he threw the heart of Bruce into the thickest of the fray and urged his soldiers to follow that heart and conquer. Christ's heart is in the densest of heathenism and Christians must have their hearts there if they would feel His heartthrob.

George V. McDaniel in *Proof*. Quoted in *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 413. Used by permission.

### **4. Illustrate**

... When Martin Luther returned to Wittenberg in later years and was greeted as the "Hero of Worms," he said:

"Our first object must be to win men's hearts; and for that purpose we must preach the gospel. Today the Word will fall into one heart, tomorrow into another, and it will operate to such a purpose as it was sent. God does more by His Word alone than you and I and all the world by our united strength. God lays hold upon the heart; and when the heart is taken, all is won."

J. D'Aubigne. Quoted in *Choice Gleanings*, November 1, 1979. Used by permission of Gospel Folio Press, Grand Rapids, Mich.

## **For Further Research**

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Available on cassette tape-Order #4441

## Two Sermon

### TWO, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE SECRET OF LIVING

**SUBJECT:** Christ Our Mind

**READING:** Isaiah 26:1–8

**TEXT:** “You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, For in ... the Lord is everlasting strength” ( 26:3–4 ).

#### Introduction

Almost every day we hear of peace marches, see peace signs, and learn of peace talks. A measure of national peace is possible if we are prepared to meet the divine conditions; but, ultimately, there will never be universal peace until the Prince of Peace reigns in righteousness and equity—first, in individual lives and then in the world—through a peace made possible by the redemptive work of Christ. This is the peace that Isaiah describes in the passage before us. He depicts a strong city with walls of salvation and gates of righteousness and speaks of the security of its citizens. With exquisite language he unfolds:

- I. The Source of Perfect Peace ( 26:3–4 )
  1. The Unfailing God ( 26:3–4 )
  2. The Unchanging God ( 26:3–4 )
- II. The Scope of Perfect Peace ( 26:3 )
  1. The Peace of Justification ( Rom 5:1 )
  2. The Peace of Sanctification ( Phil. 4:6–7 )
  3. The Peace of Glorification ( Ps 37:37 )

### III. The Secret of Perfect Peace ( 26:3–4 )

1. We Must Think on God ( 26:3 )
2. We Must Trust in God ( 26:3–4 )

#### **Conclusion**

We only enjoy the guardianship of peace “in Christ Jesus” as we submit and obey His authority and live in constant dependence upon the Lord.

## **TWO, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE SECRET OF LIVING

**SUBJECT:** Christ Our Mind

**READING:** Isaiah 26:1–8

**TEXT:** “You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You,  
Because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, For in...the Lord is  
everlasting strength” ( 26:3–4 ).

#### **Introduction**

Almost every day we hear of peace marches, see peace signs, hear peace chants, and learn of peace talks; but while lust, sin, and hate are in the world there will never be universal peace. God’s purpose for the human race is that men and women will come to know a personal peace which has been made possible through the redemptive work of Christ. To that end the Bible exhorts us to pray that “... we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” ( 1 Tim. 2:2 ).

Isaiah writes about this kind of peace in the opening verses of this chapter. He depicts a strong city with walls of salvation and gates of righteousness—a picture of the security of those who live within this city of the living God. With exquisite language, he unfolds what is the source, scope, and secret of perfect peace. Note:

### **I. The Source of Perfect Peace**

“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You.... Trust in the Lord forever, for in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength” ( 26:3–4 ). The secret of the source of this peace is in:

#### **1) The Unfailing God**

“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You.... Trust in the Lord forever, for in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength” ( 26:4 ). The emphasis here is on that name YAH or JEHOVAH, a title which underscores the covenant-keeping character of our God. Because He is Jehovah we can trust His person. The Bible tells us “... it is impossible for God to lie ...” ( Heb. 6:18 ); and again: “If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself” ( 2 Tim. 2:13 ).

Because He is Jehovah we can trust His promises, “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us” ( 2 Cor. 1:20 ). Every word of God which goes forth accomplishes His perfect will because they are as trustworthy as His character.

Because He is Jehovah we can trust His purposes— “... all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose” ( Rom. 8:28 ). Since He is sovereign He sees to it that His purposes “... work ... according to the counsel of His will” ( Eph. 1:11 ).

How wonderful that we have such an unfailing God! To understand and appropriate this fact is to know perfect peace.

### **1. Illustrate**

#### **2) The Unchanging God**

“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You... For in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength [or more literally, Jehovah is the Rock of Ages]” ( 26:3–4 ). All earthly illustrations fail to symbolize God’s unchanging character, but Isaiah employs the idea of a rock to set forth the unchangeableness of our great Jehovah. A rock changes very little throughout the centuries. True, erosion occurs, but such changes are hard to detect in any given generation, Let us make sure that our source of perfect peace is found in the unchanging God.

## **II. The Scope of Perfect Peace**

“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You ...” ( 26:3 ). While this statement is complete, in and of itself, it is amplified in the pages of the New Testament. In the writings of the apostles, perfect peace is described as:

### **1) The Peace of Justification**

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God ...” ( Rom. 5:1 ). This peace has been made possible through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. This is not a peace made with God, but rather a God-made peace. The wall of hostility that existed between man and his Creator has been removed through the reconciling death of Jesus Christ.

Horatius Bonar beautifully expresses this in his hymn:

*I hear the words of love,*

*I gaze upon the blood,*

*I see the mighty Sacrifice,*

*And I have peace with God.*

This peace is not so much a feeling, but a fact. Once true it is always true.

Peace *with* God is quite distinct from the peace *of* God. The latter is a tranquility of mind which the believer ought to experience in every circumstance of life as a consequence of casting all his anxiety upon God. Peace with God, however, is a fixed condition; it is the result of a cessation of hostilities, the end of an estrangement from God.

### **2. Illustrate**

#### **2) The Peace of Sanctification**

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” ( Phil. 4:6–7 ). Observe that the Lord Jesus ministers peace, for having risen from the dead He now preaches peace to men and women everywhere. Before He left for heaven He said to His disciples, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you ...” ( John 14:27 ).

But He not only ministers peace, He maintains peace, “For He Himself is our peace ...” ( Eph. 2:14 ). The whole idea of peace is completeness and harmony (see 1 Thess. 5:23 ; Heb. 13:20–21 ).

### **3. Amplify**

#### **3) The Peace of Glorification**

“Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; For the future of that man is peace” ( Ps. 37:37 ). The person who can face death and the life beyond is the man who can say, “... though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For you are with me ...” ( Ps. 23:4 ). There is a peace which will be consummated when we see our Lord face to face and the very anticipation of that glorious day brings perfect peace.

### **4. Illustrate**

## **III. The Secret of Perfect Peace**

“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, For in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength” ( 26:3–4 ). Here is where we must follow our text carefully. As we examine the prophet’s words we find that there is a twofold secret for perfect peace:

#### **1) We Must Think on God**

“You will keep him in perfect peace, *Whose mind is stayed on You ...*” ( 26:3 ). The word “mind” is better translated “imagination.” It is within the area of our imagination that unrest, turmoil, and fear do their destructive work; but when we learn to fix our minds on Jehovah we know perfect peace. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul speaks of “... bringing *every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ*” ( 2 Cor. 10:5 ); and in Philippians he urges his readers to think on those things which are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report ( Phil. 4:8 ). This is the mind stayed upon Jehovah.

What a peaceful church we would have in the world today if God’s people gathered together to *think on God*, rather than to discuss the earthly pursuits, pleasures, and problems that monopolize our conversation! The men and women whose thoughts are ever Godward are the individuals who know “... the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding ...” ( Phil. 4:7 ).

#### **2) We Must Trust in God**

“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, For in YAH, the Lord, is everlasting strength” ( 26:3–4 ). The more we think on God, the more we will trust in God.

This was true of *Job* . Here is a man who had lost everything: loved ones, possessions, and even his health; but in the middle of his troubles he could look heavenward and say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him...” ( Job 13:15 ). This was perfect peace.

Consider *Daniel* in the lion's den—how he must have felt among those ferocious and hung beasts; yet the only one who was really panicky in that particular circumstance was the king, who had consigned Daniel to his awful fate. When His Majesty appeared the next morning and cried, “Daniel, Daniel, are you still alive?” the godly prophet replied, “There is nothing to worry about; the angel of the Lord has taken care of me.” Then the Spirit of God records the secret of this man, Daniel: “...no injury whatever was found on him, because he *believed in his God*” ( Dan. 6:23 ).

Think again of Peter, incarcerated in the inmost cell of a Roman prison, awaiting execution (decapitation) the following day. The thought did not disturb the apostle's peace. The Lord Jesus had assured him of the length of his days and of his manner of death from this life (see John 21:18–19 ). Therefore, even in his uncomfortable prison cell he was able to lay his head to rest and sleep so soundly that an angel from heaven had to strike him in order to wake him.

Finally, picture *Paul* on a ship in a raging storm. Everybody, from the captain down to the midshipmen, was panicky; but Paul stood up and said, “...take heart, men, for *I believe God* ...” ( Acts 27:25 ). In the midst of that turbulent sea he knew perfect peace.

## 5. Illustrate

## Conclusion

Do you know this perfect peace? If not, God offers you this glorious gift in Jesus Christ, who made peace possible through the blood of His cross ( Col. 1:20 ). The source of such peace is the unfailing and unchanging God. The scope of this peace comes through justification, sanctification, and glorification. The secret of this peace is in the divine prescription: think on God and trust in God. Only as we submit and obey His authority will we know the guardianship of peace that settles all doubts and fears.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... Oliver Cromwell's secretary was dispatched to the continent on important business. He stayed one night at an inn in a seaport town, and tossed on his bed, unable to sleep. According to an old custom, a servant slept in his room, and on this occasion slept very soundly. The secretary at length awakened the man who asked how it was that his master could not rest. “I am so afraid something will go wrong with the embassy relation,” was the reply. “Master,” said the valet, “may I ask you a few questions?” The secretary nodded. “Did God rule the world before we were born?” “Most assuredly He did.” “And will He rule it after we are dead?” “Certainly He will.” “Then, master, why not let Him rule the present, too?” The secretary's faith was stirred, peace was the result, and in a few minutes both were sound asleep.

*Gleanings*. Quoted in *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 705–706, adapted. Used by permission.

### 2. Illustrate

... Once, when France and England were at war, a French vessel went off on a long whaling voyage. On the way back to France the crew ran out of drinking water. They were near an English port but were afraid that they would be taken prisoners if they went there. Some people in the port saw their signal of distress and sent word that the crew need not be afraid, since the war was over and peace had been declared. There are a great many people who don't believe the good news that peace has been made by Jesus Christ between God and man, but it is true.

### 3. Amplify

... Dr. J. H. Jowett sums up the peace of sanctification when he says: ‘Peace is not stillness, but a certain kind of movement. It is movement without friction: cog works into cog with perfect and noseless harmony: everything moves without a jar; there is no grit in the wheels. Peace is ... the absence of discord. When we dig away to the very roots of the word we find its primary content is ‘perfect joining.’ Nothing works out of its place: everything moves in everything else with delightful confluence. And this is peace, and therefore peace is harmony; it is the absence of the rebel, the extinction of strife. And so if there is to be peace in my life, all the powers in my life must cooperate without friction and move in harmony under the supreme control of the sovereign will of God.’”

### 4. Illustrate

... Three days before F. B. Meyer died he wrote a letter to a friend which went something like this: ‘My doctors tell me that my hours are numbered, but I write to you with confidence. Please don’t trouble to answer this letter, for before you receive it I may well have entered the heavenly palace. We shall meet in the morning.’ With that quality of peace he entered the celestial city to await the glorification that comes through perfect conformity to Christ.

### 5. Illustrate

... While spending a summer holiday at Harrogate, England in 1875, Edward H. Bickersteth heard the Vicar of Harmgate preach on the text ‘Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee’ ( Isaiah 26:3 ). That afternoon, while visiting an aged and dying relative, Dr. Bickersteth wrote this hymn and read it to him. The first stanza goes as follows:

*Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?*

*The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.*

Donald P. Hustad, *Dictionary-Handbook to Hymns for the Living Church* . Copyright 1978 by Hope Publishing. Company, p. 135. Reproduced by permission.

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## Three Sermon

### THREE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE SECRET OF LIVING

**SUBJECT:** Christ Our Prize

**READING:** Hebrews 12:1–4

**TEXT:** “... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus ...” ( 12:1–2 ).

#### Introduction

The Epistle to the Hebrews was primarily addressed to a society of Christian Jews who were in danger of falling away from the faith because of persecution from their fellow-men. For this reason, the whole letter, and this passage, in particular, is relevant to the present hour, for it provides a needed message on perseverance and steadfast continuance. The Christian life is set before us as a race to be run. Notice:

- I. The Instructions for the Race ( 12:1 )
  1. Disciplined Elimination ( 12:1 )
  2. Determined Endurance ( 12:1 )
- II. The Inspiration for the Race ( 12:1 )
- III. The Imitation for the Race ( 12:2 )
  1. The Right Focus for Running ( 12:2 )
  2. The Right Faith for Running ( 12:2 )
- IV. The Incentives for the Race ( 12:2 )
  1. The Joy of Obedience ( 2 Tim. 4:7 )
  2. The Joy of Recompense ( 1 Cor. 9:24 )

#### Conclusion

God give us the grace to heed the instructions, take the inspiration, study the imitation, and value the incentives of this heavenly race.

## THREE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE SECRET OF LIVING

**SUBJECT:** Christ Our Prize

**READING:** Hebrews 12:1–4

**TEXT:** "... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus ..." ( 12:1–2 ).

### Introduction

The verses before us present one of the most vivid challenges to Christian living and endeavor of all the apostolic exhortations. The epistle, as we know it today, was primarily addressed to a society of Christian Jews in Palestine—or perhaps in Rome—who were in danger of falling away because of persecution from their fellow-men. For this very reason, the passage under consideration—and indeed the whole letter—has a particular appeal and application to the present hour, for if ever the church needed a message on perseverance and steadfast continuance she needs it today! The Christian life is set before us here as a race to be run. Notice:

### I. The Instructions for the Race

"... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" ( 12:1 ). There are two clear instructions for all runners:

#### 1) Disciplined Elimination

"... let us lay aside every weight, and the sin ..." ( 12:1 ). In the Grecian games to which the writer refers, all bodily unwieldiness had to be laid aside by a disciplinary diet, if the contestants intended to race for a prize. Sacrifice was not even considered. The joy and honor of racing were more than compensation.

This applies to the heavenly race as well. Anything within or without likely to impede spiritual progress must be laid aside readily and gladly. J. Wilbur Chapman used to say: "The rule that governs my life is this: Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult, is wrong for me, and as a Christian I must turn from it." How better could we define weights than these words? Let us each be persuaded in our own mind before the Lord and then act accordingly.

Observe how Mark graphically describes the movement of blind Bartimaeus toward Christ when he writes: "And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus" ( Mark 10:50 ). There was nothing intrinsically wrong with that garment. Indeed, in all probability, it had kept him warm and comfortable on many a cold day as he sat begging. But now the chance of a lifetime confronted him, and lest his garment should impede his running to Jesus he cast it aside. So let us cast our weights aside, that we may run the race the swifter and better.

But not only have the weights to be eliminated, there is "... the sin which so easily ensnares us ..." ( 12:1 ). There are those who hold that "the sin" here is a reference to our sinful natures. Others teach that it is the particular sin into which the weights may drag us down. Or, again, it may be the sin of unbelief, for that is the burden of the writer in the preceding chapters of this epistle in contrast to the theme of the eleventh chapter, where faith is set forth as the secret of victory in life's long race. Without doubt, there is an element of truth in each of these views. How easily unbelief can trip us up and cause us to lose the race! Let us be on our guard against it.

#### 1. Illustrate

## 2) Determined Endurance

“... let us run with [persevering] endurance the race that is set before us” ( 12:1 , Greek). The word used here for “race” denotes “agony,” “struggle,” “exertion” and “anguish.” The teaching is clear: the race set before us demands all we have. Faith must not be a momentary burst of emotion, but a settled habit of the soul which carries us round the first lap, the second, the third, and so on, to the finishing line. It is the disciplined endurance which wins.

Further down the writer reminds these Hebrews that the Lord Jesus “... endured the cross, despising the shame ...” ( 12:2 ). He withstood every form of sin and never once deviated from the divine track. Consider this, challenges the apostle, “... lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” ( 12:3–4 ).

Seneca was accustomed to saying, “The athlete who has once seen his own blood ... goes down to encounter with great hope.” Cuthbert Taylor, a veteran missionary, maintained that “there is no danger in the path of duty”; and my father affirmed, “Determination, not desire, controls our destiny.”

### 2. Illustrate

## II. The Inspiration for the Race

“Therefore we ... are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses ...” ( 12:1 ). This figurative language is from the arena where the spectators pressed around to see the competitors contesting for the prize. Undoubtedly, the writer had the witnesses of Chapter 11 in mind. There they are, the named and unnamed heroes of faith arrayed in the annals of history. Look at some of them: Abel, who ran the race of *sacrifice* and won it at the cost of his life; Enoch, who ran the race of *life* and won it—even though he knew that death had passed upon all men; Noah, who ran the race of *testimony* and won it—even though the whole world was against him; Moses, who ran the race of *endurance* and won it—even though it meant suffering affliction with the people of God. These men were subject to our passions, our temptations, our difficulties, and yet they won through. What an inspiration to those of us who follow!

## III. The Imitation for the Race

“... looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith ...” ( 12:2 ). Notice that while we derive inspiration for the race from others, we imitate only *One* , even Jesus. We dare not imitate Abel or we shall have to sin as he did. We dare not imitate Enoch or we shall have to stumble, as all humans do. We dare not imitate Noah or we shall have to get shamefully drunk as he did. We dare not imitate Moses or we shall have to lose our tempers as he did. There is only One we can imitate: it is the Lord Jesus Christ, and by imitation we mean “looking unto Jesus.” Draw inspiration from those who have struggled to victory, but do not stay to study them; they are full of failures. Rather, look away to the only flawless One—Christ Himself. As we look we receive:

### 1) The Right Focus for Running

“... looking unto Jesus” ( 12:2 ). The word “look” is a remarkable one. It occurs only this once in the New Testament. It denotes the focused attention which shuts out all other distracting objects. “Looking *off* unto Jesus” is a better translation.

### 3. Illustrate

One of the medieval symbols of the church was the Polar Star, bearing in Latin the motto: “He who does not look at me goes astray.” Jesus Christ is our Polar Star. Let us keep our eyes on Him and we shall not stray.

## 2) The Right Faith for Running

“... the author and finisher of our faith [or the File Leader and Perfecter of faith] ...” ( 12:2 ). Only in Jesus has faith its full expression and its full realization. Look at yourself and faith despairs. Look at your circumstances and faith staggers. Look at men and faith fails. Look at devils and faith trembles. But center faith in Christ and all is well. There is no breakdown in Him. He has pioneered the way of faith through temptation, through a world’s sin, through death and the grave, through principalities and powers, right to the throne of heaven itself. Now he calls us to follow while He daily perfects our faith.

How can we have faith increased? J. Hudson Taylor gives us the answer: “Only by thinking of all that Jesus is, and all He is for us: His life, His work, He, Himself, as revealed to us in the Word, to be the subject of our constant thoughts. Not a striving to have faith, but a looking off to the Faithful One is all we need; a resting in the Loved One entirely, for time and eternity.”

## IV. The Incentives for the Race

“... the joy that was set before Him ...” ( 12:2 ). The Lord Jesus ran the race set before Him because of the joy of doing the Father’s will and of bringing many sons to glory. These same incentives should determine our running also:

### 1) The Joy of Obedience

“... Jesus ... endured the cross ...” ( 12:2 ). At the end of His earthly life He could say, “... I have finished the work ...” ( John 17:4 ). The apostle Paul could say during his life, “... I run ... not with uncertainty ...” ( 1 Cor. 9:26 ). His words at the close of his life were “... I have kept the faith” ( 2 Tim. 4:7 ). God save us from the experience of the Christian who admitted on his deathbed, “I’m not afraid to die, but I am ashamed to die!”

#### 4. Illustrate

### 2) The Joy of Recompense

“... looking unto Jesus, ... who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross ...” ( 12:2 ). The apostle Paul declares, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it” ( 1 Cor. 9:24 ). To run for the prize means running so as to influence others for Christ. As Paul looked on to the end of his race he could say, “... what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” ( 1 Thess. 2:19 ). The joy of recompense for him was the presence in heaven of those he had wen to Christ in the race of life. What an incentive to run with patience the race that is set before us!

#### 5. Illustrate

## Conclusion

May God give us the grace to heed the instructions, take the inspiration, study the imitation, and value the incentives of this heavenly race.

*Run the straight race through God’s good grace,*

*Lift up thine eyes, and seek His face;*

*Life with its way before us lies,*

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... During the 1987 Boston Marathon the starting gun sounded with no advance warning, causing some runners to stumble when they ran into officials who were standing in the middle of the starting line. Defending men's champion, Rob de Castella, fell after tripping over a restraining rope that was dropped late. As a result he finished in sixth place. Let us be alert lest the rope of sin trip us up in the race of life.

### **2. Illustrate**

... A young man was being ordained to the gospel ministry. As he met with the ordination council he was asked the question, "If you were to preach ten years and see no results, what would you do?" His reply was, "I would preach ten years more." That answer was of God. Human standards demand immediate, visible results; but those truly called of God will press on in faith, "... knowing that [their] labor is not in vain in the Lord" ( 1 Cor. 15:58 ).

### **3. Illustrate**

... John had been an alcoholic, gambler, and dog racer. One night, however, he was gloriously converted through the witness of an open-air meeting. From the very start of his Christian life "old things" completely passed away and everything became new. He joined a local Baptist church and very soon became an outstanding soul-winner. One evening at a church meeting John was greatly used to correct and calm what threatened to be a first-class row! Presently, a member rose to his feet and asked how it was that John was so different from the rest of the members. He was just a babe in Christ, yet he seemed to be so far ahead of the others. John quietly stood and made this reply: "Before I was converted I loved dog racing; indeed, I owned two splendid animals myself. To keep them fit I used to take them out for exercise each evening, watching that they did not pick up garbage, old bones, and the like during their airing, for racing dogs must be kept on a special diet. Invariably, however, my animals would sniff something to fight and chew over. There was only one solution. Calling them by name, I would say, 'Eyes on me! Eyes on me!' And while I said this I would keep moving. Needless to say, the next time they put their noses down they were well passed the danger. The same is true in the Christian life," said John. "While most of you scrap over bones of contention I keep my eyes on Jesus, and so keep myself from all that would hinder and hold me back." Wouldn't it be wonderful if we all took John's advice?

### **4. Illustrate**

... "Among the ancient Greeks, the winner of the race was not the man who crossed the finish line first, but he who crossed it in the least time with his torch still burning. It is a hollow victory to be a 'winner' if your torch is burned out by the time you get there."

Sidney J. Harris, News America syndicate. Quoted in *Preaching* (Jacksonville, Fl. Sept/Oct, 1985), p. 47.

### **5. Illustrate**

... Stephen Olford recalls that as a youth one of his keenest interests was in the field of athletics—particularly sprinting; he won more prizes in this area of sport than in any other. The prize he cherished most,

however, was handed to him by Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught (third son of Queen Victoria). It was a special sports day held in honor of the Prince, and despite a damaged leg he entered the sprinting event and won. Later that day, together with the winners of other events, he was presented to His Royal Highness. The wonder of that auspicious occasion, the thrill of his commendation, and the honor of receiving the prize still lingers in his memory. But even more wonderful will be that day when we stand in the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords to receive His “well done” and the crowning reward.

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## Four Sermon

### FOUR, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE SECRET OF LIVING

**SUBJECT:** Christ Our Strength

**READING:** [Isaiah 40:25–31](#)

**TEXT:** "... those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength: They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint" ( [40:31](#) ).

#### Introduction

Isaiah 40 is a chapter full of divine comfort, caution and challenge. Verse 5 breathes comfort, for the day of deliverance is as bright as His promises. It is a chapter of caution lest God's people compare the Creator to a lifeless idol; but it is also a call to renewed endeavors for God despite physical weakness and satanic opposition. In summary, the message of Isaiah 40 is that of the renewed life, but to understand it we must look at:

- I. The Peril of Expended Strength ( 40:29–30 )
  1. There Are the Demands of Service ( 40:29 )
  2. There Are the Dissipations of Sin ( 40:30 )
- II. The Principle of Exchanged Strength ( 40:31 )
  1. There is the Waiting of Dedication ( 40:31 )
  2. There is the Waiting of Supplication ( 40:31 )
  3. There is the Waiting of Expectation ( 40:31 )
- III. The Purpose of Employed Strength ( 40:31 )
  1. There is the Area of Life's Special Exaltations ( 40:31 )
  2. There is the Area of Life's Crucial Obligations ( 40:31 )
  3. There is the Area of Life's Normal Avocations ( 40:31 )

## Conclusion

The person who is “strong in the strength which God supplies” is the one who can do exploits for God.

## FOUR, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE SECRET OF LIVING

**SUBJECT:** Christ Our Strength

**READING:** [Isaiah 40:25–31](#)

**TEXT:** “... those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint” ( [40:31](#) ).

## Introduction

Isaiah 40 is a chapter full of divine comfort, caution, and challenge. It breathes comfort because God tells His ancient people in the opening words that the day of deliverance is as bright as His promises. It is a chapter of caution, for in the sentences that follow God warns His people to beware of likening the Creator of the universe to a lifeless idol. The passage before us is supremely one of challenge, for in the verses that form the conclusion there is a call to renewed endeavors for God despite physical weakness and satanic opposition. In summary, the message of Isaiah 40 is that of the renewed life. To understand its secret we must consider:

### I. The Peril of Expended Strength

“He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall” ( [40:29–30](#) ). The prophet outlines a perilous sequence: first, weariness, then weakness, and, ultimately, utter collapse. The words are intended to convey the peril of expended strength. Everyone knows how alert and subtle the devil is to take advantage of this condition in our spiritual lives.

In Old Testament times, Moses warned God’s people of this peril. of expended strength. He could say, “Remember what Amalek did to you on the way... how he attacked ... all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary ...” ( [Deut. 25:17–18](#) ). Then there is that instance when David found himself in deadly combat with one of the sons of the giants and would have been slain, but for the intervention of his faithful servant, Abishai. The reason for his impending defeat is that he “grew faint” ( [2 Sam. 21:15](#) ).

How important it is, then, to watch this matter of expended strength. The Word of God and practical experience teach us that there are two ways in which spiritual strength can be expended:

#### 1) There Are the Demands of Service

“He gives power to the ‘weak’, And to those who have no might He increases strength” ( [40:29](#) ). God promises abundant strength to those who will appropriate it, but the fact that He increases strength presupposes the expenditure of that strength in daily service.

The life of the Lord Jesus Christ illustrates this fact. Think of the occasion when an ailing woman pressed through a thronging crowd to touch the hem of His garment. As she did so she was healed of her disease. Jesus, conscious that virtue had gone out of Him, asked, “... Who touched My clothes?” ( [Mark 5:30](#) ). The release of healing power, in that moment, constituted, for the Lord Jesus, an expenditure of strength. This was true of His preaching and teaching, as well as His healing.

## **1. Illustrate**

### **2) There Are the Dissipations of Sin**

“Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall” ( 40:30 ). The word “faint” here means “to tire as if from a wearisome fight” (Strong), and the companion word “weary” comes from a root “to gasp from exhaustion.” This happened to Samson when he “tired” under the seductions of Delilah. Here is a man who was endowed with unusual powers. However, there came a moment in his life when he yielded to sin and, as a result, lost his strength, his sight, and his service for God (see Judges 16 ).

So there is such a thing as the expenditure of strength through the dissipations of sin One moment we can be in touch with the Throne of God, living in glorious victory; the next we can utterly fall through failure to draw upon the resources of heaven. How we need to beware of the peril of expended strength!

## **2. Illustrate**

## **II. The Principle of Exchanged Strength**

“... those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength ...” ( 40:31 ). The word “renew” can be rendered “change” or “exchange.” Scholars suggest that it is a word associated with a process by which the eagle exchanges its old feathers for new ones so as to be fitted for those phenomenal heights and flights for which this bird is famous.

The supreme secret of the Christian life is exchanging all that we are for all that Christ is (see Phil. 4:13 ). We begin the spiritual life that way, we continue it in the same manner, and we consummate it on the basis of the same principle. The secret of this exchanged life is wrapped up in that little word “wait.” Inherent in this word are three conditions that will bring us into the joy and fullness of this exchanged life:

### **1) There is the Waiting of Dedication**

“... those who wait on the Lord ...” ( 40:31 ). Someone has pointed out that this is not the attitude of rebellion, but rather of submission. While rebellion resides in our hearts there is consequent impatience, restlessness, and frustration; but where there is submission to all the will of God there is nothing but sheer delight and restfulness to wait upon the Lord.

The apostle Paul knew the secret of contentment in the will of God (see Phil. 4:13 ), as did the psalmist (see Ps. 40:1 ). Do you?

### **2) There is the Waiting of Supplication**

“... those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength ...” ( 40:31 ). Implicit in this word “wait” is the idea of prayerfulness. This, of course, is where the exchange is made. As we breathe our need to heaven He answers with His help. As we confess our sin He imparts His cleansing. As we own our weakness He infuses His divine strength.

Psalm 96:6 puts it perfectly: “... Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.” If we are to know the exchange of strength and the transformation of our character into the likeness of Jesus Christ then the secret is the sanctuary—the place of prayer and supplication. Neglect the sanctuary and the strength is gone. The sanctuary represents both public worship and private devotion. Remember it throughout your life: “... Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary” ( Ps. 96:6 ).

### **3. Illustrate**

#### **3) There is the Waiting of Expectation**

“... those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength ...” ( 40:31 ). The third concept inherent in the little word “wait” is that of expectation. There is no point in waiting if there is no expectation. We only receive what we expect. When we come to God in prayer we should “... ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord” ( James 1:6–7 ). On the other hand, to believe expectantly that God will meet our need is to be rewarded with divine strength. The Bible tells us that “... In quietness and confidence shall be [our] strength ...” ( Isa. 30:15 ). The quietness of prayer and the confidence of expectation bring the answer of spiritual strength.

### **III. The Purpose of Employed Strength**

“... those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint” ( 40:31 ). With exquisite imagery we are introduced into the exciting adventures we can have with God. Daniel said, “... the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out great exploits” ( Dan. 11:32 ). The purpose for which God releases divine strength is to prepare us for three areas of Christian experience:

#### **1) There is the Area of Life’s Special Exaltations**

“... They shall mount up with wings like eagles ...” ( 40:31 ). The eagle is the only bird that can fly into the eye of the sun because of a special lid which protects the eye from the sun’s brightness and heat. The Gospel of John is likened to the eagle for it flies into the very eye of the sun, as it were, and reveals truths of transcendent beauty. We need special strength for these exalted experiences of life.

When Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians he asked that God would strengthen them “... with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ [might] dwell in [their] hearts through faith ...” ( Eph. 3:16–17 ). Nothing in all the world is more wonderful than the glory of the indwelling Christ. Perhaps one of the reasons we do not enjoy these exaltations of life more often is because we do not take time to wait upon the Lord for the needed strength.

#### **2) There is the Area of Life’s Crucial Obligations**

“They shall run and not be weary ...” ( 40:31 ). There is an urgency about the work of the gospel which requires special strength (see 1 Sam. 21:8 ). The task of carrying the gospel to the far ends of the earth must be done as quickly as possible. For such demands as this we need the exchanged life with its divine strength. When Philip the evangelist saw the Ethiopian eunuch sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah the prophet he was commanded by the Spirit to “... Go near and overtake this chariot.” And we read that “... Philip ran to him ...” Acts 8:29–30 ). He did not loiter in fulfilling the King’s business.

#### **3) There is the Area of Life’s Normal Avocations**

“... They shall walk and not faint” ( 40:31 ). The word “avocation” includes “the daily round and common task” as well as the hobbies and pastimes, times in which we are normally involved; it is our daily walk before God—the steady plodding every moment of every hour. This is the area in which we are most likely to fall. We all want special exaltations; we want to be involved in crucial obligations, but when it comes to the normal avocations we tend to rely on our own strength and invariably we collapse. But our text underscores the truth that in and of ourselves we cannot please God. Whether flying, running, or walking, we need the strength of

God. Failure to recognize this is the cause of spiritual bankruptcy and moral breakdown in the church of Jesus Christ today.

## **Conclusion**

Remember the peril of expended strength. Lay hold of the principle of exchanged strength; then enter into the joy of exchanged strength. May we be men and women who know God, who are strong, and can do exploits.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... George Whitefield preached judgment in the fields of both old and New England. Near the end of his life, a friend advised him to go to bed rather than keep a preaching appointment. But Whitefield prayed, "Lord Jesus, I am weary in Thy work, but not of it. If I have not yet finished my course, let me go and speak for Thee once more in the fields, seal Thy truth, and come home and die!" A few hours later he preached his last sermon. The next morning he was found dead.

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1077.

### **2. Illustrate**

... Oscar Wilde was an Irish poet, dramatist, and novelist. He had all the charm in the world and possessed a brilliant mind; yet he paid little heed to his inner life. Eventually he fell into temptation and ended up in prison. William Barclay quotes Wilde's confession: "The gods had given me almost everything. But I let myself be lured into long spells of senseless and sensual ease ... Tired of being on the heights I deliberately went to the depths in search for new sensation. What the paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion. I grew careless of the lives of others. I took pleasure where it pleased me, and passed on. I forgot that every little action of the common day makes or unmakes character, and that therefore what one has done in the secret chamber, one has some day to cry aloud from the house-top. I ceased to be lord over myself. I was no longer the captain of my soul, and did not know it. I allowed pleasure to dominate me. I ended in horrible disgrace."

*The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*, rev. ed. translated and interpreted by William Barclay. Reproduced by kind permission of The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, Scotland.

### **3. Illustrate**

... In their worship services, Quakers place great emphasis on waiting for God. They begin their meetings in complete silence, unless someone has "an experience" and wishes to speak. They go to church for transformation and they get this by listening—waiting on God.

### **4. Amplify**

... Moses herded sheep for forty years, awaiting God's great call. Christ spent forty days in the desert, preparing for His great work. When I find myself in a time of delay and waiting, I shall remember that what men call the "arid" times of life are really opportunities for spiritual deepening and enrichment; and I shall then seek deeper fellowship with God and pray for strength to prepare for what He has for me to do.

## For Further Research

*For Bibliography on Isaiah see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 2.*

## Five Sermon

### FIVE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE SECRET OF LIVING

**SUBJECT:** Christ Our Lord

**READING:** Colossians 1:9–18

**TEXT:** “... that in all things He may have the preeminence” ( 1:18 ).

#### Introduction

The church at Colosse was being threatened by false teachers who were seeking to inculcate a combination of Judaic and Gnostic doctrines—what we would call today legalism/ritualism and intellectualism/spiritualism. Faced with this situation, Paul had one answer: the preeminence of Christ. This is the only solution to the moral and spiritual problems of our day. both in the church and in personal life. Consider:

- I. The Biblical Preeminence of Christ ( 1:18 )
  1. Christ is the Center of Creation ( 1:15 , 17 )
  2. Christ is the Head of the Church ( 1:18 )
  3. Christ is the Fullness of the Godhead ( 1:19 )
- II. The Spiritual Preeminence of Christ ( 1:18 )
  1. There was the Spiritual Preeminence of His Life ( 1:21–22 )
  2. There was the Spiritual Preeminence of His Death ( 1:20 , 23 )
- III. The Personal Preeminence of Christ ( 1:18 )
  1. The Acceptance of Christ’s Incoming ( 1:27 )
  2. The Acknowledgment of Christ’s Indwelling ( Etch. 3:17 )
  3. The Appreciation of Christ’s Infilling ( 1:27 )

#### Conclusion

The challenge comes to us: Are we going to put Christ first—biblically, spiritually, personally? To do so is to make Him Lord of all.

### FIVE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE SECRET OF LIVING

**SUBJECT:** Christ Our Lord

**READING:** Colossians 1:9–18

**TEXT:** “... that in all things He may have the preeminence” ( 1:18 ).

## **Introduction**

The church at Colosse was threatened by false teachers who had invaded the Christian community with a combination of Judaic and Gnostic doctrines. The Judaic element insisted on legalistic and ritualistic observances as the foundation of religious life, while the Gnostic element rationalized the Christian concept of worship and substituted inferior and created beings for the Head of the church, Jesus Christ. Today we would describe these doctrines as legalism and ritualism, on the one hand, and intellectualism and spiritualism, on the other. Faced with this situation Paul had only one answer: the preeminence of Christ. The more we study the apostle’s approach in this letter, the more we become convinced that this is the only solution to the moral and spiritual problems in the church and in personal life. In the verses before us Paul teaches that to be doctrinally sound on the headship of Christ we must give attention to:

### **I. The Biblical Preeminence of Christ.**

“... that in all things He may have the preeminence” ( 1:18 ). The apostle starts here to underscore the fact that wrong views concerning the person of Christ will mean wrong views about everything else in the universe, for Christ is the full and final revelation of God, as revealed in His Word. Paul sums up the biblical preeminence of Christ in three mighty declarations:

#### **1) Christ is the Center of Creation**

Christ “... is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created.... and in Him all things consist” ( 1:15 , 17 ). As the eternal image of the invisible God, the Lord Jesus is the Creator and Conservor behind all things created “... in heaven ... on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers ...” ( 1:16 ). The entire universe holds together in Him and the order of things is but a reflection of His eternal thought. Explorations in space only confirm the existence of an Almighty Creator and Conservor in the universe. How this should strengthen our faith in Christ as the Lord of all life!

##### **1. Illustrate**

#### **2) Christ is the Head of the Church**

“And He is the head of the body ...” ( 1:18 ). As the first Man raised from the dead, Christ has become the Head of a redeemed humanity. He alone, therefore, must have the preeminence in all things, for He has openly declared His lordship over all created beings. In a day to come God will demonstrate His manifold wisdom and sovereignty to the entire universe through His church (see Eph. 3:9–11 ).

So as the Redeemer and Head of the church, Christ is the Lord of all love.

##### **2. Illustrate**

#### **3) Christ is the Fullness of the Godhead**

“... it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell” ( 1:19 ). Later in this letter the phrase “all fullness” is amplified to “... all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” ( 2:9 ). The fullness of Christ’s deity was

bodily manifested in the incarnation. It is not sufficient to say that Christ is divine. We must go further and recognize that Christ is fully possessed of Deity. While divinity is an attribute of Deity, Deity is essentially the nature of God alone. As the fullness of God, Christ is the Lord of all light. Therefore, in the realm of divine revelation He has biblical preeminence. To believe in His theological supremacy is to be intellectually related to God.

## **II. The Spiritual Preeminence of Christ**

“... that in all things He may have the preeminence” ( 1:18 ). The significant words which sum up the spiritual preeminence of Christ are found in verses 20–22 —“... having made peace through the blood of His cross.... in the body of His flesh through death ...” In His mighty sacrifice on the cross Christ demonstrated, through His perfect humanity, that His life and death were offered up through the eternal Spirit (see Heb. 9:14 ).

### **1) There was the Spiritual Preeminence of His Life**

“And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the *body of His flesh* through death, to present you holy and blameless, and irreproachable in His sight” ( 1:21–22 ). In the phrase, “... the body of His flesh ... ( 1:22 ), we see the spiritual preeminence of His life in history. Apparently Paul combines both *soma* and *sarx* to make plain the actual humanity of Jesus” (A. T. Robertson).

As we read the gospel story we observe that His walk was spiritual, for He was “... holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens” ( Heb. 7:26 ). No one could challenge His character or conduct. Facing His critics the Lord Jesus could ask, “Which of you convicts Me of sin? ...”. ( John 8:46 ).

More than this, His words were spiritual. People exclaimed, “... No man ever spoke like this Man!” ( John 7:46 ) and they “... marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth ...” ( Luke 4:22 ; see also Matt. 7:28–29 ). Something magnetic was communicated when He opened His mouth that was quite different from the dead orthodoxy of the contemporary teachers of His day; His words were spirit and life (see John 6:63 ).

His works were spiritual. Those who witnessed His many miracles and deeds of kindness concluded “... He has done all things well ...” ( Mark 7:37 ). True, miracles were performed before the days of Christ, and miracles have been performed since; but there was a uniqueness about His works that put Him in the place of unrivaled preeminence.

### **2) There was the Spiritual Preeminence of His Death**

“... having made peace through the blood ... which you heard, which was preached to every creature under heaven ...” ( 1:20 , 23 ). The phrase, “... the blood of His cross” ( 1:20 ) speaks of the spiritual preeminence of His death in history. Consider the facts and the benefits of the cross. For example, we have redemption and forgiveness (see 1:14 ). Christ’s blood paid the ransom price to free men and women shackled in the slave market of sin. As our Substitute He removed our sins as far as the east is from the west (see Ps. 103:12 ). Through the cross believers can enjoy a God-made peace whereby the long struggle between the sin of man and the righteousness of God is brought to an honorable end in the cross of Christ (see 1:20 ). Then again, the cross of Christ brought reconciliation (see 1:21–22 ). To catch a vision of that “trysting place where Heaven’s love and Heaven’s justice meet” is to experience the reconciliation which follows repentance, faith, and obedience. To believe in the spiritual preeminence of Christ is to be redemptively related to God.

### **3. Illustrate**

### III. The Personal Preeminence of Christ

“... that in all things He may have the preeminence” ( 1:18 ). The apostle expresses this personal preeminence of Christ when he speaks of “... Christ in you, the hope of glory” ( 1:27 ). No one can honestly acknowledge the biblical and spiritual preeminence of Christ without giving Him His rightful place, in terms of the personal life. This involves:

#### 1) The Acceptance of Christ’s Incoming

“Christ in you” ( 1:27 ). Christ in theology is fundamental, Christ in history is evidential, but Christ in experience is consequential. A loaf of bread is fundamental to life, but it is only when we get it inside of us that it becomes effectual. The glory of the gospel is that Christ—the Center of creation, the Head of the church, and the fullness of the Godhead—deigns to enter and share the life of unworthy, but willing, sinners (see Rev. 3:20 ).

#### 2) The Acknowledgment of Christ’s Indwelling.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul puts it this way: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” ( 3:17 ). Believe it or not, it is possible to receive His person and yet not fully recognize His presence; or what Paul calls in this chapter “... the glory of this mystery ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” ( 1:27 ).

#### 4. Illustrate

Have you discovered the secret of the glory of the riches of Christ’s indwelling? Are you free from the concern and burden of living because He lives His life in you? Can you say with the hymnist:

*My Saviour, Thou hast offered rest:*

*Oh, give it then to me;*

*The rest of ceasing from myself,*

*To find my all in Thee.*

E. H. Hopkins

#### 3) The Appreciation of Christ’s Infilling

“... Christ in you, the hope of glory” ( 1:27 ). God’s purpose in salvation is that Christ should invade our lives by faith, indwell our lives by love, and infill our lives by hope. Closing his letter to the Romans, Paul prays: “Now ... the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” ( Rom. 15:13 ). This means that Christ as our hope of glory should fill our lives with a new certainty— “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast ...” ( Heb. 6:19 ). A sane and sure optimism should characterize the lives of those who know the preeminence of Christ in personal experience. Christ as the hope of glory should fill our lives with a new radiancy. “... we ... rejoice in hope of the glory of God” says Paul (see Rom. 5:2 ). The radiancy of a Christian who is filled with the hope of glory is the most enviable sight in all the world. Dr. A. W. Tozer once said that “When the Spirit presents Christ to our inner vision it has an exhilarating effect on the soul much as wine has on the body. The Spirit-filled man may literally dwell in a state of spiritual fervour amounting to a mild and pure inebriation. God dwells in a state of perpetual enthusiasm. He pursues His labours always in a fulness of holy zeal.” (George Sweeting. *Great Quotes & Illustrations* Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985, p.140)

But more than this, Christ as our hope of glory should fill our lives with a new purity—“... everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is *pure*” ( 1 John 3:3 ). Here is the secret of holy and powerful living—even Christ filling our lives with the hope of glory. To believe in the personal preeminence of Christ in the life is to be volitionally related to God; in other words, to live the only life that matters, both in time and in eternity.

## **Conclusion**

Face it! How are we going to respond to the preeminence of Christ? Are we going to put Him first biblically, spiritually, and personally? Oh, may our prayer be, “Lord Jesus, we open the doors of our minds, our hearts, and our wills to Your incoming, indwelling and infilling. Come in and have the preeminence in all of our lives.”

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Stephen Weinberg, an American professor, has written a book entitled *The First Three Minutes* in which an account is given of the work of two radio astronomers, who have done a lot of research into the continuing phenomenon of cosmic noise. They have electronically recorded it and subjected it to critical appraisal. Apparently throughout the universe, coming from nowhere and everywhere, there exists a loud hum which scientists now identify as the dying echo of that “huge explosion” which marked the beginning of the universe. However, it should be obvious to any thinking person that a rational universe cannot be the product of a non-rational bang, any more than the sublime symphony which the deaf Ludwig Van Beethoven was composing could have been produced by the thunder of guns pounding at the walls of his city. If the scientists keep listening, they may hear not a hum but a Him! Not a bang, but a Word—the fiat of the Almighty.

*Prophetic Witness*, vol. 6, no. 1 (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, January 1982), p. 3.

### **2. Illustrate**

... One Palm Sunday in the city of Florence Savonarola was preaching to a great multitude. Suddenly in the middle of his discourse he cried aloud: ‘It is the Lord’s will to give a new Head to this city of Florence.’ For a moment he paused, keeping the people in suspense, and then he went on: “The new Head is Christ! Christ seeks to become your King.” And at that the whole multitude were on their feet, shouting: “Long live Jesus, King of Florence!”

*Day by Day with Jesus*. Copyright © 1979 by Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission.

### **3. Illustrate**

... October, 1978 marked the 33rd anniversary of the completion of the Bridge over the River Kwai. On that date Dennis Roland of New York and his former guard, Ryuji, walked together arm in arm over the black, steel-girded span. Said Roland: “I bear no bitterness [toward the Japanese], but I have many memories.” At Calvary, Jesus constructed a bridge between God and man. Now all of us, whether Greek or Jew, circumcision or uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, can walk together across that bridge. “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of division between us” ( Eph. 2:14 ). We have been reconciled on the bridge!

*Sermons Illustrated* (Spearman, Tx., 3/87.13), adapted.

## 4. Illustrate

... Dr. F. B. Meyer tells of a widow who lived with her only son in a cottage in one of England's seaside towns. One day, without warning, the lad left home and went to sea. At first the distressed mother held out hope that her boy would soon return, but as time went by she had to accept the fact that he was gone for good. Being extremely poor, she decided to turn her home into a guesthouse for any who might apply. To make it a success, she worked hard day and night. Her hands became rough, her back began to stoop, and her face soon wore a haggard look—but on she toiled.

One day a sailor with a heavy beard applied at her guesthouse. She welcomed him in and gave him one of her rooms. At first she thought there was something unusual about the man, but she shrugged it off and worked harder than ever. Then one evening she made a glorious discovery. Intrigued by a familiar gesture, she dared to ask her sailor-guest who he really was. To her joy she found out that he was none other than her son. As soon as the mystery was solved he immediately took charge of the situation. "Mother," he said, "I am now a reasonably wealthy man, so I want you to give those worn hands a rest. I want to see that back straighten up and that face look young again. What work there is to do I will now perform. Your business from now onward is to REST in me." You see, the mystery was his incoming, and the glory was the discovery of His indwelling, but the riches were the means of releasing the elderly lady from any further concern or burden.

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## Six Sermon

### SIX, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** SPIRITUAL SECRETS

**SUBJECT:** The Secret of Tragedy

**READING:** 2 Kings 6:1–7

**TEXT:** "... as one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water ..." ( 6:5 ).

## Introduction

Here is an Old Testament story with spiritual and practical lessons. The ax head is the keen cutting edge of a life that is equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit. The loss and recovery of the ax head depicts the manner in which God matches the misery of human tragedy with the miracle of divine victory. What about your life? Are you on the cutting edge for God or have you lost your effectiveness? Do you know your way back to recovery and power? If not, then this message is for you. Observe:

- I. The Loaning of the Ax Head ( 6:5 )
  1. The Compassionate Provision of a Benefactor ( 6:5 )
  2. The Conditional Provision of a Benefactor ( 6:5 )
- II. The Losing of the Ax Head ( 6:5 )
  1. A Person is Diligent in His Daily Work ( 6:5 )
  2. A Person is Negligent in His Daily Watch ( 6:5 )
- III. The Locating of the Ax Head ( 6:6 )
  1. The Explanation of the Human Problem ( 6:6 )
  2. The Application of the Divine Power ( 6:6–7 )

## Conclusion

God can take a life lost in the muddy waters of defilement and death and raise it to new life and power. Remember, your ax head is loaned; it can be lost, but it can be located and recovered. Although a believer can never lose the person of the Spirit he can lose His presence and power.

## SIX, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** SPIRITUAL SECRETS

**SUBJECT:** The Secret of Tragedy

**BEADING:** 2 Kings 6:1–7

**TEXT:** "... as one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water ..."  
( 6:5 ).

## Introduction

Here is a story with deep spiritual and practical lessons. The ax head is the keen cutting edge of a life that is equipped with the power of the Holy Spirit. The loss and recovery of the ax head is an illustrative picture of the manner in which God matches the misery of human tragedy with the miracle of divine victory.

Have you lost your keen cutting edge? Is your witness and service for God ineffective? More importantly, do you know your way back to recovery and power? If you cannot answer these questions in the affirmative then this is a message for you.

To appreciate the personal application of this fascinating Old Testament story, we must observe the significance of:

## **I. The Loaning of the Ax Head**

“It was borrowed” ( 6:5 ). With the simple lifestyle of these sons of the prophets, we have every reason to assume that the loaning of the ax head was:

### **1) The Compassionate Provision of a Benefactor**

“It was borrowed” ( 6:5 ). This is a lesson we find difficult to learn! We pride ourselves on our accomplishments and achievements and forget to recognize that all that we are and have we owe to the compassionate provision of our heavenly Benefactor. The Bible says: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” ( Rom. 8:32 ); and again: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” ( James 1:17 ). So we can say with James M. Gray:

*Naught have I gotten but what I received;*

*Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed ...*

#### **1. Illustrate**

Now while “... the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable” ( Rom. 11:29 ) He expects an accounting for every talent and ability that He has conferred upon us.

### **2) The Conditional Provision of a Benefactor**

“... Alas, master! For it was borrowed” ( 6:5 ). The very cry of this man indicates that he was under an obligation. Indeed, he was not only responsible for the scheduled task, but accountable for the supplied tool. The story reveals that the training center had become too small, and that further construction was an urgent necessity. To this task the sons of the prophets were now committed. Even so is our obligation in Christian service. God is ever moving on. Where the Spirit is unhindered in evangelistic enterprise there is expansion. For this reason God holds us personally responsible for our tasks and accountable for our tools. By the incoming and in-filling of the Holy Spirit every believer is made responsible and accountable to heaven for the way he uses, misuses, or even abuses his time and talents. Oh, that the cry of the prophet’s son might be heard more often among us: “... Alas, master! For it was borrowed!” ( 6:5 ).

#### **2. Illustrate**

## **II. The Losing of the Ax Head**

“But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water ...” ( 6:5 ). Here we face a most solemn warning which we do well to heed. The Spirit of God teaches us here that it is possible to lose our cutting edge, our usefulness, and power for service.

### **1) It Can Happen While a Person is Diligent in His Daily Work**

“... as one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water ...” ( 6:5 ). This man never lost his ax head through laziness or idleness; he was, perhaps, the busiest man on the work team! What a word this is to all of us! The fact that we are busy in the Lord’s service is no final evidence that we are endued with power

from on high. Unfortunately, so much Christian activity today is nothing more than noise without power, motion without progress, and show without reality. God have mercy on men and women who try to serve without the Spirit of power and blessing in their lives!

### **3. Illustrate**

#### **2) It Can Happen While A Person is Negligent In His Daily Watch**

“But as one was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the water ...” ( 6:5 ). This son of a prophet had a mind to work, but had no sense to watch. He was blind to the fact that the ax head was slackening and slipping from the shaft. Tragedy occurred: he lost his ax head in the dark, muddy waters of the Jordan River.

Jesus told His disciples to “Watch and pray, lest [they] enter into temptation ...” ( Mark 14:38 ). It is a fact that more spiritual breakdown can be traced to a neglected devotional life than to any other cause. Samson lost his power while diligent in working but negligent in watching. His spiritual life began to slip. Then one day he awoke from sleep to go out as before to demonstrate his strength, but “... he did not know that the Lord had departed from him” ( Judges 16:20 ).

Beware of losing your power with God and with men! It can happen while you are diligent in working, yet negligent in watching. The Lord preserve us all!

### **4. Illustrate**

## **III. The Locating of the Ax Head**

“And the man of God said, ‘Where did it fall?’ And he showed him the place. So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float” ( 6:6 ). Once again, we are confronted with solemn instruction. when the cutting edge is gone and the power is lost, what is the only way of recovery?

If *you* are asking that question then the answer is twofold:

#### **1) The Explanation of the Human Problem**

“And the man of God said, ‘where did it fall?’ And he showed him the place ...” ( 6:6 ).

The hardest thing for a backslider to do is to explain why he went astray and how he lost his power, but the Lord Jesus, the Man at God’s right hand, insists on this. It is a principle of Scripture that *the place of departure is the place of recovery*. You will only find the power Where you lost it. It is futile to imagine that you can overlook the past without accounting for it and confessing it before God. The Bible says, “... God requires an account of what is past” ( Eccles. 3:15 ); and again: “If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” ( 1 John 1:9 ). Some people have had to return to sins committed years previously before God restored to them the joy and power of His Spirit.

Where did you lose your power? Show God the place, the time, and the circumstances. Explain to Him the problem, for He already knows; nothing is hidden to Him. Confession is His way of recovery.

#### **2) The Application of the Divine Power**

“... So he cut off a stick, and threw it in there; and he made the iron float. Therefore he said, ‘Pick it up for yourself.’ So he reached out his hand and took it.” To believe in God is to believe in miracles, and it is obvious

that a miracle was performed here. Note the action of the man of God.— “... he cut off a stick ...” ( 6:6 ). The Lord Jesus is often referred to in Scripture as “a Branch” ( Isa. 11:1 ).

The cutting off, of course, speaks of His death. The application of divine power is always the answer to human need. When the message of a crucified Christ is applied to our problems there is *always* release and restoration.

Observe, in our story, that when Elisha cut off the branch and threw it in the river the iron ax head floated to the surface. Here was *liberation* . It not only overcame the law of gravity, but the strength of the current. This reminds us of Paul’s words in Romans 8:2 : “... the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.” The “death” waters of Jordan and the current of the river were no match for the application of divine power. Then there was restoration—“... ‘Pick it up for yourself.’ So he reached out his hand and took it” ( 6:7 ).

Thank God, in the cross of Christ there is liberation and restoration for every backslider, every defeated Christian, every fruitless believer. Will you accept God’s sentence of death upon your failure and sin and then take His life and power in an act of faith? Power for service can be restored if you are prepared to show God where you lost it, accept the word of the cross, and then take by faith His releasing and restoring life.

## **Conclusion**

We have seen how God can take a life that is lost in the muddy waters of defilement and death and raise it to new life and power. Remember, your ax head is loaned. It can be lost but, thank God, it can be located and recovered. Although a believer can never lose the person of the Spirit, he can lose HIS presence and power. Surely, this is what William Cowper had in mind when he wrote:

*Return, O holy Dove, return,*

*Sweet messenger of rest;*

*I hate the sins that made me mourn,*

*And drove Thee from my breast.*

*The dearest idol I have known,*

*Whate’er that idol be,*

*Help me to tear it from Thy throne,*

*And worship only Thee.*

*So shall my walk be close with God,*

*Calm and serene my frame;*

*So purer light shall mark the road*

*That leads me to the Lamb.*

## **Additional Annotations**

## 1. Illustrate

... During his last hours, John Knox woke from a slumber sighing, and told his friends that he had just been tempted to believe that he had “merited heaven and eternal blessedness, by the faithful discharge of my ministry. But blessed be God who has enabled me to beat down and quench the fiery dart, by suggesting to me such passages of Scripture as these: ‘What hast thou that thou didst not receive?’ ‘By the grace of God I am what I am.’ ‘Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.’ ”

Christian World Pulpit. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville: Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 529.

## 2. Illustrate

... Daniel Webster, the great statesman of other years, was once asked, “Mr. Webster, what is the most sobering, searching thought that ever entered your mind?” Without hesitancy, the staunch statesman replied, “My personal accountability to *Sel.* ”

## 3. Illustrate

... John Henry Fabre, the great French naturalist, conducted a most unusual experiment with some Processionary Caterpillars. These caterpillars blindly follow the one in front of them; hence the name. Fabre carefully arranged them in a circle around the rim of a flower pot so that the lead caterpillar actually touched the last one, making a complete circle. In the center of the flower pot he put pine needles, which is the food they eat. The caterpillars started around this circular flower pot. Around and around they went, hour after hour, day after day, night after night. For seven full days and seven full nights they crawled around the flower pot. Finally, they dropped dead of starvation and exhaustion. With an abundance of food less than six inches away they literally starved to death because they confused activity with accomplishment. Many Christians make that same mistake.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Spearman, Tx. 3/87.1).

## 4. Illustrate

... One night some years ago, the captain of a Greenland whaling vessel found himself surrounded by icebergs and “lay-to” till morning, expecting every moment to be ground to pieces. As the morning dawned he sighted a ship not too far away. Getting into a boat with some of his men, he carefully picked his way through the lanes of open ice toward the mysterious-looking craft. Coming alongside, he shouted, “Ship ahoy!” but there was no response. He looked through the porthole and saw a man, evidently the captain, sitting at a table as if writing in a log-book, but the figure was dead and frozen. From the last entry in the log-book it appeared the vessel had been drifting the Arctic seas for thirteen years—a floating sepulchre, manned by a frozen crew. Today there are souls who have refused the divine offer of life, who have forsaken the centers where they were warmed with hallowed influences. As a result they have drifted into the chilling regions of Arctic darkness and frost. Many of these adopt certain appearances of the Christian life, and a name to live by, but are dead!

*Christian Journal*. Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 499. Used by permission.

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*SERIES "Spiritual Secrets" available on cassette tape-Order #7416/0 from Olford Ministries International, P.O. Box 757800, Memphis, TN 38175.*

## Seven Sermon

### SEVEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** SPIRITUAL SECRETS

**SUBJECT:** The Secret of Misery

**READING:** 2 Kings 4:38–41

**TEXT:** "... it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, 'O man of God, there is death in the pot!' And they could not eat it" ( 4:40 ).

#### Introduction

Elisha had returned to Gilgal to minister to the sons of the prophets. At the time, there was a famine in the land, and these men were feeling the effects of it. Only when the man of God arrived did the situation begin to change. Elisha's arrival represents:

- I. God's Sovereign Provision ( 4:38 )
  1. A Purifying Influence ( 4:38 )
  2. A Unifying Influence ( 4:38 )
  3. A Satisfying Influence ( 4:38 )
- II. Man's Sinful Intrusion ( 4:39–40 )
  1. Adam and Eve— Self-Glory ( Gen 3:5 )
  2. Nadab and Abihu— Self-Effort ( Lev. 10:1–2 )
  3. Hophni and Phinehas—Self-Pleasing ( 1 Sam. 2:12 )
  4. Uzzah—Self-Respect ( 2 Sam. 6:6–7 )
- III. Faith's Simple Solution ( 4:41 )
  1. Trusting Christ to Conquer the Power of Death ( 4:41 )
  2. Trusting Christ to Cancel the Poison of Sin ( 4:41 )
  3. Trusting Christ to Control the Principle of Life ( 4:41 )

## Conclusion

Man's tendency to thwart God's purpose of blessing always leads to poison in the pot. However, there is a glorious antidote in Christ crucified, risen, and reigning in our lives.

## SEVEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** SPIRITUAL SECRETS

**SUBJECT:** The Secret of Misery

**READING:** 2 Kings 4:38–41

**TEXT:** "... it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, 'O man of God, there is death in the pot!' And they could not eat it" ( 4:40 ).

## Introduction

Elisha had returned to Giigal to minister to the sons of the prophets. At the time, there was a famine in the land, and physical distress and spiritual darkness prevailed on every hand. Without doubt, the sons of the prophets felt the effects of the grave conditions then existing. Only when the man of God arrived did the situation began to change. Elisha's arrival represented:

### I. God's Sovereign Provision

"And Elisha ... said to his servant, 'Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets' " ( 4:38 ). Heaven is never embarrassed by human need. God always has His Elishas who represent the voice of hope in a time of famine. From the dawn of history God has matched human bankruptcy with divine sufficiency, meeting the hunger of men and women at every level. From the story before us we learn that God sovereignly supplies man's needs in terms of:

#### 1) A Purifying Influence

"... 'Put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets' " ( 4:38 ). The seven-year famine that prevailed throughout the country had been predicted by Elisha (see 2 Kings 8:1 ) and represented the judgment of God upon human sin. But even amid such judgment God was able to provide for the sons of the prophets

This is a divine principle found throughout Scripture. Recall that when famine threatened the land, in Jacob's day, God had His Joseph to provide corn in Egypt (see Gen. 41 ). Later on we read that when darkness plagued the Egyptians, the people of God had light in their dwellings (see Exod. 10:21–23 ). Then think of Elijah who was supplied with food and water by God's ravens at the Brook Cherith while the country around him was perishing with hunger (see 1 Kings 17:4–6 ).

How true are the words: "... The Lord will give grace and glory; No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly" ( Ps. 84:11 ). And again David says: "I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread" ( Ps. 37:25 ). Yes, God provides for those who meet His conditions, and in this sense His provision is always a *purifying* influence to His people. Certainly the sons of the prophets would have interpreted such a lesson from the action of Elisha.

#### 1. Illustrate

#### 2) A Unifying Influence

“... ‘Put on the large pot ... ’ ” ( 4:38 ). While God’s blessings are conditional, His means of supplying the need are always the same. There is only one Calvary, one Pentecost, one Christ. Paul states this well in 1 Corinthians where he says: “... we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread” ( 10:17 ); and again: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” ( 12:13 ). In Christ our Savior and Sovereign we are always unified.

### **3) A Satisfying Influence**

“... ‘Put on the large pot, and boil stew’ ...” ( 4:38 ). While all around was death and distress, there was enough food for the college of the prophets. When God provides He always satisfies. To appropriate His provision is to know the satisfaction of our spirits with His life, the satisfaction of our minds with His truth, the satisfaction of our hearts with His love, the satisfaction of our wills with His freedom, and the satisfaction of our bodies with His health. How true are the words, “You open Your hand And satisfy the desire of every living thing” ( Ps. 145:16 ). The true evidence that we are finding our resources in Christ is that our lives are being daily purified, unified, and satisfied.

### **2. Amplify**

It is often at this point that we spoil the picture and thwart the purpose of God for our lives, for whereas Elisha’s visit represented God’s sovereign provision, his visit to Gilgal also rebuked:

## **II. Man’s Sinful Intrusion**

“... one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered from it a lap full of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, though they did not know what they were.... as they were eating ... they cried out and said.... ‘there is death in the pot’ ...” ( 4:39–40 ). It is characteristic of human nature not only to attempt to improve upon God’s provision but to intrude into God’s purpose. We are not told whether the young prophet of our story acted ignorantly or willfully, but it seems reasonable to assume that he did not proceed according to the word of Elisha. How this illustrates the intrusion of self into the purpose of God! Numerous accounts in the Bible demonstrate that wherever self intrudes there is poison in the pot. Think of:

### **1) The Sinful Intrusion of Adam and Eve for the Sake of Self-Glory.**

The devil had told Adam and his wife that in the day they ate of the fruit of the garden their eyes would be opened, and they would be “... like God, knowing good and evil” ( Gen. 3:5 ). They believed him and ate of the fruit. The New Testament commentary on this episode is very clear: “... just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, ... thus death. spread to all men, because all sinned” ( Rom. 5:12 ). Adam’s self-intrusion into the purpose and provision of God meant death in the pot. It seems inconceivable that an innocent pair like these two people could wish for anything more than that which God had provided for them in the Garden of Eden; but in response to satanic temptation there was this desire for self-glory, and under pressure the sin was committed, bringing death into the pot.

### **3. Illustrate**

### **2) The. Sinful Intrusion of Nadab and Abihu for the Sake of Self-Effort.**

In Leviticus 10:1–2 we read: “Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So the fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.” Here were two young men brought

up under the godly influence of their father Aaron, so they had no excuse for familiarity with sacred things. Nevertheless, because of self-effort they offered strange fire before the Lord, thus bringing death into the pot.

So much service today is lifeless because of self-effort! Instead of obeying the Lord's commands we go our selfish ways and offer strange fire—the symbol of self-effort. It is a serious thing to serve God in the energy of the flesh. The inevitable result is death in the pot.

### **3) The Sinful Intrusion of Hophni and Phinehas for the Sake of Self-Pleasing.**

We are told that the two sons of Eli were "... priests of the Lord ..." ( 1 Sam. 1:3 ), but because of weak parental control and their own self-pleasing they became corrupt and vile; "... they did not know the Lord" (see 1 Sam. 2:12 ; 3:13 ). The next chapter tells us that when "... the Philistines fought, ... Israel was defeated,... the ark of God was captured; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, died" ( 1 Sam. 4:11 ).

Self-pleasing is the very opposite of living to the pleasure of God. The Bible says that "... even Christ did not please Himself ..." ( Rom. 15:3 ). As a result God broke through from heaven on at least two occasions (Jesus' baptism, and the Mount of Transfiguration) to declare, "... This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" ( Matt. 3:17 ; 17:5 ). Throughout His life He sought to do God's will, not His own (see John 4:34 ; Luke 22:42 ). When self reverses this divine principle there is death in the pot.

### **4) The Sinful Intrusion of Uzzah for the Sake of Self-Respect.**

"And ... Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled. Then the anger of the Lord was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God" ( 2 Sam. 6:6–7 ). Uzzah, who was probably a Levite, had taken the responsibility of bringing the ark back to Jerusalem. At any rate, he was sufficiently aware of how the ark was to be handled. Strict instructions had been given that the ark was first to be covered by the priests and then carried by the Levites by means of poles. Until it was covered the Levites were not to look at it or touch it, lest they die (see Num. 4:5–20 ). But when the oxen stumbled and the ark appeared to be in danger of shifting, Uzzah intruded into an area in which he was not allowed, so inviting divine displeasure and judgment.

How often we try to save the work of God, not because of His glory, but because of our self- respect. May God ever teach us that wherever self intrudes there is poison in the pot which affects our spiritual relationship with the Lord.

#### **4. Illustrate**

### **III. Faith's Simple Solution**

Elisha said, "... 'bring some flour.' And he put it into the pot, and said, 'Serve it to the people, that they may eat.' And there was nothing harmful in the pot" ( 4:41 ). The way of faith is the way of full salvation, and Elisha's action typifies the truth that Christ is the remedy for every malady. Flour, in Scripture, is a beautiful type of Christ in His resurrection life and power. It is the result of the crushing and grinding of the "bread corn." How significant, then, is the procedure of putting flour into the pot of death! This pictures what Christ did for us at Calvary, when by His perfect life and death He absorbed the poison into Himself and then emerged in resurrection life.

The mixture of the flour with the stew effected a divine miracle: there was no further poison in the pot. So Elisha gave orders to serve the people and they ate without ill effects. They simply believed his word in virtue of what he had done. In terms of the New Testament, this story teaches us that the only answer to the problem of sin and self is:

## **1) Trusting Christ to Conquer the Power of Death.**

Elisha said, "... 'bring some flour.' And he put it into the pot, and said, 'Serve it to the people, that they may eat.' And there was nothing harmful in the pot" ( 4:41 ). Because of Christ's death at Calvary we can cry, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" ;and again: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" ( 1 Cor. 15:55 , 57 ). How wonderful to know that "... through death ... He ... [destroyed] him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" ( Heb. 2:14 ). Now by identification with Christ in His death and resurrection we, too, can know victory over the deadening and defiling power of Satan in ours lives.

## **2) Trusting Christ to Cancel the Poison of Sin**

"... And there was nothing harmful [or evil, marginal rendering] in the pot" ( 4:41 ). It is one thing to know forgiveness and pardon in regard to the past; it is another to experience moment-by-moment deliverance over our corrupt natures (see Rom. 8:2 and Rom. 6:14 ). Now that Christ has nullified the poison of sin there is the sweetening influence and fragrance of the grace of Christ.

## **3) Trusting Christ to Control the Principle of Life**

"... Serve it to the people, that they may eat ..." ( 4:41 ). The principle of life is reproduction. Just as the food became life and healing to the sons of the prophets, so the life of Christ in us becomes a ministry to others. Paul says, "always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus ... may be manifested in our body.... So then death is working in us, but life in you" ( 2 Cor. 4:10–12 ). What a joy to communicate a ministry of resurrection power and blessing where death once reigned!

## **Conclusion**

We have observed that God's purpose is ever to provide fullness of blessing for His people, while man's tendency is to thwart God's purpose by sinful intrusion leading to poison in the pot. Thank God, however, there is a glorious antidote in Christ crucified, risen, and reigning in our lives. Oh, that we might be so fully identified with Him in simple faith that we can say, "... it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" ( Gal. 2:20 ).

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... In his book *Miracles in Black*, Dr. John C. Wengatz tells of an African convert who was left at a new mission station to carry on the Lord's work with a cannibalistic tribe. It was the dry season when Joao Mbaxi took over, but soon the tropical rains would come. Month after month went by but no cloud appeared and people were on the brink of starvation. In all the years they had worshiped their ancient gods, the rains had never failed them. Now Joao was ordered to leave the country and take "the white man's God" with him. He refused. The chief warned him that unless it rained by sunrise the following day they would drink his blood and eat his flesh. Recalling the story of Elijah, Joao went to his hut and prayed with the same fervency as the ancient prophet. Just before daylight thunder was heard in the distance and abundant rain refreshed the entire region. Elijah's God still lives today! As we meet the conditions we will find the Lord pouring out His blessings with the same plenteous supply.

Adapted from *Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio)

## 2. Amplify

... Look at the wonder of God's provision: Am I wounded? He is balm. Am I sick? He is medicine. Am I naked? He is clothing. Am I poor? He is wealth. Am I hungry? He is bread. Am I thirsty? He is water. Am I in debt? He is surety. Am I in darkness? He is sun. Must I face the gathering storm? He is an anchor. Am I to be tried? He is my advocate. Am I condemned? He is pardon.

From *Choice Gleanings*, April 30. Used by permission of Gospel Folio Press, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

## 3. Illustrate

... One afternoon Goethe and Beethoven walked together in the Carlsbad Valley to talk at ease. Everywhere, as they walked, passers-by saluted them, pointed them out, and bowed with ostentatious deference. "Isn't it maddening?" exclaimed Goethe. "I simply can't escape this homage." "Don't be too much distressed by it," said Beethoven; "it is just possible that some of it may be for me."

*Christian Faith and Life*. Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 535. Used by permission.

## 4. Illustrate

... When the saintly James Harvey was a young curate, he frequently talked with a wise old plowman named Clayton. One day they discussed the subject, "What is the greatest impediment to spiritual growth and happiness?" The curate said: "Surely, to renounce our sinful self." "No," said the plowman, "the greatest difficulty is to renounce our righteous self."

*3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight, p. 535. Used by permission.

## For Further Research

*For Bibliography on 2 Kings see vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 6*

# Eight Sermon

## EIGHT, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** SPIRITUAL SECRETS

**SUBJECT:** The Secret of Energy

**READING:** [2 Kings 4:1-7](#)

**TEXT:** "... 'what do you have in the house?' And she said, 'Your maid-servant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil' " ( [4:2](#) ).

### Introduction

Here is an Old Testament story about Elisha and a poor widow which illustrates how the person and work of the Holy Spirit operates in a believer's life. It shows how God can take a Christian, who is a victim to spiritual depression, poverty, and bondage, and fill him with joy, richness, and liberty for effective service. In this particular passage the jar of oil represents:

- I. The Identity of the Spirit In Our Lives ( 4:2 )
  1. By His Indwelling ( 4:2 )
  2. By His Anointing ( 4:2 )
- II. The Reality of The Spirit In Our Lives ( 4:4 )
  1. Provided Emptiness ( 4:3 )
  2. Persistent Prayerfulness ( 4:4 )
  3. Perpetual Yieldedness ( 4:4 )
- III. The Sufficiency of the Spirit In Our Lives ( 4:7 )
  1. Public Accountability ( 4:7 )
  2. Private Responsibility ( 4:7 )

## Conclusion

Have you a jar of oil in the house of your life? If so, provide the emptiness, give yourself to prayerfulness and yieldedness, then know and show the life of usefulness in the Holy Spirit. Let your prayer be:

*For this I pray, Lord, for this I plead—*

*Thy Spirit's fullness flood my soul;*

*Be Thou enthroned, Lord, within my heart,*

*And all my yielded life control.*

Stephen F. Olford

## EIGHT, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** SPIRITUAL SECRETS

**SUBJECT:** The Secret of Energy

**READING:** 2 Kings 4:1–7

**TEXT:** "... 'what do you have in the house?' And she said, 'Your maid-servant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil' " ( 4:2 ).

## Introduction

Here is an Old Testament story about Elisha and a poor widow which illustrates how the person and work of the Holy Spirit operates in a believer's life. It shows how God can take a Christian, who is a victim to spiritual depression, poverty, and bondage, and fill him with joy, richness, and liberty for effective service.

The story reveals that the woman had reached the place of bankruptcy. Faced with the shame and embarrassment of not being able to meet her obligations, she cast herself on the mercy of the man of God. Perhaps if she had sought his advice earlier she would have never reached this state of affairs. Is this a picture of your life? Have circumstances and unfulfilled obligations overwhelmed you like a flood? If so, why have you not turned to the Man at God's right hand—Jesus—and asked for His guidance and intervention in your situation?

When the widow sought Elisha's advice, he asked her a most significant question: "... what do you have in the house? ..." ( 4:2 ). If her reply had been, "I have nothing in the house," then Elisha would have had nothing upon which to work. The question God asks us is not so much whether we have something in the house but rather if we have Someone in the house of our lives.

In the passage before us, it seems reasonable to interpret the jar of oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Note:

## **I. The Identity of the Spirit In Our Lives**

"... Elisha said to her, 'What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?' And she said, 'Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil' ( 4:2 ). The New Testament teaches that there are at least two ways in which we may identify the Holy Spirit in our lives:

### **1) By His Indwelling**

"... 'what do you have *in the* house?' ..." ( 4:2 ). Whatever else this woman had sold or parted with, she had retained this jar of oil. Likewise, whatever calamities may befall the Christian, in terms of wealth, health, or the loss of loved ones, he can never part with or lose the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Corinthian church had deteriorated greatly in the absence of the apostle, having lost much of its original purity, power, and grace. Yet Paul wrote to them: "... do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you ..." ( 1 Cor. 6:19 ; see also Rom. 8:9b , 16 ). So the Holy Spirit may be identified by His indwelling.

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **2) By His Anointing.**

Said the widow, "... Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil" ( 4:2 ). Such a jar in the house was kept for the purpose of cooking or anointing. In normal circumstances, this oil would be used daily following the regular ablutions.

Greater than its personal use, however, was the ceremony of anointing, which was related to all the important offices of Jehovah's servants; without it he was not considered qualified for his ministry. The prophet was anointed as the messenger of God to the people (see 1 Kings 19:16 ). The priest was anointed that he might be holy unto the Lord (see Lev. 8:12 ). The king was anointed in order that the Spirit of the Lord might rest upon him (see 1 Sam. 16:13 ). Even the Lord Jesus was anointed at the outset of His ministry with the Spirit and with power (see Luke 4:18 ; John 3:34 ).

In terms of New Testament teaching, this anointing of the Spirit is distinct from the filling of the Holy Spirit, yet it is contingent upon it. It takes place initially with the new birth, but continues recurrently as the believer needs ability and authority in Christian service. Dr. C. I. Scofield said it well: "One baptism, many fillings, constant anointing." This anointing of the Spirit communicates a twofold blessing:

#### **A) A SPIRITUAL ABILITY IN THE WORD OF GOD**

“... the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him” ( 1 John 2:27 ). There is a distinct difference between “the tuition of learning and the intuition of the Spirit. The one is intellectual knowledge; the other is spiritual knowledge. While we do not downgrade the former, we note the Bible puts the weightier emphasis on the latter. It says, “... Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God” ( 1 Cor. 2:9–10 ). All ability in understanding the Scriptures comes through the anointing of the Spirit. Only He can open our eyes to truths that would otherwise be hidden and inexplicable.

## B) A SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY IN THE WORK OF GOD

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts ...” ( 2 Cor. 1:21–22 ). The apostle Paul speaks of this anointing in connection with his own authority as a preacher and identifies himself with all others who are similarly anointed of the Spirit. It is an anointing of authority which carries with it a sense of God’s presence and power.

Jesus promised this spiritual authority to His disciples in His final word of commission. He told them to “... tarry in the city of Jerusalem until [they were] endued with power from on high” ( Luke 24:49 ). The original meaning of the word “endued” carries the thought of being invested, or clothed, with a new power. After Pentecost the disciples were to wear this power like a garment. This is why people took knowledge of these early believers, that they had been with Jesus (see Acts 4:13 ). This is why they were amazed and could not withstand the wisdom with which they spoke (see Acts 6:10 ).

### 2. Illustrate

Let me ask you, then, the question of the man of God: “... ‘what do you have in the house?’ ...” ( 4:2 ). Can you say with deep conviction, “I have a jar of oil in the house; I know that by His indwelling and anointing the Holy Spirit indwells my life”?

## II. The Reality of the Spirit In Our Lives

“And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones” ( 4:4 ). Whatever the pot of oil had meant to the woman in the past, she obviously had not learned the secret of its full potential and power, under God. But when Elisha took hold of the situation he indicated certain conditions in which the pot of oil would become a vital reality. There was:

### 1) Provided Emptiness

He commanded, “... Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few” ( 4:3 ). The value of each vessel, to this woman, was its capacity to receive. The more she provided, the more oil she obtained; when she ceased to borrow vessels the flow of oil ceased. The lesson is clear. God can only fill the capacities we make available. That is why Paul states both in Colossians and Ephesians: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly ... ( Col. 3:16 ), while in the parallel passage in Ephesians 5:18 he commands, “... be filled with the Spirit.” The Word of God makes the capacity in our lives; the Spirit of God fills that capacity. We have to watch, however, that our capacities are not half-filled with something else. Only as we are filled with the Holy Spirit can we expect the anointing of the Spirit.

### 2) Persistent Prayerfulness.

“... when you have come in,” said Elisha, “... you shall shut the door behind you and your sons ...” ( 4:4 ). Note that the reality and fullness of the Spirit in a believer’s life is always associated with waiting upon God. Luke 11:13 says, “If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” Without doubt, the principle of asking applies to the initial receiving of the Spirit, as well as to the continual fullness and anointing of the Holy Spirit. Asking is praying, and the praying which counts—and *costs* —is behind shut doors. This means shutting out the many legitimate, and often pleasant, calls and demands of business, domestic, and social life.

### **3. Illustrate**

#### **3) Perpetual Yieldedness.**

Said the man of God, “... you shall ... pour ... into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones” ( 4:4 ). What a moment this was! How far was the woman prepared to prove the prophet’s promise by submitting herself to the pouring out of the oil? Though the idea appeared fantastic, in simple faith she yielded and the miracle happened. So, too, in the spiritual life, it is only as we personally yield to the indwelling Spirit that His life begins to flow in us and from us (see Acts 5:32 ). The story shows us that in keeping with Elisha’s word the jars of oil were filled according to the capacity provided. God will do the same for us if only we are empty, prayerful and yielded. Only one Man in the universe possessed the Holy Spirit without measure and that was the Lord Jesus (see John 3:34 ).

### **4. Illustrate**

## **III. The Sufficiency of the Spirit In Our Lives.**

Once the oil had been poured out Elisha said, “... Go, sell the oil and pay your debt; and you and your sons live on the rest” ( 4:7 ). These practical words teach us that the sufficiency of the Spirit is a blessing which relates to everyday life and also to our ministry. Note from the story that the sufficiency of the oil provided for the following obligations:

#### **1) Public Accountability**

“... Go, sell the oil and pay your debt ...” ( 4:7 ). There are two ways in which every believer is in debt:

##### **A) HE IS IN DEBT TO GOD.**

Paul tells us that “... we are debtors—not ... to live according to the flesh” ( Rom. 8:12 ), which implies that we are in debt to live to God from the moment of conversion. All time lived outside the sufficiency of God’s Spirit is wasted and, therefore, lost. That is why Paul adds, “... if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live” ( Rom. 8:13 ).

##### **B) HE IS IN DEBT TO MAN.**

The apostle realized that he owed a debt to mankind (see Romans 1:14 in terms of his prayers, his ministry, and the gospel. God holds us responsible for fulfilling our obligations in the gospel to every person we meet. It may be by the way we speak or simply by the way we act, but we only discharge our debts by releasing something of the sufficiency of the Holy Spirit.

#### **2) Private Responsibility.**

The injunction was clear: "... you and your sons live on the rest" ( 4:7 ). Public accountability is an obligation which every believer must fulfill, but it in no way excuses him of personal responsibility in private life. If this principle was obeyed we would not be continually hearing of Christians who behave like saints in public but live like devils in private. God holds every believer responsible for a life of tenderness, sympathy, thoughtfulness, and humility in the home. The widow had to keep her life and that of her sons healthy, strong, and useful. What a word to husbands concerning their wives; wives concerning their husbands; parents concerning their children; yes, and children concerning their parents! In Ephesians 5:18–6:9 Paul links the fullness of the Spirit with the church, the home, and business life, and in all three we are to draw our resources from God. Only then will we be individuals who are marked by the identity, reality, and sufficiency of the Spirit.

## Conclusion

Do you have a jar of oil in the house of your life? If so, provide the emptiness, give yourself to prayerfulness and yieldedness, then know and show the life of usefulness in the Holy Spirit. Let your prayer be:

*For this I pray, Lord, for this I plead—*

*Thy Spirit's fullness flood my soul;*

*Be Thou enthroned, Lord, within my heart,*

*And all my yielded life control*

Stephen F. Olford

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... A little girl sat at the tea table, alternately stirring and sipping her tea. Presently, with disappointment in her eyes, she exclaimed, "Mother, it won't come sweet!" The mother realized that she had forgotten to put in the sugar. This done, the sugar itself did the rest. No amount of stirring, or trying, can make our lives sweet; but when we let the Lord Jesus enter, by the power of the Spirit, He makes them pure and lovely. Sweetness of life is only possible as Jesus dwells within, exercising through us the fruit of the Spirit.

### 2. Illustrate

... James Hervey, the friend of the Wesleys at Oxford, describes the change which took place in him through his anointing by the Spirit: that while his preaching was once like the firing of an arrow, all the speed and force thereof depending on the strength of his arm in bending the bow, now it was like firing a rifle-ball, the whole force depending upon the powder back of the ball, and needing only the touch of the finger to let it off.

A. J. Gordon. Quoted in *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 292. Used by permission.

### 3. Illustrate

... J. Wilbur Chapman, Presbyterian clergyman and evangelist, once met the famous missionary, "Praying Hyde," and asked him to come to his room and pray for him. Chapman had been conducting meetings at the time and very much felt the need of spiritual strengthening. Hyde graciously consented to his request, entered

the room, and locked the door. Once they were on their knees, Chapman recalls that he waited five minutes before Hyde uttered a single syllable. So special was the sense of the Lord's presence that Chapman felt hot tears beginning to course down his cheeks although Hyde had not uttered a word. Then looking heavenward, the missionary exclaimed, "O God" and again there was silence. At last, when he sensed that he was in right communion with the Lord, Hyde continued his prayer, uttering such heartfelt petitions as Chapman had never heard. Commenting later, the evangelist said, "I arose from my knees knowing what real prayer was!" Be it ours to learn that one of the great secrets of prayer is prayer in secret.

Adapted from a devotional by Henry G. Bosch in *Our Daily Bread* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class), March 28, 1979.

#### **4. Illustrate**

... When General William Booth was in his eighties he was asked his secret for success. After a moment's pause for reflection, he replied, "I will tell you the secret: God has had all there was of me. There have been men with greater brains than I, men with greater opportunities; but from the day I got the poor of London on my heart, and a vision of what Jesus Christ could do with [them], I made up my mind that God would have all there was of William Booth. And if there is anything of power in the Salvation Army today, it is because God has all the adoration of my heart, all the power of my will, and all the influence of my life." His questioner went away from that meeting knowing that "the greatness of a man's power is the measure of his surrender."

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1367, adapted.

#### **For Further Research**

*For Bibliography on 2 Kings see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 6.*

## **Nine Sermon**

### **NINE, SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** SPIRITUAL SECRETS

**SUBJECT:** The Secret of Victory

**READING:** 2 Kings 6:8–23

**TEXT:** "... Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" ( 6:16 ).

#### **Introduction**

Throughout these chapters Elisha is called "the man of God" because of the life he lived, the ministry he exercised, and the authority he displayed. It is not surprising, therefore, that the devil attacked him at every opportunity; in this case, through the king of Syria. This story teaches us that despite Satan's devices the man of God is invulnerable because he possesses the secret of victory. Consider:

I. The Futility of Satanic Opposition ( 6:13 )

1. The Motivation of the Enemy is Always Wrong ( 6:13 )

2. The Calculation of the Enemy is Always Wrong ( 6:14 )

II. The Reality of Spiritual Revelation ( 6:16 )

1. The Man of God Saw Invisible Realities ( 6:16 )

2. The Man of God Shared Invisible Realities ( 6:17 )

III. The Authority of Sovereign Vindication ( 6:18 )

1. The Man of God was Gloriously Delivered ( 6:18 )

2. The Foes of God Were Gloriously Defeated ( 6:23 )

## **Conclusion**

There are many incentives to a holy life. The supreme one is glorifying God and enjoying Him forever. Another factor is that of being victorious over the evil one by the keeping power of God. May God make us all Elishas of the 20th century-individuals who know the secret of victory in daily experience.

## **NINE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** SPIRITUAL SECRETS

**SUBJECT:** The Secret of Victory

**READING:** 2 Kings 6:8–23

**TEXT:** "... Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" ( 6:16 ).

## **Introduction**

The description by which Elisha is best known throughout these chapters is that of "the man of God." The life he lived, the ministry he exercised, and the authority he displayed earned him this characterization. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find the devil attacking him at every opportunity.

In the story before us, there is an outstanding example of the hatred and hostility of the enemies of God against Jehovah's servant. In point of fact, Elisha had been exposing the plans of the Syrian armies so that attempted attacks on the king of Israel had been thwarted many times. Deeply troubled, and suspecting treachery among his servants, the king of Syria called them together to discover the source of the leakage of his military secrets. The story tells us that one of his servants said, "... Elisha, the prophet, who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom" ( 6:12 ).

The life of a man of God always exposes the plans and plots of the enemy. His character and ministry are a rebuke to the sin and wickedness around him. For this reason he is ever a target of vicious reprisals. This story teaches us that despite Satan's devices the man of God is invulnerable because he possesses the secret of victory. Consider:

## **I. The Futility of Satanic Opposition.**

The king of Syria said, "... Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him ..." ( 6:13 ). Dothan may appear to be a very perilous place in which to be found when the king of Syria is around, but when the man of God is in the center of the will of God there is nothing to fear. He is invulnerable to satanic opposition because:

### **1) The Motivation of the Enemy is Always Wrong**

"... Go and see where he is, that I may send and get him ..." ( 6:13 ). The only motivation the king of Syria had for apprehending Elisha was that the man of God was exposing his evil designs; and that is the only motivation that Satan has for seeking to apprehend us. The enemy of souls hates the holy life for it exposes the ugliness of sin and the emptiness of hypocrisy. Jesus said that the devil was "... a murderer from the beginning ..." and the father of lies ( John 8:44 ); so what else can we expect than vicious opposition from Satan?

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **2) The Calculation of the Enemy is Always Wrong**

"Therefore he sent horses and chariots, and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city" ( 6:14 ). With all his subtlety Satan always oversteps himself and this is dramatically illustrated in this story. Since the king of Syria was aware that Elisha knew his whereabouts, it seems strange that he should try to trick the very man who knew all his secrets. Furthermore, the king of Syria had miscalculated the fact that the biggest army he could command was no match for the hosts that were supporting the man of God. How true are the words, "... If God is for us, who can be against us?" ( Rom. 8:31 ); and again: "... He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" ( 1 John 4:4 ).

We see then that satanic opposition is utterly futile when it is pitted against a man like Elisha. How this should comfort the godly and challenge others to seek and pursue holiness! Such a guided life is also a guarded life.

#### **2. Illustrate**

## **II. The Reality of Spiritual Revelation**

"So [Elisha] answered, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them' " ( 6:16 ). It seems to be a principle of spiritual experience that God graciously gives special revelations to His own people under the pressure of opposition and persecution. Job was given his greatest vision of God under pressures that almost killed him. Daniel proved that Jehovah vindicates His own—even in a den of lions. Paul wrote some of his greatest epistles while chained in a Roman dungeon; and John saw the unveiling of the enthroned Christ and the eternal destinies of men and women while exiled on the isle of Patmos. This was the case with Elisha on this occasion. Encircled with satanic opposition:

### **1) The Man of God Saw Invisible Realities**

"... Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" ( 6:16 ). Like Moses before him, Elisha endured "... as seeing Him who is invisible" ( Heb. 11:27 ). Long before his servant knew what he was talking about, Elisha had seen beyond the Syrian army to invisible hosts of angelic guardians surrounding and protecting him. So he could say with calm composure, "... Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" ( 6:16 ). Doubtless, in his quiet time early that morning, God had given him a vision of His plan and power of deliverance.

From this we learn that when a believer is in the center of God's will Satan's attacks do not ultimately hinder, but only serve to make spiritual and eternal truths all the more precious and real.

## **2) The Man of God Shared Invisible Realities**

“And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” ( 6:17 ). Only the man who has seen spiritual visions himself can make invisible realities clear to others. It appears that while Elisha’s servant was busy ministering day by day he was oblivious to the invisible realities which were being enjoyed by his master. But under the pressure of satanic attack, Elisha was able to pray effectively for his servant, so that his spiritual eyes were opened to behold the mountain full of horses. and chariots of fire.

The lessons are clear. Once we have caught a glimpse of heaven our praying power assumes a new dimension, and miracles take place: people around us who are spiritually blind begin to see what we see. We also find that in Christ we are invulnerable because the greater the opposition from the enemy, the deeper becomes our spiritual experience.

### **3. Illustrate**

## **III. The Authority of Sovereign Vindication**

“So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, and said, ‘Strike this people, I pray, with blindness.’ And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha” ( 6:18 ). A man who keeps in the center of God’s will never has to justify himself; God ultimately vindicates His own. This is exemplified in this historical record of Elisha and the opposing armies of Syria. Notice carefully that the sovereign vindication of Elisha was demonstrated in a twofold fashion:

### **1) The Man of God was Gloriously Delivered.**

In answer to prayer, God struck the Syrians “... with blindness according to the word of Elisha” ( 6:18 ). Could anything be more confirmative for the prophet of the Lord? God acted according to the word of Elisha. If this is not vindication, then nothing else could be. The same will be true of us, if we know what it is to be yielded to the sovereign will of God. He will always vindicate His own by a glorious deliverance—if not immediately then ultimately.

### **4. Amplify**

### **2) The Foes of God Were Gloriously Defeated**

“... So the bands of Syrian raiders came no more into the land of Israel” ( 6:23 ). This defeat of the Syrians is worthy of careful study. There was nothing cruel or murderous about Elisha’s approach to his enemies; indeed, his whole attitude is an outworking of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. In his triumph over the enemy:

#### **A) HE REDUCED THE SYRIANS TO A STATE OF HARMLESSNESS**

“... And He struck them with blindness ...” ( 6:18 ). No purpose is served in challenging Elisha’s strategy in leading the Syrian raiders into the city of Samaria. Elisha was a man of God; therefore, he would not act unethically. Some have suggested that he employed a military technique in misleading his captives while they were blinded and deluded. Another explanation is that he was quite correct in telling the Syrians that the man they sought was in Samaria—for Elisha actually lived in the city of Samaria.

The principle here is that through the victory which Christ affords us we can always render the enemy harmless. This is what Jesus did in relation to Satan, when He died on the cross. Our enemy is very much alive, but he has been rendered inoperative and harmless to the child of God who uses the right weapons of warfare—even to the pulling down of strongholds (see 2 Cor. 10:4 ). John tells us that the faithful “... overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony ...” ( Rev. 12:11 ). The very word “overcame” means “to render the enemy harmless.” Hallelujah for such victory!

## **5. Illustrate**

### **B) HE REDUCED THE SYRIANS TO A STATE OF HELPLESSNESS**

“So it was, when they had come to Samaria, that Elisha said, ‘Lord, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.’ And the Lord opened their eyes ...” ( 6:20 ). Can you imagine the panic and paralysis which overwhelmed the king of Syria and his men when they found themselves at the mercy of the king of Israel. Had Elisha given the word they would have been massacred in cold blood. But there is more than one way of overcoming evil, as we shall see from the teaching of the New Testament.

### **C) HE REDUCED THE SYRIANS TO A STATE OF HOPELESSNESS**

“... he prepared a great feast for them ...” ( 6:23 ). Now while Elisha was up against flesh and blood, the forces behind these Syrians were spiritual wickednesses; yet the New Testament principle of retaliation (that of leaving all vengeance to God) applies in both instances. Note the words of the apostle Paul: “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. ‘Therefore if your enemy hungers, feed him; If he thirsts, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head’ ” ( Rom. 12:19–20 ). The apostle may well have had Elisha in mind when he wrote these words.

So Syria was gloriously defeated, and they “... came no more into the land of Israel” ( 6:23 ). While the name and fame of the man of God spread far and wide, the Syrians feared him even more because they had discovered that he was invincible. There are many incentives to a holy life. The supreme one is that of glorifying God and enjoying Him forever. But there are other motivations that drive us to know this holy walk with the Lord. One is that of being kept from the evil one. John the apostle reminds us that “... whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but the begotten of God keepeth him, and that wicked one toucheth him not” (see 1 John 5:18 , marginal rendering). What peace and poise this brings into the Christian’s life!

## **Conclusion**

Do you know what it is to be kept from the evil one? Are you impervious to the attacks of the enemy? You can be, if you are prepared to be a man of God. Only then will you know the futility of satanic opposition, the reality of spiritual revelation, and the authority of sovereign vindication. God make us all Elishas of the twentieth century!

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Nature provides us with an illustration that closely parallels the insidious tactics employed by our adversary. According to scientists, Arctic polar bears feed almost entirely on seals. To enjoy such a meal, they sometimes resort to a cunning bit of trickery. If the hole through which the seal gets his food is near the edge of the ice, the polar bear will take a deep breath and swim under water to its exact location. Remaining below the

surface, he will then make a tiny scratching sound, imitating a fish. When the charmed seal hears this, he dives in for a quick supper, only to find himself suddenly entrapped in the huge, hungry embrace of his predator.

Similarly, while the man of God is prey for the enemy of souls, thank God Satan's opposition is futile because his motivation is always wrong. The Bible says, "... we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" ( 2 Cor. 13:8 ).

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 4/86.15).

## **2. Illustrate**

... A little boy came to his father and asked, "Father, is Satan bigger than I am?" "Yes, my boy," said the father. "Is he bigger than you, Father?" "Yes, he's bigger than your father." The boy looked surprised, but thought again and asked, "Is he bigger than Jesus?" "No, the Lord Jesus is bigger than he is." The little fellow, as he turned away, said with a smile, "Then I'm not afraid of him."

*Did we in our own strength confide,*

*Our striving would be losing,*

*Were not the right Man on our side,*

*The Man of God's own choosing ...*

M. Luther *Choice Gleanings*, October 23, 1981. Used by permission of Gospel Folio Press, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

## **3. Illustrate**

... The Southern Baptist Convention was organized in 1845 in the First Baptist Church of Augusta, Georgia. As a tribute to the faith of its founding fathers, the church placed this inscription in the building: "Men who see the invisible, hear the inaudible, believe the incredible, and think the unthinkable!"

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1564.

## **4. Amplify**

... Dr. Bob Cook, radio broadcaster, and former president of The King's College (New York), once said: "You never need lift a finger to defend yourself unless you are not quite sure that God can handle the matter. Wait. Wait for time, and wait for God, and strangely enough, wait for yourself! You see, you are not in any sense static—you are constantly changing, growing, advancing, learning, moving along the road of life. If you don't have the answer to some problems in your personality, or in your relations to friends, loved ones, and relations, today—just commit it to the Lord, and wait. You'll find yourself saying, some day soon, 'Now why didn't I think of that before?' "

## **5. Illustrate**

... An Indian gentleman went to Paris, got in with the wrong crowd, became a theosophist, then a spiritist, and was much used as a medium. Eventually, he was converted to God. Then it was that the evil spirits distressed him. For months he was awakened by them night after night, rarely getting half an hour's consecutive

sleep. Tangible hands touched him, and terrible manifestations of their presence afflicted him. He prayed to God but got no relief. At last a voice appeared to say to him, "Mention the blood." He then spoke to them, commanding them by the precious blood of Jesus Christ to leave him. Every time he mentioned the blood they left him: and by that means he obtained complete deliverance.

*Bible League Quarterly*. Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 209. Used by permission.

## For Further Research

*For Bibliography on 2 Kings see. Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 6.*

## Ten Sermon

### TEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Centrality of the Cross

**READING:** 1 Peter 2:13–25

**TEXT:** "... who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" ( 2:24 ).

### Introduction

The cross of Christ is the outworking of God's redemptive purpose. It is a recurring theme in Scripture, is the converging point between two eternities, and must be central to human experience. According to Peter:

- I. The Cross is God's Standard For Men ( 2:21 )
  1. Absolute Sinlessness ( 2:22 )
  2. Absolute Submissiveness ( 2:23 )
- II. The Cross is God's Salvation For Men ( 2:24 )
  1. Deliverance From the Penalty of Sin ( 2:24 )
  2. Deliverance From the Power of Sin ( 2:24 )
  3. Deliverance From the Poison of Sin ( 2:24 )
- III. The Cross is God's Satisfaction For Men ( 2:25 )
  1. The Shepherd Restores the Soul ( 2:25 )
  2. The Shepherd Preserves the Soul ( 2:25 )

## Conclusion

Outside of the cross of Christ God has nothing to say to a sinful world; its message to us is one of deliverance and assurance. Come in repentance to that cross, and by an act of faith make the Christ of the cross central to every relationship of your life. Only then will you know the healing and harmony that flow from the place called Calvary.

## TEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Centrality of the Cross

**READING:** 1 Peter 2:13–25

**TEXT:** "... who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed" ( 2:24 ).

## Introduction

The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the outworking of God's redemptive purpose in time and in eternity. For this very reason the cross is central in God's Word as well as being central to God's world. In the Bible we find the message of the cross of Christ central in the Law, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles, and the Book of Revelation. To remove this recurring truth is to render the Bible meaningless. But the cross is also central to God's world. It was planted on a hill called Calvary in a land called Palestine. The cross is central in history, for the death of Christ divides human history and is the converging; point of two eternities.

But, supremely, the cross of Christ is central to human experience, having an important relevance to the relationships of government and people, masters and servants, husbands and wives. A careful study of these verses makes it obvious that without submission to the Christ of the cross there can be no hope of peace, harmony, or good will. The reason for this will become clear in the passage before us. According to Peter:

## I. The Cross is God's Standard For Men

"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" ( 2:21 ). The word "example" means "something written underneath," "traced," or "copied over." The verb translated "you should follow" is a compound one, suggesting a close following of the example already given. Peter recalls the example of the Lord Jesus and sees in the life and death of the Savior God's standard for all men. Observe that the standard of the suffering Savior was one of:

### 1) Absolute Sinlessness.

Christ "... committed no sin, Nor was guile found in His mouth" ( 2:22 ). Although Peter is here quoting from the Old Testament (see Isaiah 53 ), he is choosing his language carefully. No one followed the Lord Jesus more closely or knew Him more intimately than Peter. Therefore, as he reviews that life and death, he says, He "... committed no sin, Nor was guile found in His mouth" ( 2:22 ). Jesus never failed in deed nor in word; He was neither guilty of error or deceit. This means, of course, that Jesus did not deserve to suffer or die; but as a Lamb without blemish and without spot He suffered and died for men and their salvation. Only a sinless Savior could atone for sinful men.

#### 1. Illustrate

### 2) Absolute Submissiveness

“... who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” ( 2:23 ). The emphasis in this verse is on the surprising silence of Jesus as well as His submission to treatment that He never deserved. When unjustly reproached He did not answer back; when unfairly treated He did not condemn His oppressors, or invoke judgment upon them. In the language of the prophet Isaiah, “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth ...” ( Isa. 53:7 ). Someone has written:

*Why is He silent when word,*

*Would slay His accusers all?*

*Why does He meekly bear their taunts,*

*When angles wait His call?*

*“ He was made sin, ” my sin He bore*

*Upon the accursed tree,*

*And sin hath no defense to make*

*His silence was for me.*

(Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations, p. 663)

We cannot contemplate the Savior’s behavior in suffering and death without being amazed at His submissiveness. This is the example God has set before us in the relationships of government with people, masters with servants, husbands with wives. But the objector says, “This can’t be done! If this is what God expects we are hopelessly lost!” Of course, the answer is that *we are* hopelessly lost! This is why God says, “... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” ( Rom. 3:23 ). Only as we measure ourselves against God’s standard do we realize our desperate need for God’s salvation.

## **II. The Cross is God’s Salvation For Men**

“... who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” ( 2:24 ). The only reason why God sent His Son to die upon the cross is because there was no other way to remove the guilt of sin and to save the souls of men. If there were any other way of salvation, God—in His infinite wisdom and power—could have certainly devised it. This is why the cross is most crucial and central in God’s purpose of redemption. Observe carefully that God’s salvation means:

### **1) Deliverance From the Penalty of Sin**

“... who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree ...” ( 2:24 ). Here is the clearest statement concerning the purpose of the death of Christ. Whatever theories may surround the doctrine of the atonement one thing is inescapable: Christ died for our sins when He hung upon that tree. The whole description in this verse is spectacular and dramatic. Peter is giving his testimony as an eyewitness of an event in history, pointing out that the One who died to put away sin was none other than Christ Himself. He emphasizes “who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree ...” ( 2:24 ). Jesus did nothing less than take our penalty “ *right up onto the tree,* ” as the original has it. No one else could have done this.

## 2. Illustrate

### 2) Deliverance From the Power of Sin

“... we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness ...” ( 2:24 ). We cannot study these words without reaching the conclusion that the purpose of Christ’s passion was not only to deliver us from the penalty of sin, but also from the power of sin. We might add that as we come to appreciate the death of Christ we cannot do anything else but hate sin and love righteousness. Peter uses a word here which does not occur again in the whole of the New Testament. He tells us that we are to be dead to sin and alive unto righteousness. The word “dead” means “removed from” and was used by Greek writers describe the departed or the dead. The idea Peter has in mind is that through the cross of Christ we have no more connection with our old sin or with a life of sinning. By the power of the risen Lord we are now to separate ourselves from sinfulness and dedicate ourselves wholly to righteousness. What a difference this would make to all our relationships of life!

### 3) Deliverance From the Poison of Sin

“... by whose stripes [we] were healed” ( 2:24 ). While Peter is quoting here first Isaiah 53:5 he also has in mind the unmerciful scourging of the Lord Jesus. He can still visualize those lacerations on the Savior’s body, so he declares, “... by *whose stripes* [we] were healed” ( 2:24 ). Sin is not only a matter of guilt and power in our lives, but also of poison which affects the whole of our personalities. Sin is a sickness for which there is only one antidote: it is the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. His life laid down in death and taken up again in resurrection cleanses, purifies, and heals.

Have you by faith appropriated this great salvation God has provided in His Son? Have you laid hold of His deliverance for the penalty, power, and poison of sin? Until you do you are lost, for this is the only standard that God accepts: this is the only salvation which makes any sense in time or in eternity.

## III. The Cross is God’s Satisfaction For Men

“For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” ( 2:25 ). In His inscrutable wisdom, God has made provision not only for our salvation. but for our satisfaction. It is one thing to be saved, it is another to realize all that God has designed for our redeemed humanity. So we need both a Savior and a Shepherd (see v. 25 ). Two thoughts suggest themselves:

### 1) The Shepherd Restores the Soul

“... the Shepherd ... of your souls” ( 2:25 ). Without doubt, Peter has Psalm 23 in mind where David says, ‘The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; lie leads me beside the still waters. He *restores* my soul ...’ ( 23:1–3 ).

Even after our salvation there is a tendency to wander and stray. Indeed, until the day of our final redemption we will possess a perverse nature which can be overcome only by the indwelling life of Christ. Therefore, at any point that we decentralize our faith from Christ to ourselves we can fail again. This is where our Shepherd comes along to restore our souls. The thought is more than restoration from sin: it involves a restoration to a peace “which surpasses ... understanding” ( Phil. 4:7 ); a joy which is “... joy inexpressible and full of glory” ( 1 Pet. 1:8 ); a hope which is “sure and steadfast” ( Heb. 6:19 ); and a love which is “... as strong as death ...” ( Song of Sol. 8:6 ). Restoration, therefore, is fellowship with God and with fellow saints. There is nothing more satisfying in all the world than to know soul restoration. As St. Augustine exclaimed, “Our souls were made for God and we are restless until we find our rest in Him.”

### 2) The Shepherd Preserves the Soul

“... the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” ( 2:25 ). If restoration is the negative aspect of the Shepherd’s ministry, then preservation is the positive aspect of this same ministry. Writing to the saints at Thessalonica, Paul prayed for the preservation of their total personality. “... the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely,” he says, ‘and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ’ ( 1 Thess. 5:23 ). It is a glorious thought to contemplate that under the care of the Shepherd and Overseer (or Bishop) of our souls we can be preserved blameless until Jesus Christ comes again and our work on earth is done. Paul had this confidence for himself, for he could say, “... I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” ( 2 Tim. 1:12 ; see also John 10:28 ).

### **3. Illustrate**

## **Conclusion**

We have seen what we mean by the centrality of the cross of Christ. It is God’s standard for men, it is God’s salvation for men, and it is God’s satisfaction for men. Outside of the cross of Christ God has nothing to say to a sinful world; its message to us is one of deliverance and assurance. Come in repentance to that cross, and by an act of faith make the Christ of that cross central to every relationship of your life. Only then will you know the healing and harmonizing streams that flow from the place called Calvary.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... At the close of an evangelistic service a gentleman approached Dr. D. M. Stearns with a criticism, “I don’t like your way of preaching. I do not care for all this talk about Christ dying for the lost. Instead of preaching the death of Christ on the cross it’s better to be up-to-date. Preach Jesus, the teacher and example.” “Would you then be willing to follow Him if I preach Christ as the great example?” asked Dr. Stearns. “I would,” said the gentleman. “I would follow in His steps.” “Then,” Dr. Stearns said, “let us take the first step: ‘Who did no sin,’ as we read in 1 Peter 2:22 . Can you take this step?” The critic seemed confused. “No,” he said, “I do sin, I must admit.” “Well, then,” said Dr. Stearns, “your first need of Christ is not as an example, but as a Savior.”

Clarence Jones. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1227.

### **2. Illustrate**

... One afternoon in 1975 Daniel Waswa, a citizen of Kenya, East Africa struggled up a hill and was crucified by his wife at his own direction. As he hung on the cross, he told the gathered crowd: “I am dying for the sins of all Kenyans.” After nailing her husband to the cross, the woman collapsed and died, apparently from shock. Waswa’s neighbors knew this was no spur-of-the-moment act. He had talked about it for a year and had told them he had been called by God for this purpose. They begged him to let them take him down. He refused all requests. Finally, he was taken down still alive, but he soon died of the nail-wounds, which had become infected. A tragic sacrifice offered in vain, wherein two died! There is only one sacrifice by which mankind may live—Jesus Himself.

James C. Hefley. *Prophetic Witness*, vol 8, no. 3 (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, March, 1984), p. 15.

### **3. Illustrate**

## **“Full Coverage”**

*I have an insurance policy  
Written in the blood of the Lamb,  
Sealed on the Cross of Jesus,  
Redeemable wherever I am!  
The company will never go bankrupt,  
It is bonded by God’s promise true;  
It will keep every word of its contract,  
Exactly what it says it will do.  
I don’t have to die to collect it,  
No Premiums do I have to pay;  
All I do is to keep God’s promise  
And walk in His holy way.  
No collector will ever come calling,  
It was paid on Calvary’s tree;  
It insures me for living and dying  
And for all eternity.*

H. H. Hover— *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1190.

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## Eleven Sermon

### ELEVEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Claims of the Cross

**READING:** [Matthew 27:27–32](#)

**TEXT:** "... Him they compelled to bear His cross" ( [27:32](#) ).

#### Introduction

Once the sentence of death was pronounced, we are told that Jesus was led forth to Calvary, bearing His cross. So great was the strain and suffering of the preceding hours and so heavy was His wooden load that the Roman soldiers feared His collapse. Therefore, they commandeered Simon to carry the cross to Golgatha's hill. Three considerations demand our attention:

- I. The Compulsion of the Cross ( [27:32](#) )
  1. A Change of Direction ( [27:32](#) )
  2. A Change of Devotion ( [Luke 23:26](#) )
- II. The Costliness of the Cross ( [27:32](#) )
  1. The Shame of the Cross ( [27:32](#) )
  2. The Suffering of the Cross ( [27:32](#) )
  3. The Sacrifice of the Cross ( [27:32](#) )
- III. The Compensations of the Cross ( [27:32](#) )
  1. The Blessing of the Cross In the Home ( [Mark 15:21](#) )
  2. The Blessing of the Cross In the Church ( [Acts 13:1](#) )
  3. The Blessing of the Cross In the World ( [27:32](#) )

#### Conclusion

Jesus still calls for cross-bearers, but we cannot adequately present a crucified Savior without knowing a crucified life. Before we shrink from this holy responsibility let us remember that Jesus took up the cross for our sakes. Now He asks us to share its shame, suffering, and sacrifice in order that its redemptive power may be

released through our lives to the world that we represent. God give us the grace to follow Simon of Cyrene who took up the cross and bore it after Jesus.

## **ELEVEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Claims of the Cross

**READING:** [Matthew 27:27–32](#)

**TEXT:** “... Him they compelled to bear His cross” ( [27:32](#) ).

### **Introduction**

Once the sentence of death was pronounced, we are told that Jesus was led forth to Calvary, bearing His cross. So great was the strain and suffering of the preceding hours and so heavy was His wooden load that the Roman soldiers feared His complete collapse. We read that “... they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross” to Golgatha’s hill ( [27:32](#) ). Three considerations demand our attention:

### **I. The Compulsion of the Cross**

“... Him they compelled to bear His cross” ( [27:32](#) ). The word “compelled” is of ancient origin. It was used of Persian couriers who had the authority, at a regular stage in the journey, of commandeering anyone they deemed suitable to carry precious cargo or correspondence to a desired destination.

Whether or not Simon was a disciple of Jesus at this point is not revealed. What is clear, however, is that the compulsion of the cross demanded:

#### **1) A Change of Direction**

“... as they came out, they found a man ...” ( [27:32](#) ). Mark tells us that Simon was “... coming out of the country” ( [Mark 15:21](#) ). From that point onward he traveled in a different direction; this was the spiritual turning point in Simon’s life. No one can bear the cross of Christ without experiencing a revolutionary change. Jesus said, “... If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” ( [Luke 9:23](#) ). Simon’s desires and designs that day had to be denied for Jesus Christ. Bearing the cross always means saying no to self and yes to Christ.

#### **2) A Change of Devotion.**

Luke records that “... they laid the cross [on Simon] that he might bear it after Jesus” ( [Luke 23:26](#) ). How suggestive this is! Bearing the cross and following Jesus are the essence of Christian devotion. Jesus taught that unless a person was willing to bear the cross and follow Him he could not be His disciple (see [Luke 14:27](#) ). Discipleship denotes desire, discipline, and devotion.

As we contemplate the compulsion of the cross we need to ask ourselves whether we have faced its demand upon our lives? Has the cross changed the direction and devotion of our lives?

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **II. The Costliness of the Cross**

“... Him they compelled to bear His cross” ( 27:32 ). Simon literally carried the cross that day. He felt its curse, its weight, its pain, but even more important, Simon became identified with the threefold costliness of the cross:

### **1) The Shame of the Cross**

“... Him they compelled to bear His cross” ( 27:32 ). It is said of the Lord Jesus that “... for the joy that was set before Him [He] endured the cross, despising the shame ...” ( Heb. 12:2 ). There is such a thing as the shame of the cross. Paul calls it “... the offense of the cross ...” ( Gal. 5:11 ). The word “shame” means “to cover up.” It is the reaction to exposure and vulnerability. Never was a man in history more exposed and vulnerable than Simon on that first Good Friday.

To be identified with Jesus Christ is to be put into the open; and man does not like that! In his unregeneracy—and even carnality—he prefers the darkness. As Jesus taught: “... this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” ( John 3:19 ). But once a man takes up the cross, the days of secrecy are over. He goes further to endure the cross, despising the shame.

### **2) The Suffering of the Cross**

“... Him they compelled to bear His cross” ( 27:32 ). As the weight of that wooden load sank into Simon’s shoulder, he experienced suffering. What was physically true of that Cyrenian must be spiritually true of you and me. Peter tells us that “... Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow His steps” ( 1 Peter 2:21 ). Etymologically speaking, the word “suffering” means ‘to bear the weight.’ Jesus bore our sins, our sorrows, our sicknesses in a complete and atoning sense. In this respect we can never follow Him. However, in the outworking of what He has done for us we can have a share. This is what Paul means when he speaks about filling up “... what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church” ( Col. 1:24 ). George MacDonald has written: “The Son of God suffered unto death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His.” This “fellowship of suffering” ( Phil. 3:10 ) is sharing the Savior’s redemptive concern for a world of sin, sorrow, and sickness. It is dying to our selfishness and living by His selflessness. Paul could say, “always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you” ( 2 Cor. 4:10–12 ).

### **2. Illustrate**

### **3) The Sacrifice of the Cross**

“... Him they compelled to bear His cross” ( 27:32 ). Simon could never have carried that cross all the way to Calvary without lingering to see Jesus give Himself in sacrificial death. Ever after he could say with Paul, “... the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” ( Gal. 2:20 ).

So the sacrifice of the cross is giving one’s body and blood in redemptive service. It is holding back nothing for the glory of God and the good of man. No demand will be too great for the believer who personally knows something of the claims of the cross upon his life. C. T. Studd, that famous cricketer and missionary of a bygone generation, made these words his motto: “If Jesus Christ be God, and died for me, then no sacrifice is too great for me to make for Him.”

### **3. Illustrate**

Have you counted the cost of bearing the cross? If you had been Simon of Cyrene would you have accepted that wooden load to bear it after Jesus?

### **III. The Compensations of the Cross**

“... Him they compelled to bear His cross” ( 27:32 ). We know very little of the subsequent life of Simon of Cyrene, but what is disclosed is full of instruction and inspiration. We learn, for instance, that God is no man’s debtor. We cannot bear the cross in vain; there are the compensations of the cross.

#### **4. Illustrate**

For Simon, this meant:

##### **1) The Blessing of the Cross In the Home.**

Mark recalls that Simon of Cyrene was “... the father of Alexander and Rufus ...” ( Mark 15:21 ). This man was so transformed by the power of Christ that the blessing of the cross overflowed to his home. Mark refers to his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, as well known believers in the Christian church. “It is tempting, in view of the tradition that Mark’s Gospel is Petrine preaching as it took shape at Rome, to see a possible reference to the Rufus of the Roman church” (Dr. Alan Cole, *The Gospel According to St. Mark [ TNTC ]*, p. 238). Paul certainly acknowledges Rufus as a man “... chosen in the Lord ...” and his mother (Simon’s wife) as a mother in the Lord to the great apostle ( Rom. 16:13 ). What a home this must have been! Today, the only answer to the problems of the home is cross-bearing. Only when the power of the cross penetrates the relationships of husband and wife, parents and children, is there authority, stability, and security in the home.

##### **2) The Blessing of the Cross In the Church.**

When Luke enumerates the leaders who taught and ministered in the church at Antioch, he names “... Simeon who was called Niger ...” ( Acts 13:1 ). Many scholars maintain that this is our man. Indeed, some suggest that he was a black man since he came from Libya in North Africa and was surnamed Niger. If these suppositions are correct then Simon became one of the greatest blessings in the life of the early church. As Alan Cole puts it: ‘Simon of Cyrene might be taken homiletically as a picture of every disciple, bearing the Lord’s cross for Him.’

How we need men of the cross in the church of Jesus Christ today! Only where Calvary is a reality is sin judged, self crucified, and the Spirit outpoured.

##### **3) The Blessing of the Cross in the World**

“... Him they compelled to bear His cross” ( 27:32 ). We can never compute the blessing which Simon has become to the world since that first Good Friday. Throughout the centuries the story of cross-bearing, at the moment of our Savior’s greatest need, has converted and inspired millions. In this sense, Simon has been honored above Peter, James, John, or any other disciple who forsook the Master and fled, leaving Him to carry His cross alone.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus still calls for cross-bearers. To heed His call is to become a blessing to your generation in the home, in the church, and in the world. We cannot adequately present a crucified Christ without a crucified life, and crucifixion, in terms of personal living, is bearing the cross, accepting its claims upon our lives. Before we shrink from this holy responsibility let us remember that Jesus took up the cross in the first place in order that

we might be pardoned from our sins and quickened by His Spirit. Now He asks us to share its shame, suffering, and sacrifice in order that its redemptive power might be released through our lives to the world that we represent. No wonder Jesus said, "... whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" ( Luke 14:27 ). Once we have faced this challenge of cross-bearing we are left with one of two choices: either to be a disciple or a deserter. God give us the grace to follow Simon of Cyrene who took up the cross and bore it after Jesus.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... A man came back from a weekend retreat experience and when a friend asked him how it was, he said, "I died!" The friends asked him what he meant. "You see," the man answered, "I went to this thing not knowing what to expect. But in the process of that long weekend, I discovered that I had spent my whole life hiding behind a lot of masks. I realized that I had never even let my wife see me as I really was. I'd been playing games with her, and playing games with my children, and playing games with others—never letting anybody know who I really am. The worst of it was to discover that even I didn't know myself. I was not in touch with my own honest feelings about myself. And, as all of this was being exposed over the weekend, I died over and over again." It is a painful thing for a middle-aged man to discover that he is not even in touch with his own honest feeling about himself. "I am convinced," he said, "that I had to go through this death experience in order to become the new person that I hope to be now." Unless a grain of wheat falls to earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears rich fruit.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 2/87.11).

### **2. Illustrate**

... The proprietor of a dry cleaning and dyeing business hung this quaint sign in his window: "We dye to live, we live to dye; the more we dye, the more we live; and the more we live, the more we dye." For the child of God, it is also true that the more he dies, the more he lives.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 7.18/86).

### **3. Illustrate**

... When James Calvert went out to cannibal Fiji with the message of the gospel, the captain of the ship in which he traveled sought to dissuade him. "You will risk your life and all those with you if you go among such savages," he said. Calvert's magnificent reply was, "We died before we came here." And yet he would have been the last to talk about a sacrifice; it was not a life of sacrifice, but of real pleasure.

*King's Business*. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1177.

### **4. Illustrate**

... When Sir Walter Raleigh spread his beautiful new cloak over the mud so that Queen Elizabeth might walk without getting her shoes dirty, he was shrewd enough to know that nothing is lost that is given to royalty. Indeed, in a very true sense, it is impossible really to deny one's self for our King. His return is so swift and so vastly in excess of what we give. But it is the heart of self-sacrifice that He wants.

Russel Sewall, *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, p. 1157.

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## Twelve Sermon

### TWELVE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Crime of the Cross

**READING:** [Mark 15:1–15](#)

**TEXT:** “For he [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy” ( [15:10](#) ).

#### Introduction

One of the seven deadly sins mentioned in Scripture is that of envy. It is evil under every guise, but especially so when garbed with the vestments of pretentious piety. A threefold picture of this ugly sin is given us in this chapter which is sufficient to send us to the cross for deliverance. As we consider the context let us observe:

- I. The Conception of the Sin of Envy ( [15:18](#) )
  1. Envy is the Rejection of the Deity of Jesus Christ ( [15:10](#) )
  2. Envy is the Rejection of the Sovereignty of Jesus Christ ( [15:10](#) )
- II. The Consequence of the Sin of Envy ( [15:10](#) )
  1. Envy Distorts the Sense of All True Value ( [15:11](#) )
  2. Envy Destroys the Source of All True Virtue ( [15:13–15](#) )
- III. The Conquest of the Sin of Envy ( [15:10](#) )
  1. The Saving Work of Christ ( [15:31](#) )
  2. The Saving Word of Christ ( [15:31](#) )

#### Conclusion

By the wonder-working power of God, the cross of Christ has been turned into a throne of grace where sinners can find forgiveness and cleansing. So as we come afresh to the foot of the cross let us confess the sin of envy and claim the promise that "... the blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanses us from all sin" ( 1 John 1:7 ; see also v. 9 ). Let us come with true repentance, with genuine faith, and with determined faith. Only then we will know victory over this insidious evil.

## TWELVE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Crime of the Cross

**READING:** Mark 15:1–15

**TEXT:** "For he [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy" ( 15:10 ).

### Introduction

The sin of envy—one of the seven deadly sins mentioned in Scripture—is the outstanding crime of the cross. Envy is evil under every guise, but especially so when garbed with the vestments of pretentious piety. The fact that envy can and does penetrate the boundaries of religious life should come as a salutary warning to every heart. A threefold picture of this green-eyed monster is given us in this chapter which is sufficient to send us to the cross for deliverance. As we consider the context let us observe:

### I. The Conception of the Sin of Envy

"For ... [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy" ( 15:10 ). According to that Greek scholar, W. E. Vine, envy is "the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others." Almost without exception, this is the bad sense in which the word is used throughout the New Testament, but it does not reveal the motivating power behind this malicious evil. Only as we examine the events that led up to that first Good Friday and then carefully analyze our text do we see that the conception of envy is theological, both in its implication and application. In other words:

#### 1) Envy is the Rejection of the Deity of Jesus Christ

"... [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy" ( 15:10 ). Only a matter of weeks earlier the Lord Jesus had performed the greatest of all His miracles, that of raising a man to life again after he had been buried for four days. Such was the testimony of Lazarus to this remarkable miracle that the fame of Jesus spread far and wide (see John 11:47–53 ). Everybody knew that a miracle like this could only be performed by God, but these Jews did not want to acknowledge this fact (see John 3:2 ). They said to Pilate, "... We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God" ( John 19:7 ). Here was the implication behind this sin of envy.

But with the implication there is the application. When people accept the deity of Jesus Christ they are committed to a manner of response compatible with the demands of divine revelation. Writing to his son in the faith, Timothy, Paul says, "If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, *from which come envy ...*" ( 1 Tim. 6:3–4 ). The application is clear: to reject the Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine of godliness is to be proud and envious. It is a simple, but serious, matter of cause and effect.

Even more basic to this passage is the unveiling of human sin that is portrayed for us in Romans 1:28–29 . Writing of the depravity of human hearts, Paul says that when men refuse to retain God in their knowledge they are given up to the fullness of envy. This is true of personal life, social life, national life, and ecclesiastical life. The hatred, jealousy, and malice evident in religious circles today is the direct result of the rejection of the deity of Jesus Christ. If He is only a man like ourselves then He is just a religious convenience or a compelling image; but if He is God then we must either own and obey Him as God or we react with envy, malice, and murder in our hearts.

## **2) Envy is the Rejection of the Sovereignty of Jesus Christ**

“For [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy” ( 15:10 ). The main issue on which Pilate and the religious leaders crossed swords was the sovereignty of Jesus Christ. What infuriated the chief priests and Pharisees was the fact that Pilate had presented Jesus Christ as the *King* of the Jews (see Mark 15:9 ; also John 18:36–37 ; 19:14–15 ). The same crowd, only a few days earlier, had chanted, “... Hosanna to the Son of David! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ Hosanna in the highest!” When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that Christ did, and heard the children singing, “... ‘Hosanna to the Son of David? *they were indignant*” ( Matt. 21:9 , 15 ). Even then there was a rejection of the sovereignty of Jesus Christ; but now that Pilate had confirmed the same messianic kingship, the malice and envy of these leaders knew no bounds.

Once again, an important principle underlies the reactions of the leaders and people to the declared sovereignty of Jesus Christ. Paul reminds us that there is a fundamental distinction between the fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:22–23 ; 5:16–26 ). No one can be filled with the Spirit of God without the acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as undisputed Lord (see 1 Cor. 12:3 ). When the Spirit fills the life fruit appears; where there is a refusal to own the Lordship of Christ the works of the flesh are inevitable (see Gal. 5:19–21 ; Titus 3:3 )—among them envy.

Envy, therefore, is the direct result of rejecting the deity and sovereignty of Jesus Christ. This is what we mean by the conception of the sin of envy. Let us see that this lust is never found in our hearts for, ultimately, it brings forth death (see James 1:15 ).

### **1. Illustrate**

## **II. The Consequence of the Sin of Envy**

“For ... [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy” ( 15:10 ). Following this statement we read that “... the chief priests stirred up the crowd ...” ( 15:11 ). The sin of envy is inflammable: it can burn like coals of fire, quickly spread like a flame, and get out of control (see Song of Sol. 8:6 ).

### **1) Envy Distorts the Sense of All True Value**

“... the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should ... release Barabbas ...” ( 15:11 ). This is quite astonishing. Everybody in the crowd knew that Barabbas was a prisoner who had been committed for insurrection and murder; yet so distorted was all sense of value that the people cried for the release of Barabbas and the crucifixion of our Lord. Think of it: Barabbas instead of Jesus, a robber instead of a giver, a sinner instead of a Savior, a killer instead of a healer, a peacebreaker instead of a peacemaker. This is how envy distorts all sense of value. Once a person is mesmerized by this green-eyed monster he will stoop to any level of sin. This is true of the unregenerate; it is also true of the regenerate. Even though born of the Spirit of God, every Christian is possessed of the old nature until the day of final redemption. Therefore, if and when the believer takes his eyes off the Master, envy can emerge in all its ugliness and maliciousness.

## 2. Illustrate

### 2) Envy Destroys the Source of All True Virtue

“So [the people] cried out again, ‘Crucify Him!’ Then Pilate said to them, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ And they cried out more exceedingly, ‘Crucify Him!’... Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified” ( 15:13–15 ). This is the ultimate consequence of the sin of envy.

Everyone in that crowd that day knew of the *virtuous life* of the Lord Jesus; in Him the mosaic of God’s character was totalized. As a perfect Man under the control of His Father, He manifested the fruit of the Spirit. Peter bore witness that He was “... the Christ, the Son of the living God” ( Matt. 16:16 ). Pilate admitted, “... I find no fault in this Man” ( Lk. 23:4 ), and even the demons declared that He was “... the Holy One of God!” ( Mark 1:24 ). In a word, Jesus Christ was the summation of all moral qualities, the incarnation of all virtue. Yet, in spite of all that Jesus revealed and represented of divine virtue, the people cried “Crucify Him! Crucify Him?” Today, envy is still as ugly and sinful as it was on that first Good Friday. If it is found in your heart it will distort the sense of all true value and destroy the source of all true virtue.

## 3. Illustrate

### III. The Conquest of the Sin of Envy

“For ... [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy” ( 15:10 ). Later on in the chapter we read, “... the chief priests, ... together with the scribes, mocked and said among themselves, “He saved others; Himself He cannot save” ( 15:31 ). Motivated by envy, these blinded men could never have spoken words more true or triumphant.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus taught, “... whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” ( Luke 9:24 ); and again: “... unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” ( John 12:24 ). This is the principle of life out of death. If the Savior had come down from the cross everyone of those murderers would have been consigned to hell without grace, forgiveness, or hope. Instead, the Master prayed for them: “... Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do ...” ( Luke 23:34 ). In the mocking words of the chief priests we see the very conquest of the sin of envy. In their statement the enemies of Jesus unwittingly implied:

#### 1) The Saving Work of Christ

“... He saved others; Himself He cannot save” ( 15:31 ). The purpose for which the Lord Jesus came into the world was “... to save His people from their sins” ( Matt. 1:21 ). During His ministry the Master declared that He was “... come to seek and to save that which was lost” ( Luke 19:10 ); and Paul later testified that “... Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ...” ( 1 Tim. 1:15 ). The interesting and yet inevitable consequence of the saving work of Christ is that it requires and restores the concept of His Deity. Even the enemies of Jesus Christ had to admit that no one could forgive sins but “God alone” ( Mark 2:7 ). If we want to know deliverance from the sin of envy we have to kneel at the foot of the cross and exclaim with Thomas, the disciple, “... My Lord and *my God* !” ( John 20:28 ). When Jesus hung upon the cross He was reconciling the world unto Himself (see 2 Cor. 5:19 ). In the mystery that no one can ever fathom, the entire Trinity was involved in that redemptive act of sinbearing. The Son of God, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God when He hung upon that tree to make remission for our sins (see Heb. 9:14 ). He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, “... that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” ( 2 Cor. 5:21 ).

#### 2) The Saving Word of Christ

“... *He saved* others; Himself He cannot save” ( 15:31 ). This statement represents not only the work of Christ but the word of Christ. Without the work we would have no word to preach. Paul tells us that because of the cross we have a gospel. Indeed, he says, “... the message [the word] of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” ( 1 Cor. 1:18 ). Peter reminds us that when this saving word is applied it becomes effective. He says: “But the word of the Lord endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. Therefore, laying aside all malice, all guile, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” ( 1 Pet. 1:25–2:3 ).

If you are following the reasoning of this exposition you will notice that if the saving work of Christ requires and restores the concept of Deity, then the word of Christ requires and restores the concept of sovereignty, *for when Jesus Christ is Lord His word is law*. A slave never answers back to his master; and as bondslaves of Jesus Christ we are committed to a life of total obedience. As we apply that saving word to our lives, day by day, we are given power to lay aside all malice, envyings, and evil speaking so that we grow, like newborn babes, and prove the Lord to be full of grace and goodness in our lives.

## Conclusion

By the wonder-working power of God, the cross of Christ has been turned into a throne of grace where sinners can find forgiveness and cleansing. The crime of all ages has now become the cure of all ages. So as we come afresh to the foot of the cross let us confess the sin of envy and hear the Spirit say, “... the blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanses us from all sin” ( 1 John 1:7 ). But we must come with true repentance, with genuine faith, and with determined obedience. Only then will He be “... faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; only then will we know victory over this insidious evil.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... The young lady to whom Mozart was first engaged to be married became discontented with her choice when she saw more of the world, and gave up the composer. She thought him too small in stature. When the world had begun to recognize his greatness, she explained her refusal of him by saying: “I knew nothing of the greatness of his genius. I saw only a little man.” Isaiah speaks of the rejection of Christ by the world in much the same way. These are his words: “He is despised and rejected of men.” But oh! how disappointed will those men be, when they shall see Him in His beauty!

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### 2. Illustrate

... The Devil was once crossing the Libyan Desert when he came upon a group of small fiends who were tempting a holy hermit. They tried him with the seductions of the flesh, they sought to sow his mind with doubts and fears, they told him that all his austerities were worth nothing. But it was all in vain. The holy man was impeccable. Then the Devil stepped forward. Addressing the imps he said, “Your methods are too crude. Permit me for one moment to make a recommendation.” Going up to the hermit, he asked, “Have you heard the news? Your brother has been made Bishop of Alexandria.” The fable says that “a scowl of malignant jealousy clouded the serene face of the holy man.”

W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Illustration*, (London: Epworth Press, 1946), p. 19.

### 3. Illustrate

... On a wall of a chapel in Padua, an old city in northeastern Italy, is a painting by the Renaissance artist Giotto. On it he depicted Envy with long ears that could hear every bit of news of another's success. He also gave to Envy the tongue of a serpent to poison the reputation of the one being envied. But if you look carefully at the painting you will notice that the tongue coils back and stings the eyes of the figure itself. Not only did Giotto picture Envy as being blind, but also as destroying itself with its own venomous evil. It always brings harm to the embittered person in whose heart it resides.

David C. Egner, *Our Daily Bread* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class), November 18, 1982.

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## Thirteen Sermon

### THIRTEEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Christ of the Cross

**READING:** [Isaiah 53:1–12](#)

**TEXT:** "... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" ( [53:5](#) ).

### Introduction

Two Old Testament passages describe the death of Christ with remarkable detail. The first is Psalm 22 ; the other, Isaiah 53 —both written hundreds of years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Surely, this is one of the outstanding evidences of prophetic accuracy and infallibility. The chapter before us is the Scripture portion

which Philip shared with the Ethiopian eunuch as he "... preached Jesus to him" ( Acts 8:35 ). It vividly depicts God's sin-bearing Servant. Consider:

- I. The Majesty of the Savior's Person ( 52:13–15 )
  1. The Majesty of His Sovereignty ( 52:13 )
  2. The Majesty of His Agony ( 52:14 )
  3. The Majesty of His Victory ( 52:15 )
- II. The Mystery of the Savior's Passion ( 53:1–9 )
  1. About the Life of Christ ( 53:2-3 )
  2. About the Death of Christ ( 53:4–9 )
- III. The Ministry of the Savior's Purpose ( 53:10–12 )
  1. Spiritual Fertility ( 53:10 )
  2. Spiritual Longevity ( 53:10 )
  3. Spiritual Prosperity ( 53:10 )
  4. Spiritual Maturity ( 53:11 )
  5. Spiritual Activity ( 53:11 )
  6. Spiritual Supremacy ( 53:12 )

## **Conclusion**

We have seen Isaiah's unveiling of the Christ of Calvary. May God enable us to appreciate the agony of Good Friday as well as to appropriate the victory. of Easter Sunday.

## **THIRTEEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Christ of the Cross

**READING:** [Isaiah 53:1–12](#)

**TEXT:** "... He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" ( [53:5](#) ).

## **Introduction**

Two Old Testament passages describe the death of Christ with remarkable comprehensiveness and arresting vividness. The first is Psalm 22 , written over a thousand years before Christ; the second, Isaiah 53 , penned 700 years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Surely, this is one of the outstanding evidences of prophetic

accuracy and infallibility. For those who know their Bible, there can be no doubt that the person described in this 53rd chapter of Isaiah is Jesus Christ. When the Ethiopian eunuch inquired of Philip the evangelist as to whom the prophet Isaiah was referring, we read that "... Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him" ( Acts 8:35 ). So in this chapter we are confronted with the Man of Sorrows and the Christ of the cross.

Scholars point out that Isaiah 53 actually commences with the 13th verse of Chapter 52 , and that the whole section is divided into three divisions. We shall consider each in order of sequence:

## **I. The Majesty of the Savior's Person**

"Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high.... So shall He sprinkle many nations" ( 52:13–15 ). The suffering Savior is introduced to us here from heaven's viewpoint; and Calvary means little if we do not appreciate the majesty of His person, as unveiled to us in these three verses:

### **1) The Majesty of His Sovereignty**

"Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high" ( 52:13 ). In striking language these words describe our Savior's life on earth—even unto the death of the cross. In total obedience to His Father's will, God's Servant acted wisely until His triumphant cry, "It is finished!" Therefore, God could exalt Him to the highest heaven. This is the significance of the three stages referred to in verse 13 — "Behold, ... He shall be exalted ..." —at His resurrection; "and extolled" —at His ascension; "... and be very high" —at His enthronement.

### **2) The Majesty of His Agony**

"... *His visage was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men*" ( 52:14 ). Isaiah is telling us that the face of Christ was so marred that His appearance was unlike the sons of men. This, of course, was due to the brutalities that preceded HIS crucifixion (see Matt. 26:67–68 ; 27:27–30 ). Disfigured as He was, however, there was a majesty about His agony. Indeed, never was Jesus Christ more a King than when He hung on Calvary's tree, wearing His crown of thorns!

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **3) The Majesty of His Victory**

"So shall He sprinkle many nations ..." ( 52:15 ). If the word 'sprinkle' be retained, then the sprinkling connotes the spiritual cleansing of the nations to be evangelized. Other commentators, however, render the verb "startle many nations." This would anticipate the day when that marred face is going to radiate with unspeakable glory, and nations will be startled. Kings will shut their mouths, and those who have ignored Him will be obliged to give Him audience and attention. Paul tells us that the time will come when "... at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" ( Phil. 2:10–11 ).

## **II. The Mystery of the Savior's Passion**

"Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" ( 53:1 ; see also w. 2–9 ). The cross of Christ has always been a mystery to the non-Christian. Christ crucified is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks (see 1 Cor. 1:23 ). That is why Isaiah the prophet asks, "Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" ( 53:1 )?

## 1) There is a Mystery About the Life of Christ

“For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant.... He is despised and rejected by men ...” ( 53:2–3 ). From heaven’s perspective, the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world was like “... a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground ...” ( 53:2 ). God the Father could look down upon the Savior and declare, “... This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” ( Matt. 3:17 ). Amid the barrenness of lifeless religion and hopeless formalism, He was divine life, light, and love. Unregenerate men and women saw no beauty in Him. Because of their sinful attitude they “... hid, as it were, [their] faces from Him; ... and ... did not esteem Him”; therefore, He was “despised and rejected” ( 53:2–3 ). John tells us that “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” ( John 1:11 ). That is still true today. Our Savior is still despised and rejected of men. They see no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. This is a mystery, but it is also a fact of life.

## 2) There is a Mystery About the Death of Christ

“Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows;.... And [He] made His grave with the wicked ...” ( 53:4-9 ). If people find the life of Jesus hard to understand they are totally confounded when it comes to His death. Without the illumination of the Holy Spirit and genuine repentance, no one can understand the true meaning of Calvary. So Isaiah cries, “Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?” ( 53:1 ). Yet with all its mysteriousness, the violent and vicarious death of Christ is the only answer to man’s basic need. Only in the cross of Christ is there a full and free redemption.

### 2. Illustrate

In matchless words the prophet unfolds to us the mystery of the Savior’s passion:

#### A) IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST THERE IS A CURE FOR HUMAN SICKNESS

“Surely He has borne our griefs ...” ( 53:4 ). The word “griefs” here is better translated “sicknesses” or “diseases.” Whereas some people question whether or not physical sickness was included in the atonement, there is no doubt that moral sickness was borne away by our blessed Savior. We speak today of a “sick society”—and nothing could be more self-evident; but praise God, through the cross of Christ there is healing!

### 3. Illustrate

#### B) IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST THERE IS A COMFORT FOR HUMAN SORROW

“Surely He has borne ... our sorrows ...” ( 53:4 ). As a Man of Sorrows, He was acquainted with everything that spell sadness, bereavement and heartbreak; but through His Cross He can turn sadness to gladness, desperation to jubilation. Only at Calvary is true joy to be found.

#### C) IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST THERE IS A CLEANSING FOR HUMAN SINFULNESS

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed” ( 53:5 ). Here is a verse that declares the substitutionary work of Christ. Vicariously He was *pierced* for our transgressions, *bruised* for our iniquities, *chastised* for our peace, and *lacerated* for our healing. The words describe the violent and agonizing death which our Savior endured on our account so that we might be cleansed from our sins.

### 4. Illustrate

#### D) IN THE DEATH OF CHRIST THERE IS A CONQUEST FOR HUMAN STRAYING

“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” ( 53:6 ). Individually, socially, and nationally, people are straying creatures, just like silly sheep. But the Christ of the cross “... has come to seek and to save that which was lost” ( Luke 19:10 ). In order to find us and to bring us back to Himself, the Lord “... laid on Him [at immeasurable cost] the iniquity of us all” ( 53:6 ). We read that He was oppressed, afflicted, imprisoned, cut off, stricken, and entombed; yet in the face of all this suffering He was speechless, for “... He opened not His mouth ...”; He was selfless, for “... He was led as a lamb to the slaughter ...”; He was harmless, for He did no violence; He was sinless, for there was no “... deceit in His mouth” ( 53:7 , 9 ). Truly, He was the suffering Savior!

## **5. Illustrate**

### **III. The Ministry of Our Savior’s Purpose**

“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him ...” ( 53:10 ; see also vv. 11–12 ). These words appear strange until they are interpreted by all that follows. The fact is that the Lord Jesus did not die in vain. He turned the crown of thorns into a crown of gold, He transformed the cross into a throne, and He changed an open tomb into an open heaven. So flowing from His cross is a ministry of purpose which Isaiah outlines for us in six glorious statements:

#### **1) There is the Purpose of Spiritual Fertility**

“... He shall see His seed ...” ( 53:10 ). In pouring out His soul as an offering for sin, the Lord Jesus has become “... the firstborn among many brethren” ( Rom. 8:29 ). Heaven is going to be populated by redeemed men and women because of the victory of Calvary. As we identify ourselves with His cross we become involved in spiritual fertility. An Israelite was considered blessed if he had many descendants—especially if he lived to *see* them (see Gen. 48:11 ; Ps. 128:6 ). The Savior has seen the fruit of His death; and we also can see this ministry of fruitfulness as we “... work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling” ( Phil. 2:12 ).

#### **2) There is the Purpose of Spiritual Longevity**

“... He shall prolong His days ...” ( 53:10 ). The Israelites considered longevity another blessing (see Ps. 91:16 ; Prov. 2:3 , 16 ). The reference here is to the endless life of our risen Lord. He could declare, “I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore ...” ( Rev. 1:18 ). Therefore He can say to us, “... Because I live, you will live also” ( John 14:19 ).

#### **3) There is the Purpose of Spiritual Prosperity**

“... the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand” ( 53:10 ). Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection God will bring every purpose of His to a joyous realization. The phrase, “in His hand,” refers to His mediatorial and high priestly ministry at the present time, and also to His authority and power in a coming day when He shall reign as King of kings and Lord of lords. How wonderful that we can share in our Savior’s prosperity through our union with Him in life.

#### **4) There is the Purpose of Spiritual Maturity**

“He shall see the travail of His soul, and be satisfied ...” ( 53:11 ). The Savior travailed in death to bring about the birth of His church, and He travails again in life to bring about the growth of the church. His purpose for His people is spiritual maturity (see Eph. 4:13 ). Once again, we can share in this ministry of our risen Lord. Paul reminds us that we can “... fill up ... what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church” ( Col. 1:24 ).

## 5) There is the Purpose of Spiritual Activity

“... By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities” ( 53:11 ). Because of who our Savior is, He not only imputes righteousness but imparts it. He commissions His servants to go forth and preach the Good News of pardon, peace, and power (see John 20:21–23 ). As the child of God fulfills this mission He promises to bear our iniquities ( 53:11 ); in other words, He intercedes for us as our ever-living High Priest (see Heb. 7:25 ).

## 6) There is the Purpose of Spiritual Supremacy

“Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong” ( 53:12 ). The Lord Jesus has overcome principalities and powers and has now “... sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” ( Heb. 1:3 ). He has won the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and in this sense He has entered into His reward. The thrilling consequence of this is that we now share His victory here on earth, but one day in greater fullness when we reign with Him in glory. Our position, then, is that we fight *from* victory, rather than *for* victory. Ours is the life of spiritual supremacy in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here, then, is the sixfold ministry of our Savior’s redemptive purpose. The world outside may question the validity of our gospel, but unto us who are saved it is both “... the power of God and the wisdom of God” ( 1 Cor. 1:24 ).

## Conclusion

We have seen Isaiah’s unveiling of the Christ of the cross: the majesty of His person, the mystery of His passion, and the ministry of His purpose. May God enable us not only to appreciate the agony of Good Friday, but also to appropriate the victory of Easter Sunday.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... The death of Socrates, peacefully philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for; that of Jesus, expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it; but Jesus, in the midst of His tortures, prayed for His merciless tormentors. Yes! If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God.

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### 2. Illustrate.

When repairs were made on an English abbey some years ago, an ancient stone wall was taken down. Behind it there was found a Saxon crucifix which experts estimated dated back to A.D. 1000. The main interest of that crucifix was that it did not show a pain-wracked victim on a cross, as so many do today, but a living, reigning Jesus, attired as High Priest and crowned as King. His eyes, instead of being agonized by suffering or closed in death, are wide open in calm serenity and He is reaching down a hand—the hand which is “mighty to save.” How eloquent is that ancient crucifix! When we get down at the foot of that cross we find that the place of death is really the place of life. When we die in His death we actually begin to live in His life and to reign with Him.

J. Sidlow Baxter, *The Master Theme of the Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers).

### 3. Illustrate

... When General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, died his body lay in state for three days. Thousands filed by the old warrior's casket, which was flanked by wreaths sent by royalty and titled heads-of-state. His funeral was held in a vast exhibition hall in West London, England, attended by some 40,000—representing every strata of society—from royalty to the moral outcasts of a sick society, to whom he had ministered. A shabby, but neatly dressed woman, who had come early to claim an aisle seat, found herself seated next to Queen Mary. She confided to the Queen that she had once been a prostitute and that the General had saved her. As the casket filed past, she placed three faded carnations on the lid—the only flowers on the casket—and she was heard to say, “He cared for the likes of us.” What an epitaph for the General—and for our Lord, who not only loved us, but gave Himself for us in death.

### 4. Illustrate

... A missionary, in the wilds of Africa, was telling the heathen the wonderful story of the Lord Jesus Christ. Seated in the front row was the chief. He had listened intently to all the missionary had said. As the missionary told of how Christ was nailed to the cross, the chief jumped to his feet and said, “Stop! Take Him down from the cross; I belong there, not He!” Have you ever thanked Him for [enduring an agonizing death] for you?

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### 5. Illustrate

... In 1840 Bishop Selwyn, who was a missionary among the cannibal Maoris of New Zealand, wrote: “If I speak to a native of murder, infanticide, cannibalism, and adultery, they laugh in my face and tell me I might think these acts are bad, but they are very good for a native, and they cannot conceive any harm in them. But on the contrary when I tell them that these and other sins brought the Son of God, the great Creator of the universe, from His eternal glory to this world to be incarnate and to be made a curse and to die—they wish to hear more, and presently they acknowledge themselves sinners, and say they will leave off their *sins*. ”

*Day by Day with Jesus.* Copyright © 1979 by Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission. Truly, the death of Christ is the answer to all who have gone astray.

### For Further Research

*For Bibliography on Isaiah see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 2.*

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## Fourteen Sermon

### FOURTEEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Conquest of the Cross

**READING:** [John 20:19–23](#)

**TEXT:** "... the first day of the week, when the doors were shut ... Jesus came ... and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side ..." ( [20:19–20](#) ).

### Introduction

Easter Sunday is not a day when we remember an emaciated Christ who hung upon a cross; rather, it is a day when we worship a risen Lord who displayed the battle scars of His triumph over death to His own. When our Lord suddenly appeared to His disciples in that upper room, on that evening of His resurrection, the first thing He did was to show them His hands and His side, after which He commissioned them for service. These scars of the Savior speak of:

- I. The Savior's Personal Identity ( 20:19–20 ; Luke 24:40 )
  1. The Christ of Calvary ( 20:20 )
  2. The Christ of Victory ( 20:19 )
- II. The Savior's Powerful Authority ( 20:20–21 )
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- III. The Savior's Plentiful Sufficiency ( 20:22–21 )
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## Conclusion

What difference will the scars of the Savior make in your life? Conquest or defeat? For those first disciples, it spelled out the identity, authority, and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as Lord and Master. 'Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.'

## FOURTEEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CROSS OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Conquest of the Cross

**READING:** [John 20:19–23](#)

**TEXT:** "... the first day of the week, when the doors were shut ... Jesus came ... and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side ..." ( [20:19–20](#) ).

## Introduction

In a famous church in Copenhagen, Denmark there is a statue of our Lord showing Him alive with nail-pierced hands outstretched. He is in the middle of His disciples—six on one side, six on the other; and of that number the apostle Paul takes the place of Judas. Visitors who pause to look at the statue are moved deeply because they do not see as a Victim—an emaciated Christ upon a cross—but rather a risen Lord, displaying the battle scars of His triumph over death, standing among His own, and commissioning them to service.

It is this kind of vision that John gives us here in this passage. When our Lord appeared to the disciples in the upper room, following His resurrection, the first thing He did was to show them His hands and side. These scars of the Savior speak of:

## **I. The Savior's Personal Identity**

“Then ... Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ Now when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side [and Luke adds, “His feet”]. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord” ( 20:19–20 ; Luke 24:40 ). The terrified disciples—and especially Thomas—would never have been convinced of the Savior’s identity had He not shown them His hands and side (see 20:20 ). These wounds meant much to the group on that first Sunday evening. In short, the scars of the Savior signified:

### **1) The Christ of Calvary**

“... He showed them HIS hands and His side ...” ( 20:20 ). While the disciples had deserted Him, John (and probably Peter afar off) had witnessed the crucifixion. They had watched as their Lord and Friend was nailed to the cross. They had observed as the spear was plunged into His side. They had seen Him die. Now the Jesus of Calvary was standing among them in His risen power, showing them His hands and feet.

When John describes the heavenly vision he had of the Lord Jesus (see Rev. 5:6 ), He describes Him as “... a Lamb as though it had been slain ...” That phrase depicts the Lamb now alive, but with the marks of Calvary.

### **2) The Christ of Victory.**

On that first Sunday evening, “... when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you’ ” ( 20:19 ). No one but a Conqueror could say such words. Indeed, twice over He declared, ‘Peace to you!’” ( 20:21 , 26 ). It was a peace that canceled the guilt of the disciples, for they had all deserted Him and fled. Yet despite their guilt Jesus said, ‘ ... Peace be with you’” ( 20:19 ).

It was a peace that calmed their fears, for Luke records that “... they were terrified and frightened ...” ( Luke 24:37 ), and John and Mark confirm that that they were full of fear; but Jesus said, ‘..Peace be with you’” ( John 20:19 ).

So He canceled their guilt, calmed their fears, and cleared their doubts by His word of peace. He had bought ‘ ... peace through the blood of His cross’” ( Col. 1:20 ); now He brought peace by the power of His resurrection. He was indeed the Christ of victory.

This same Jesus stands before us in all the power of His resurrection rife and speaks peace to us. We cannot mistake Him because the scars are self-evident, and we cannot escape Him because we need our guilt canceled, our fears calmed, and our doubts cleared. Thank God, we can know the reality of this transforming experience because of the scars of the Savior.

### **1. Illustrate**

## **II. The Savior's Powerful Authority**

“... He showed them His hands and His side.... Then Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you’ ” ( 20:20–21 ). Those scars in His hands and side were the indisputable evidence of a completed mission. Throughout His ministry our Lord spoke of doing the Father’s will and of finishing His work (see Luke 2:49 ; John 4:34 ; 9:4 ; 19:30 ). Because of that completed work God could raise Him from the dead and honor Him with a unique authority. When Jesus commissioned His disciples He could say, “... All authority has been given [past tense] to Me.... Go ... make disciples of all the nations ...” ( Matt. 28:18–19 ). As the Son of God, this authority was always inherently HIS, but as the Son of Man He earned this authority by learning obedience through suffering—even the death of the cross. The evidence of this was the scars in His

hands and side. Those scars endorsed His authority to condition, as well as commission, His disciples for service.

### **1) He Conditioned His Disciples for Service**

“... As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” ( 20:21 ). The disciples could never divorce those words from the wounds in the Savior’s body. They knew that the scars spoke of His undeviating obedience to the Father’s will. Three of them may have heard the Savior pray in the Garden of Gethsemane, “... Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” ( Matt. 26:39 ). Now He says to them, “... As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” ( 20:21 ); or, “As I have obeyed the Father, so I expect you to obey Me. As I brought Myself under My Father’s sovereign authority so I expect you to come under My sovereign authority. Look at My hands and side, and then do as I tell you.”

#### **2. Illustrate**

### **2) He Commissioned His Disciples for Service**

“As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” ( 20:21 ). The verb in the Greek is emphatic: “As my Father *has sent* me.” The death of the Lord Jesus did not abrogate His commission. True, one aspect of His work was over, but now a new stage of God’s redemptive mission was being launched. This is why Luke opens up his Acts of the Apostles with the significant words, “The former account I made ... of all that Jesus began both to do and teach” ( Acts 1:1 ). Observe that word “began.” Jesus was still working, but now He works by the Holy Spirit, through His apostles, and through you and me. Therefore, those words uttered some two thousand years ago are as relevant today as when they were first spoken: “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” ( 20:21 ).

#### **3. Illustrate**

## **III. The Savior’s Plentiful Sufficiency**

“And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained’ ” ( 20:22–23 ). We can never think of the scars of the Savior without thinking also of the sufficiency of the Savior. John links these two concepts together when he describes what happened on the cross. He writes in John 19:34 : “... one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.” If blood is the symbol of Calvary then water is the symbol of Pentecost. When our Savior commissions His disciples He reminds them of both events. We read, “... He showed them His hands and His side ...” —Calvary; “... Receive the Holy Spirit”—Pentecost (see 20:20 , 22 ). He was in fact communicating to them resurrection life. AS disciples they were already born of the Spirit-and presently they were to be endowed with power from on high; but at this point He was giving them a new breath of life—a life they had never known before—the life of a new humanity which Jesus Christ now assumes in heaven as our Representative. This is why there is no article in the Greek before the name “Holy Spirit.” He said, “Receive Holy Spirit,” and many scholars maintain that the sentence could be rendered, “Receive a gift of the Spirit.” Presently they were to receive the power of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost; here it was the communication of the risen life of Jesus—a gift that you and I receive at conversion. The whole act of breathing upon them symbolizes empowering for holy living and mighty preaching. Here was:

### **1) The Sufficiency for Holy Living**

“... He breathed on them, and said ... to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ ” ( 20:22 ). Before there can be mighty preaching there must be holy living. We must be saints before we are servants. A study of the New Testament makes it evident that the fruit of the Spirit has more emphasis in the writings of the apostles than the gifts of the Spirit. What we are is more important than what we do. If what we are does not conform to the

standards God expects of us then what we do is virtually worthless. God wants us before He wants our service. To Him it is more important to be a devoted father and husband in the home than to be a famous preacher. It is more important to be a sweet, loving mother and wife than a conference speaker or a Bible Class leader. It is more important that children be obedient and helpful than football stars on the field, or debaters in the classroom. Paul says, “[Be ye being] filled with the Spirit” ( Eph. 5:18 ), and he immediately adds instructions concerning loving husbands, submissive wives, and obedient children. Do you know the Holy Spirit dominant in your life? You won’t until Calvary is a reality to you. The Holy Spirit will never reign or rule where He is grieved or quenched. The only thing that will deal with the hindrances to a Spirit-filled life is a dynamic experience of the cross. Only when we are dead to sin can we be alive to God.

## **2) The Sufficiency for Mighty Preaching.**

Jesus said, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” ( 20:23 ). These words present certain interpretive problems, but in general the idea is clear. In making this statement our Savior was capsulizing the gospel message in all its fullness. The same idea is found in the closing chapter of Mark’s Gospel, where Jesus said, “... Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” ( Mark 16:15–16 ).

To some people our message is one of salvation; to others, it is a message of damnation. Paul writes, “... we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death to death, and to the other the aroma of life to life ...” ( 2 Cor. 2:15–16 ). In another place he declares, “... the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” ( 1 Cor. 1:18 ). God is described in Scripture as possessing the qualities of “goodness” and “severity” (see Rom. 11:22 ). Where people respond to the message of the gospel sins are remitted; where they reject the claims of Christ sins are

Now while applications of this same principle are relevant in the disciplinary life of the church, we are majoring here primarily with our task as preachers and soul-winners in a world that desperately needs the message of forgiveness and reconciliation. To fulfill this mission we must know sufficiency for holy living and mighty preaching.

When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples at Pentecost they were fearless in their preaching. For example, Peter who cowered and cringed at the giggle of a girl on the night of the Savior’s betrayal could now face the murderers of Jesus and declare, “... let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” ( Acts 2:36 ). This is mighty preaching! No wonder people were convicted and converted on that memorable day!

## **4. Illustration**

### **Conclusion**

What difference will the cross and the scars of the Savior make in your life? For those first century disciples, it spelled out the identity, authority, and sufficiency of Jesus Christ as Lord and Master. For us, there can only be one response. Isaac Watts has summed it up best:

*See, from His head, His hands, His feet,*

*Sorrow and love flow mingled down;*

*Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,*

*Or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,*

*That were a present far too small;*

*Love so amazing, so divine,*

*Demands my soul, my life, my all.*

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Stephen Olford recalls that his father visited a faithful preacher of the Word in Angola, West Africa, who was gravely ill. Bending over him, Frederick Olford whispered in his ear, "Where are you going?" The African brother replied, "To meet my Lord." "But how will you know Him?" asked the missionary. For a moment the man's eyes brightened as he quoted the first two lines of a hymn which Mr. Olford had translated into the A-Chokwe language. "Ngana," he said, "I shall know Him, I shall know Him, by the print of the nails in His hands.'

### **2. Illustrate**

... A little girl was being put to bed, and as her mother pulled the covers over her the girl asked a very pointed question. "Mommy," she said, "why are your hands so twisted, blotchy, and worn?" The mother replied, "Darling, when you were very little a dreadful thing happened one night. Our house caught fire and the first room to burn was the one in which you were lying asleep. I rushed in and found you enveloped in flames, and I tore the blankets and clothing from you. As I did this my hands were terribly burned. That is why they look like that." The little girl sat up and threw her arms around her mother, exclaiming, "You are the best Mommy in all the world! I will do anything for you."

The disciples must have felt something of this when the Lord Jesus showed them His hands and side and commissioned them for service.

### **3. Illustrate**

... S.D. Gordon, in one of his books, writes of a dream he had of the ascending Lord arriving back in heaven. He tells of the angelic hosts gathering around the Master and welcoming Him home. Then He describes one of the archangels coming over to the triumphant Lord and saying, "Master, You did a great work when You were down there on earth, and it climaxed in that awful, mysterious cross; but, Master, who carries it on?" And Jesus turns and replies, "The handful of men that I have left down there." "But supposing they fail. Have you an alternative program?" insists the archangel. And the Lord Jesus looks back and says one word: "No."

The implications of that one word are tremendous. God has no other method than men. As we look at the cross and gaze upon those wounds, may it impel us to engage all our powers in the task of worldwide evangelism.

### **4. Illustrate**

... When Dr. Joseph Parker observed the fortieth anniversary of his pastorate in the City Temple of London, he declared: "Looking back upon all the checkered way, I have to say that the only preaching that has done me

good is the preaching of a Savior who bore my sins in His own body on the tree; and the only preaching by which God has enabled me to do good to others is the preaching in which I have held up my Savior, not as a sublime example, but as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” May God help every pastor to say with Paul, “God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

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## Fifteen Sermon

### FIFTEEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Prophetic Word

**READING:** [2 Peter 1:16–21](#)

**TEXT:** “We also have the prophetic word ... which you do well to heed ...” ([1:19](#)).

### Introduction

To arrive at an understanding of the doctrine of the Lord’s return we need to examine what the Bible means by the prophetic Word. Although other New Testament writers deal with this subject it is Peter who best defines the term. When he penned this epistle, he was writing to encourage persecuted Christians, to warn against false teachers and doctrines, and to draw attention to the glorious hope of the Lord’s return. In this first chapter he deals with:

- I. The Certainty of the Prophetic Word ( 1:19 )
  1. The Reality of the First Advent ( 1:16 )

2. The Necessity of the Second Advent ( 1:19 )
- II. The Character of the Prophetic Word ( 1:20–21 )
1. It is Divinely Inspired ( 1:21 )
  2. It is Divinely Interpreted ( 1:20 )
- III. The Challenge of the Prophetic Word ( 1:19 )
1. A Searching Light ( 1:19 )
  2. A Saving Light ( 1:19 ).
  3. A Satisfying Light ( 1:19 )

## Conclusion

Here, then, is the challenge of the prophetic Word. Let us commit ourselves to its study and also to its searching, saving, and satisfying light. Only then shall we abide in Christ and not be ashamed at His coming.

## FIFTEEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Prophetic Word

**READING:** [2 Peter 1:16–21](#)

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## I. The Certainty of the Prophetic Word

“We also have the prophetic word made more sure ...” ( 1:19 ). With a ring of confidence, Peter vividly sets forth the twofold basis of the certainty of the prophetic Word. To start with, there is:

### 1) The Reality of the First Advent

“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” ( 1:16 ; see also vv. 17–18 ). To Peter, the fact that Jesus had come once was evident proof that He would come again. He, along with James and John, had been eyewitnesses of the Savior’s majesty and glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. They had heard heaven’s

commendation of Jesus Christ as God's beloved Son; but Peter here maintains that this experience cannot be compared with the more sure word of prophecy (see 1:19 ). The 'prophetic Word' to which Peter refers is the body of Old Testament teaching concerning the coming again of the Lord Jesus. Dr. A. T. Pierson points out that there are 333 prophecies and references to Christ in the Old Testament which are expressly cited in the New Testament, either as predictions fulfilled in Christ as previsions applied to Him. Pierson goes on to say that if there are this many prophetic statements concerning the first coming of Christ, then there are at least double that number which relate to His second coming. The reality of the first coming of Christ was Peter's ground for believing even more confidently in the second coming. Paul employs a similar argument in his first letter to the Thessalonians when he writes: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout ..." ( 1 Thess. 4:14-16 ).

### 1. Illustrate

#### 2) The Necessity of the Second Advent

"We also have the prophetic word made more sure ..." ( 1:19 ). It is significant that Peter uses the event of the transfiguration to support his contention that Jesus must return to this earth. Peter knew that the first coming of Christ was characterized by humiliation, sorrow, and death. Yet on that one memorable occasion, when Jesus was transfigured before His three favored disciples, Peter had witnessed something of the majesty, honor, and glory of Jesus, which were never seen throughout His earthly ministry. In view of this Peter insists, in this second letter of his, that the return of Christ is a sheer necessity. So he speaks of "...*the* power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ..." ( 1:16 ). In the very nature of things, the Christ of grace must be manifested as the Christ of glory; the Christ of humility must be demonstrated as the Christ of honor; the Christ of redeeming love must be vindicated as the Christ of reigning life. We can imagine Peter saying, in the words of Frances Ridley Havergal:

Oh, the may to see Thee reigning,

Thee, my own beloved Lord!

Every tongue Thy Name confessing,

Worship, honor, glory, blessing

Brought to Thee with one accord;

Thee, my Master and my Friend,

Vindicated and enthroned;

Unto earth's remotest end

Glorified, adored, and owned.

From The KESWICK HYMNBOOK. Used by permission of Marhsall-Pickering.

### 2. Illustrate

## II. The Character of the Prophetic Word

“... no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” ( 1:20–21 ). People tend to regard prophetic pronouncements and predictions with skepticism and incredulity. To some extent this attitude of mind has been justified because of misinterpretations and misapplications of prophetic teaching throughout the history of the church. On the other hand, to the Bible lover who approaches this great truth with a humble spirit, an open mind, and an obedient heart, there need be no doubt or nebulous thinking, for Peter tells us here that the character of the prophetic Word is divinely safeguarded.

### **1) It is Divinely Inspired**

“... for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” ( 1:21 ). Prophetic truth throughout the Bible is not of man’s devising; on the contrary, holy men were so controlled by the Holy Spirit that they wrote supernaturally and infallibly. At times they wrote above and beyond their own experience (see 1 Pet. 1:10–11 ; 2 Pet. 1:21 ). This does not suggest that holy men were robots or machines, since their personalities shine through their prophetic utterances, but it does mean that they spoke “out of God.” Their speech was God-initiated, God-driven and God-controlled, so that their word was sure, certain, and authoritative.

On one occasion a person asked D. L. Moody how he knew the Bible was inspired, to which the evangelist gave the brief but correct response, “Because it inspires me.”

### **2) It is Divinely Interpreted**

“... no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” ( 1:20 ). In order to understand the prophetic Word we need the aid of the Holy Spirit and the support of comparative Scriptures. Only the Spirit can guide men into all truth, “... for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” ( John 16:13 ). Paul tells us that to understand the words which the Holy Spirit teaches we must compare spiritual things with spiritual (see 1 Cor. 2:13 ). How vital it is, then, to approach prophetic teaching and all truth with minds that are free from prejudice and preconceptions, relying only on the plain statements of Scripture and the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## **III. The Challenge of the Prophetic Word**

“We also have the prophetic word made more sure, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” ( 1:19 ). Peter exhorts that we are to take heed to the prophetic Word, for wherever we find this light it is:

### **1) A Searching Light**

“... a light that shines in a dark place ... [or more literally, a light that shines in squalor]” ( 1:19 ). How searching is the truth of the Lord’s return! In personal life, this prophetic light exposes anything and everything that would make us ashamed at the coming of Christ. John tells his readers to “... abide in [Christ], that when He appears, [they] may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” ( 1 John 2:28 ). How can a Christian await the return of Christ with an unforgiving spirit, an immoral life, a disorderly walk, an unsundered body, or an unfulfilled

### **3. Illustrate**

But this searching light exposes not only the sin and squalor in personal life, but also of life in general. The more we understand the truth of the Lord’s return, the more we shall become aware of the increasingly dark, sinful, and squalid world around us. The unregenerate man wistfully hopes for Utopia or the age of prosperity

and seems to think that by a process of evolution such a golden era will be ushered in. But the Scriptures give no such hope. On the contrary, the Word tells us that ‘... in the last days perilous times will come.... evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived’ ( 2 Tim. 3:1 , 13 ). The nominally religious person thinks the world is eventually going to be converted, and so he works feverishly to bring this about. The fact is, God has never promised the conversion of the world in this age. What the Bible does teach is that God has visited “... the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name” ( Acts 15:14 ). While this activity of the Spirit is going on, “... the mystery of lawlessness is already at work ...” ( 2 Thess. 2:7 ). The spirit of the Antichrist is already operating in the world, and sin, squalor, and wickedness will therefore abound more and more. To the genuine believer, all these signs are but a herald of the Savior’s coming. The Christian recognizes that the darkest hours always precede the dawn. Instead of getting better, the world is going to get worse. The church will experience revival (see James 5:7–8 ) and souls will be won from every part of the earth, but the light of prophecy will increasingly show up the hideous wickedness of a world that is fast moving to destruction. How this should challenge us to hold forth the Word of life and shine as lights in the dark world around us!

## **2) A Saving Light**

“... a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns ...” ( 1:19 ). While this light searches and exposes sin, it also anticipates the coming dawn. Paul speaks of that “dawn” as the day of salvation. To the believer, salvation comprehends the past, present, and future. In the past we are saved from the penalty of sin; in the present we are being saved from the power of sin; in the future we shall be saved from the presence of sin. The apostle reminds us that “... it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” ( Rom. 13:11–12 ). Here is the saving light of prophecy. The dawn is coming. The hour of our “redemption draws near” ( Luke 21:28 ). In view of this we must wake up— “... awake out of sleep ...”; get up— for “The night is far spent, the day is at hand ...”; dress up— “... put on the armor of light,” which is holy living (see Rom. 13:11–12 ), and then look up— “... because [our] redemption draws near” ( Luke 21:28 ).

## **3) A Satisfying Light**

“... a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” ( 1:19 ). Some commentators prefer to link the phrase “your hearts” with the injunction “take heed.” This interpretation undoubtedly has merit. The “morning star” is none other than Jesus our Lord. At His first coming He called Him “...the Dayspring from on high ...” ( Luke 1:78 ). At His second coming He is to be known as “... the Bright and Morning Star” ( Rev. 22:16 ). Christ, then, is the Morning Star of our hearts. As the light of prophecy points to that rising star, our hearts leap with us, for the star has always been the symbol of that which satisfies the heart. So we can affirm with David, “... I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness” ( Ps. 17:15 ).

### **4. Illustrate**

## **Conclusion**

Here, then is the challenge of the prophetic Word. With its certainty, character, and challenge, let us submit ourselves to its study and also to its searching, saving, and satisfying light. Only thus shall we abide in Christ and not be ashamed at His coming.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Dr. A. W. Hare once said: "If you saw a half-dozen doors with as many locks to them—so new and strange that not a locksmith in the country could make a key to fit any one of them, and if a man then came with a key which fitted all these different locks and opened all the six doors, could you doubt that his was the right key? This is just the kind of proof which the prophecies afford of the truth and divinity of Christ. The weight of this proof rests on two simple facts: One is that the prophecies were written many hundreds of years before the birth of Christ; the other is that Jesus died the death related in the New Testament. Jesus is the true key for the prophetic lock; and the prophets who foretold all these things hundreds of years before must assuredly have spoken, as Peter says, "... never ... by the will of man, but ... as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." Where—outside of the Bible—shall we find prophecies of this kind?"

*The King's Business.* Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 544. Used by permission.

## 2. Illustrate

... During one of the Crusades, Philip Auguste, King of France, before he went into one of his battles, removed his royal crown from his head, set it on a table, and made his oration, as was the custom in those days. He asked his nobles, knights, and men to forget that he was their king and commander, and to consider that the crown which he had laid aside for the battle would be the prize of the one who carried himself most worthily and bravely and contributed most to their victory. They entered the battle and returned victorious. All gathered round the table on which the crown had been placed. One of the nobles, stepping forward, took the crown, and, advancing toward the monarch, placed it on his head, saying, "Thou, O king, art the most worthy."

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations.* Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1241, adapted.

## 3. Illustrate

... A doctor told how, as a young man, he was persuaded to attend a theater much against his will. After being seated, he quickly got up. "What are you doing?" asked his friends. "I'm getting up," he replied. "But where are you going?" they urged. "I'm going out," said he. "But you just came in." "I knew it, and I'm going out. You see, I'm a Christian; I believe the Bible, and my Bible tells me that Jesus, my Lord, is coming back to this earth, and that He may come at any time, and I don't want Him to catch me here."

*Day by Day with Jesus.* Copyright © 1979 by Concordia Publishing House. Used by permission.

## 4. Illustrate

... In World War II a certain soldier's face was horribly disfigured. When he realized his condition he said that he wanted to die. The plastic surgeon told him that he could restore his face if he had a picture to go by. The soldier did not have a picture. So he said: "It's of no use, Doctor, just let me alone." "But," protested the medical man, "I can do something for you if you will just pick out a picture." "It doesn't matter," said the boy, "but if you really want one, that picture on the wall will do." The soldier did not know that it was a picture of Jesus Christ. The doctor performed the operation, and it was highly successful. The lad was greatly pleased when he looked in the mirror after he had fully recovered. Then he said to the doctor: "Whose picture was that?" The doctor told him that it was a picture of Jesus Christ. "What kind of Man was He?" asked the soldier. The medical man handed him a New Testament and informed him that in its pages he would find a perfect picture of Jesus Christ. When the surgeon came back a few days later, the soldier said to him: "There is just one thing for me to do. Since I look like Him, I have resolved that in every way I will try to be like Him." The New Testament refers to a reverse procedure to occur at the Rapture: "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" ( 1 John 3:2 ).

E. E. Seeman, *Prophetic Witness*. vol. 6, No. 1 (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House), January, 1982, p. 18.

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

*Cassette tapes of this series are entitle PROPHECY FOR TODAY #8419–8433*

## Sixteen Sermon

### SIXTEEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Promise of Christ's Coming

**READING:** [2 Peter 3:1–18](#)

**TEXT:** "... we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" ( [3:13](#) ).

### Introduction

One of Peter's objects in writing his two epistles was to emphasize the hope of the Lord's return. In this chapter he anticipates the scoffer's challenge, "... Where is the promise of His coming? ..." ( [3:4](#) ) by showing that Christ's second coming has been foretold, foreshadowed, and fulfilled.

- I. The Promise Foretold ( [3:1–2](#) )
- II. The Promise Foreshadowed ( [3:3–9](#) )
  1. The Answer from Creation ( [3:4](#) )
  2. The Answer from the Flood ( [3:6](#) )
  3. The Answer from Time ( [3:8](#) )
  4. The Answer from Mercy ( [3:9](#) )
- III. The Promise Fulfilled ( [3:13](#) )
  1. A Personal Realization ( [3:13](#) )
  2. A Punitive Realization ( [3:10](#) )
  3. A Pranced Realization ( [3:11–12](#) )

### Conclusion

The promise of Christ's coming should have a practical effect upon our lives. It should make us increasingly holy, godly, and busy, so that when He comes we may be "... found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless" ( 3:14 ). May our prayer be:

*Make me holy by Thy blood,*

*Make me godly, Lamb of God:*

*Keep me busy in the fray,*

*Make me ready for that day.*

Stephen F. Olford

## **SIXTEEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Promise of Christ's Coming

**READING:** 2 Peter 3:1–18

**TEXT:** "... we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" ( 3:13 ).

### **Introduction**

As we saw in our last study, one of Peter's objects in writing his two epistles was to emphasize the glorious hope of the Lord's return. In the chapter before us he anticipates the day when scoffers, walking after their own lusts, would challenge, "... Where is the promise of His coming? ..." ( 3:4 ). Notwithstanding such skepticism, however, Peter confidently shows that Christ's second coming has been foretold, foreshadowed, and fulfilled.

### **I. The Promise Foretold.**

Peter says, "... I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder, that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior" ( 3:1–2 ). The apostle reminds his readers that the subject of Christ's return was no new truth, for the prophets had already foretold it. What a wonderful field of study this opens up for the prophetic student!

"Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with promises of the Second Coming of Christ. There are 1,845 references to it in the Old Testament, and a total of seventeen Old Testament books give it prominence. Of the 260 chapters in the entire New Testament, there are 318 references to the Second Coming, or one out of 30 verses. Twenty-three of the 27 New Testament books refer to this great event. The four missing books include three which are single-chapter letters written to individual persons on a particular subject, and the fourth is Galatians which does imply Christ's coming again. For every prophecy on the first coming of Christ, there are 8 on Christ's second coming" ( *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, p. 1239 ).

Let me cite several examples of how the prophets and apostles foretold the promise of the Savior's coming as King of kings and Lord of lords:

*Genesis 49:10* : "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people." These words constitute part of the blessing which the dying Jacob predicted for his son, Judah, but, prophetically, they refer to the time of Christ's coming

into the world and beyond. It is such a remarkable prophecy of the Messiah that it has been acknowledged by both Jewish and Christian antiquity.

As to its fulfillment, it is clear from history that the tribal authority (or scepter) and the highest place in the nation continued with Judah until the time of Herod the Great, just before the birth of the Savior. But this was only a partial fulfillment. Jesus is yet to come as “Shiloh,” or Prince of Peace, when He shall have “... the obedience of the people” ( Gen. 49:10 ).

*Psalm 45:6–7* : “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.” The Lord Jesus is pictured in this messianic psalm as a kingly Bridegroom with His queenly Bride. There can be no doubt that these verses refer to the Messiah as the coming King when He shall sway the scepter of universal authority for ever and ever (see Heb. 1:8–9 where the writer uses them in direct relation to Christ).

*Micah 5:2* “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, From everlasting.” Here again is a clear reference to the coming Christ. You will recall that when the Magi inquired of Herod as to the birthplace of the King of the Jews he, in turn, posed the question to the chief priests and scribes. These recognized teachers of the people at once turned to the words of Micah 5:2 . The birth of the Lord Jesus was a partial fulfillment of this prophecy. But since Jesus was rejected as King of the Jews there must yet come a day when He shall rule Israel in power and equity.

*I Corinthians 15:25* : “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.” In this magnificent apostolic statement on the resurrection, Paul foresees the day when the Lord Jesus shall have put down all rule, authority, and power before He delivers the kingdom to His Father God.

*Revelation 19:16* : “And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” Here in the Apocalypse is the final visitation of the King who must and shall reign. All the prophecies concerning His kingship will then be consummated, and the universe will acknowledge that He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

## **II. The Promise Foreshadowed**

“... scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.... But.... The Lord is not slack concerning His promise ...” ( 3:3–9 ). Again and again God has invaded history with certain cataclysmic interventions and will doubtless do so again. So Peter gives a fourfold answer to the scoffers’ question:

### **1) The Answer From Creation**

“... all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation,” maintain the scoffers ( 3:4 ), but that is not so. Creation itself was the introduction of a vast change; for, following that first creative act some great act of judgment took place. We are not concerned here with the scientific phenomena (the Bible was never intended to teach knowledge which men, by patient labor, may obtain for themselves), but it is clear that a catastrophe of the greatest magnitude happened between verses 1 and 2 of the first chapter of Genesis (see also Isaiah 14:12–14 ; Ezekiel 28:17 ; Jeremiah 4:23–25 ; Job 9:5–7 ). Whatever God makes is perfect, and that which is described in the verses that follow is the remaking of His original creation, after it had been spoiled by some catastrophic act of judgment. If that happened once it can happen again. Scoffers willfully forget this. They shut their eyes to the fact that He who made the world can destroy it.

## **2) The Answer From the Flood**

“... the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water” ( 3:6 ). This is a clear allusion to the flood—another proof that all things have not continued as they were. That awful visitation of judgment upon mankind, as attested by the Bible, science, and tradition, is a warning of coming judgments. When all flesh had corrupted God’s way upon the earth He interposed in awful justice, and the earth, through a baptism of water, was purified, restored, and prepared for a new beginning. What do scoffers have to say to that?

### **1. Illustrate**

## **3) The Answer From Time**

“ ... do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” ( 3:8 ). When the scoffers say that “... all things continue as they were ...” ( 3:4 ) they forget that God is not conditioned by men’s idea of time. His thoughts are not our thoughts. Delay is purely a human conception, for “... one day is as a thousand years ...” ( 3:8 ). When it pleases the Lord to fulfill His promise He will come and not delay.

### **2. Illustrate**

## **4) The Answer from Mercy**

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” ( 3:9 ). The Lord will not delay beyond the time appointed, but is longsuffering. It is of His mercy that we are not consumed. The hush of heaven is the hope of humanity. Scoffers may call this longsuffering “slackness,” but the Christian calls it “salvation.”

### **3. Illustrate**

## **III. The Promise Fulfilled**

“... we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” ( 3:13 ). Peter sees a threefold realization in this fulfilled promise:

### **1) A Personal Realization**

“... we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth ...” ( 3:13 ). The longing of every born-again person is for the day when he shall enter that new heaven and new earth, in which righteousness dwells. Our Lord will never deny His people the fulfillment of this expectation. Peter begins his first epistle by stating that his readers have been begotten to “a living hope” ( 1 Pet. 1:3 )—one that is identified with a resurrected Christ.

Today’s governments promise a new world, but their expectations are never realized. Instead of improved living conditions things grow steadily worse.

### **4. Illustrate**

### **2) A Punitive Realization**

“... the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” ( 3:10 ). New heavens and a new earth presuppose the dissolving of the old heavens and earth. This is the

moment for which justice waits, when evil is going to be dealt with forever and righteousness will be exalted. Scoffers, evildoers, and men who prefer to live without God can have their own way today, but the hour of judgment is coming when ‘... the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat’ ( 3:12 ). This will end the old world which man has marred. Until a few years ago those who talked about the end of the world were labeled as “cranks,” “fanatics” or “religious faddists” but thinking men are not laughing anymore. In fact, philosophers, politicians and scientists themselves have become the prophets of doom, as they reflect on the potential dangers of a nuclear holocaust. In 1946 Winston Churchill shook the world with this statement: “It may well be that in a few years the atom bomb will not only bring an end to all that we call civilization, but may disintegrate the globe itself.”

## 5. Illustrate

### 3) A Practical Realization

“... since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?” ( 3:11–12 ). Peter says that if we understand the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ at all then it must have a practical effect upon our lives now.

#### A) WE MUST BE HOLY

“... what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct ...” ( 3:11 )? Holiness is both a gift and a process. It is a good gift from God in Christ and starts when the Lord Jesus is received by faith into the human personality. But it is also a process: it involves obedience to God in all things (see 1 Pet. 1:14–15 ). If we are not holy then we shall never see the new heavens and the new earth (see Heb. 12:14 ).

#### B) WE MUST BE GODLY

“... what manner of persons ought you to be in ... godliness” ( 3:11 ). Godliness is the realization of God’s abiding presence issuing in godlikeness. David could say, “... know that the Lord has set apart for Himself him who is godly” ( Ps. 4:3 ). The man who walks with God is someone who is godly. Do you walk with God, read His Word, enjoy His presence, know His power, and love His people? Your answer to these questions will reveal whether or not you are godly. Only godly people will inhabit the new heavens and the new earth.

#### C) WE MUST BE BUSY

“... looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God ...” ( 3:12 ). How do we hasten His coming? Very simply, by the ministry of soulwinning. At this hour the Lord Jesus is waiting for the number of the elect to be saved. When the body of Christ is complete He will come. Is this busyness for souls the prime concern of your life? If not, then you will not be numbered with those who are going to inhabit the new heavens and the new earth.

## Conclusion

We have seen how the promise of Christ’s coming is foretold, foreshadowed and fulfilled. The practical effect of this upon our lives should make us increasingly holy, godly, and busy, so that when He comes we may be “... found in Him in peace, without spot and blameless” ( 3:14 ). May our prayer be:

*Make me holy by Thy blood,*

*Make me godly, Lamb of God:*

*Keep me busy in the fray,*

*Make me ready for that day.*

Stephen F. Olford

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... The company library of the Atlantic Mutual Insurance Co. in New York City has one of the most complete sets of records of marine disasters outside of England. The completeness is so legendary that someone once asked Atlantic if it had a record of Noah's Ark. In due time the inquirer received this information: "Built 2448 B.C. Gopher wood, pitched within and without. Length, 300 cubits; width, 50 cubits; height, 30 cubits. Three decks. Cattle carrier. Owner: Noah and Sons. Last reported stranded on Mount Ararat.

*New York Herald Tribune*. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan. (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1275.

### **2. Illustrate**

... In her book *Tramp for the Lord*, Corrie ten Boom tells of speaking before a group of young theologians on the Second Coming of Christ. A brash young student challenged her: "For two thousand years," he said, "Christians have believed this myth. Can't you understand all this talk is nonsense?" Tante Corrie, a stubborn old Dutch woman in her eighties, smiled and said: "Thank you, young man, for proving that Jesus is coming to this generation. The Bible says that the generation who will see His return will hear scoffers such as you. You, my young friend, are one of 'the signs of the times.' "

Jamie Buckingham in *Prophetic Witness*. vol. 7 no. 9. (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, September 1983), p. 12.

### **3. Illustrate**

... On one occasion when the infidel Robert Ingersoll was attacking man's faith in the Savior, he took out his watch and said, "I'll give God a chance to prove that He exists and is almighty. I challenge Him to strike me dead within 5 minutes!" First there was silence, then people became uneasy. Some left the hall, unable to take the nervous strain, and one woman fainted. At the end of the allotted time, the atheist exclaimed derisively, "See! There is no God. I am still very much alive!" After the lecture a young fellow said to a Christian lady, "Well, Ingersoll certainly proved something tonight!" Her reply was memorable. "Yes, he did. He demonstrated that even the most defiant sinner cannot exhaust the patience of the Lord in just five minutes!" How thankful we should be that God is still operating in mercy and desires to show His love rather than His wrath.

Condensed from *Sermons Illustrated*, (Holland, Ohio, 5/86.22).

### **4. Illustrate**

... "Why did God ever make such a world as this?" a young person asked petulantly, adding "I could make a better world myself!" "That," a friend suggested, "is just the reason God put you into this world—to make it a better world. Now go ahead and do your part!" The paradox is that we must work for God as if it were possible for us to make a new world, knowing full well that none but God Himself can do it and that He has declared His intention in that direction. He said, "Behold, I make all things new" ( Rev. 21:5 ). For this reason "we,

according to HIS promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness makes its home” ( 2 Pet. 3:13 ). “There’s a new world coming!”

*Prophetic Witness*, vol. 6, no. 1, January, 1982, p. 18.

## 5. Illustrate

... Think of the destruction which followed the dropping of the A-bomb on Hiroshima. The air shock or concussion was equivalent to a wind velocity of 500 to 1000 miles per hour. Three and one half square miles of the city center were devastated. The heat was so intense that bodies were literally cooked; their brain cells seared and their eyeballs melted and [ran] down their cheeks.

Harold Gretzinger, “No Time to Waste” (Carol Stream, Ill.: *Christian Life*, February, 1949), pp. 6, 54.

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

# Seventeen Sermon

## SEVENTEEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Certainty of Christ’s Coming

**READING:** [John 14:1–6](#) ; [Acts 1:1–12](#) ; [1 Thess. 4:13–18](#)

**TEXT:** “... if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” ( [John 14:3](#) ).

### Introduction

In this study we shall see how the certainty of His coming stirs expectation in the believer. Whether in worship ( 1 Cor. 11:26 ), witness ( Luke 19:12–13 ), or warfare ( Rev. 2:25 ), the Christian is ever viewed in the New Testament as being on the tiptoe of expectancy, influenced by the certainty of the Lord’s return. Taking three separate passages of Scripture as the basis of our study we note:

- I. The Authentic Declaration of the Certainty ( John 14:1–6 )
  1. His Program was Certain ( John 14:2 )
  2. His Promise was Certain ( John 14:3 )
  3. His Purpose was Certain ( John 14:3 )
- II. The Angelic Confirmation of the Certainty ( Acts 1:9–11 )
  1. His Coming Will Be Personal ( Acts 1:11 )
  2. His Coming Will Be Visible ( Acts 1:11 )

3. His Coming Will Be Aerial ( Acts 1:12 )
- III. The Apostolic Revelation of the Certainty ( 1 Thess. 4:13–18 )
1. The Shout of Command ( 1 Thess. 4:16 )
  2. The Voice of Summons ( 1 Thess. 4:16–17 )
  3. The Frump of Advance ( 1 Thess. 4:17 )

## Conclusion

To meditate upon such passages as these is to be impressed afresh with the authentic declaration, the angelic confirmation, and the apostolic revelation of His return. May it affect the way we live “till He comes.”

## SEVENTEEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Certainty of Christ’s Coming

**READING:** [John 14:14](#) ; [Acts 1:1–12](#) ; [1 Thess. 4:13–18](#)

**TEXT:** “... if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” ( [John 14:3](#) ).

## Introduction

In our last message we saw how the promise of Christ’s coming stimulates anticipation in the believer. In this study we shall see how the certainty of His coming stirs expectation in the believer. Whether in worship, witness, or warfare, the Christian is ever viewed in the New Testament as being on the tiptoe of expectation.

When Paul unfolds the sacredness and significance of the Lord’s Supper, he exhorts the Corinthian believers to participate worthily, ever remembering that “... as often as [they] eat this bread and drink this cup, [they] proclaim the Lord’s death *till He comes* ” ( 1 Cor. 11:26 ).

In one of His parables, the Lord Jesus likens His return to heaven to “... A certain nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.” And we read that “... he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business *till I come*’ ” ( Luke 19:12–13 ).

In His letter to the church at Thyatira the risen Christ warns the members of some of the satanic influences which were invading the local assembly. In view of these happenings he admonishes them to hold fast till He comes (see Rev. 2:25 ).

Therefore we see that the certainty of Christ’s coming must affect all that we do. Of the many passages throughout the New Testament upon which we might base the certainty of our Lord’s return, let us consider three in particular:

### I. The Authentic Declaration of the Certainty

(see John 14:1–6 ). Let us remember that the Lord Jesus spoke these words with His death imminently before Him. Yet with composure and confidence He could say to His anxious disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me” ( 14:1 ). In other words, He was reassuring His followers that

just as faith in God the Father cannot fail, so faith in God the Son would not fail—however immediate circumstances might appear to the contrary. A new day would dawn when He would come back again. In the light of this:

### **1) His Program was Certain**

“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” ( John 14:2 ). As we know, His program included not only preparing a place in heaven, but making a way to heaven. In the words of Cecil F. Alexander:

*He died that we might be forgiven,*

*He died to make us good,*

*That we might go at last to heaven,*

*Saved by His precious blood.*

*There was no other good enough*

*To pay the price of sin;*

*He only could unlock the gate*

*Of heaven and let us in.*

Or in the language of the writer to the Hebrews: “... Christ ... entered ... heaven itself [by virtue of His own blood], now to appear in the presence of God for us” ( Heb. 9:24 ).

### **2) His Promise was Certain**

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again ...” ( John 14:3 ). In this wonderful promise there are two statements of equal value. The first is “... *if I go and prepare a place for you ...*” ( John 14:3 ). The question is, Did He go? Surely there can be no doubt as to the answer: He really did. Then we must with equal certainty accept the second part of the promise, “... *I will come again ...*” ( John 14:3 ).

There are those who maintain that this word of promise does not mean what it says. Because of the imperfect tense of the verb, “I am coming again,” they allege that this has no reference to the Second Advent, but rather to the following:

#### **A) CHRIST’S COMING AT CONVERSION.**

Now it is true that Christ comes to us at conversion, as implied in such verses as John 1:12 , Colossians 2:6 , and illustrated in Revelation 3:20 ; but how this can be confused with His Second Coming is difficult to understand. Jesus says plainly, “... if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*” ( John 14:3 ). I know I am converted—but I am sure I am not in heaven!

#### **B) CHRIST’S COMING AT PENTECOST.**

There are two main reasons why that could never be. The first is that many of the promises regarding the Second Coming of Christ were made after the day of Pentecost; for instance, Philippians 3:20 —“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”; 2 Timothy 4:8 — “... there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing”; and 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 — “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

The second is that the events of I Thessalonians 4:16–17—which we shall consider presently—have not yet taken place. There has been no “shout,” no “voice of an archangel,” no “trumpet of God.”

### C) CHRIST’S COMING AT CALAMITIES

E.g., the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Here again, the events of 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 did not take place during the destruction of Jerusalem. That was a time of suffering, sorrow, bloodshed, and anguish, whereas the Second Coming is a glad, joyous, and comforting hope. What is even more convincing is the fact that many of the promises concerning the Second Coming (including John 14 and Revelation 22:20 — “... Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”)—were written after A.D. 70.

### D) CHRIST’S COMING AT DEATH.

Quite apart from the fact that we *go to* Christ, rather than His coming to us at death, it is important to see the distinction which Christ makes between death and His coming, as recorded in John 21:22–23 . You remember the Lord Jesus was replying to Peter’s question about John—“... what about this man?” He said, “... If I will that he remain *till I come*, what is that to you? ...” ( John 21:21–22 ). Jesus “was rebuking Peter’s curiosity, not affirming that John would live on till the Master returned” (A. T. Robertson).

But the distinction between Peter’s impending death and the promised coming of Christ is made abundantly clear.

With these four erroneous views out of the way, we can see how plain is the certainty of the promise.

## 3) His Purpose was Certain

“... I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” ( John 14:3 ). His purpose in coming again is, first, to rapture His own believing people, and then to return with them to judge the world and set up His kingdom. With such an authoritative declaration from the Savior, who can question the certainty of His return?

### 1. Illustrate

## II. The Angelic Confirmation of the Certainty

“... while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.... as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who ... said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’ ” ( Acts 1:9–11 ). This historic record of the Savior’s ascension—backed by the reassuring word of the two witnesses that Jesus would return in like manner—is one of the greatest confirmations of the

Lord's own words in John 14 . While we need to exercise caution in the interpretation of these verses, it seems quite clear, from the various other descriptions of His appearing in the New Testament, that we can be certain that:

### **1) His Coming Will Be Personal**

“This same Jesus” ( Acts 1:11 ). Paul declares: “... the *Lord Himself* will descend from heaven ...” ( 1 Thess. 4:16 )—not another Jesus, nor a mystic Jesus, but the same One who sat by Sychar's well, who lay asleep in the bow of a Galilean boat, who dried the widow's tears outside the gate of Nain, who bled and died on Calvary, and who rose again the third day.

### **2) His Coming Will Be Visible**

“... Jesus ... will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” ( Acts 1:11 ). Previous to those words we read, “... while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight” ( Acts 1:9 ). John tells us in 1 John 3:2 , “... we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” ( 1 John 3:2 ). Then later, when He returns with the saints, we are told that he will come “... with clouds, and every eye will see Him ...” ( Rev. 1:7 ).

### **3) His Coming Will Be Aerial.**

“Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey” ( Acts 1:12 ). He went from Olivet, and we read that when He comes again “... His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives ...” ( Zech. 14:4 ). True, His coming must be viewed in its twofold aspect: one, into the air for His church; and then to the earth with His church to judge and reign. But whether it be the first or second of these events, His coming will be actual and physical, and not some spiritual experience, as many would have us believe.

## **2. Illustrate**

## **III. The Apostolic Revelation of the Certainty**

(see 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 ). When Paul declares, “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord ...” ( 4:15 ), he is making a direct claim to a special revelation. In other words, he is saying, “I am telling you this as a message straight from God”; therefore, we must give heed to such a revelation. In these verses Paul describes what will happen when the Lord descends from heaven to receive His own. He speaks of the “shout,” the “voice” and the “trumpet.”

There is believed to be an allusion here to the well-known Roman Army custom. After the night's bivouac, the sleeping soldiers were aroused by three blasts of the trumpet. The first was the signal to waken from sleep; the second was to rally the soldiers around their leaders; and the third was the signal to advance. With that picture in mind, consider the words of the apostle, in relation to the coming of Christ. First, there will be:

### **1) The Shout of Command**

“... the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout ... And the dead in Christ will rise first” ( 1 Thess. 4:16 ). Walk through a cemetery and read the inscriptions on the tombstones and you are bound to come across the grave of a believer. In many instances you will find that after the name and description of the deceased, his age and date of passing, three short words will express the hope of the one buried there—“Till He come.” The first act of the returning Lord will be to rouse the sleeping saints (see also 1 Cor. 15:52 ). This, of course, will be a resurrection out from among the dead. The rest of the dead will be left in their graves until the

resurrection and judgment described in Revelation 20:5 . In response to this shout of command the spirits of our loved ones who have died in Christ will be reunited with souls and bodies. Simultaneously with this will take place the miracle of transformation, when the raised bodies shall be changed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body (see Phil. 3:21 ). This is the phase of redemption which still awaits fulfillment (see Rom. 8:23 and Eph. 4:30 .

## 2) The Voice of Summons

“... the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with ... the voice of an archangel.... Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together ...” ( 1 Thess. 4:16–17 ). This *voice* of summons will bring together the saints who are still upon the earth, and “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, ...” they shall be changed into the likeness of Christ (see 1 Cor. 15:51–52 and Phil. 3:21 ). Thus, like the dead already raised, living believers shall receive spiritual, sinless, immortal bodies like unto our Lord's (see 1 John 3:2 ).

## 3. Illustrate

### 3) The Trump of Advance

“... the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with ... the trumpet of God.... Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord” ( 1 Thess. 4:16–17 ). All the raised and all the changed shall be caught up together, says the apostle. In light of this, the “partial rapture” theory is untenable, for it is quite clear that this event concerns all who are Christ's (see 1 Cor. 15:23 ).

The phrase, “caught up,” is a descriptive one. It means “to snatch away by force,” as a wild beast seizes and carries off its prey. It also implies “to be snatched away out of danger,” as a child is sometimes rescued from the cruel death of a passing vehicle (Herbert Lockyer).

Therefore, in response to the trumpet of God, we shall advance as an army of raised and raptured saints to meet the Lord in the air and then to live and reign with Him for ever and ever. Thus the church jubilant and militant becomes the church glorified, and ascends to rejoice with our Captain in His final conquest (see Ps 50:4–5 ).

## Conclusion

To meditate upon such passages as these is to be impressed afresh with the authentic declaration, the angelic confirmation, and the apostolic revelation of His return. It only remains to be said that such certainty should vitally affect our worship, witness, and warfare as Christians. May our prayer ever be:

*Coming suddenly! Coming soon!,*

*Coming certainly!—night or noon.*

*Jesus, I humbly pray,*

*Wash all my sins away,*

*And keep me till that day*

*When Thou shalt come.*

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## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... All of us, at one time or another, have studied a map, an atlas, or a globe of the world and observed the variegated colors representing different countries of the world. We have looked up foreign places, some with strange sounding names, and located them on the map. Some of us have even had the opportunity of traveling to places like Tokyo, Japan, Papua, New Guinea, the islands of the Caribbean, or Australia, and have discovered that the places we have read about actually do exist. Having assumed that the cartographer is correct on what we do know, it gives us confidence to believe him regarding the accuracy of other places that are unknown to us.

So it is with the promise of the Lord's certain return. Because the Bible is absolutely trustworthy and our Savior has never failed us, we are confident that He will keep His word when He says "I will come again." The prophecies concerning His birth are a guarantee of His coming as a King.

### **2. Illustrate**

... Holiday Inns had planned to erect a hotel on the Mount of Olives. They sent a group of engineers to prepare for the erection. After some investigation they said it could not be done. There is a geological fault under the Mount which is causing it to split.

*Christian Victory*. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rock, lie, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1240.

### **3. Illustrate**

... If you've ever been to London, England, you may have visited the tomb of John Wesley, located at the rear of his chapel in City Road, just opposite the famous Bunhill Fields Nonconformist burying ground, containing the mortal remains of John Bunyan and Isaac Watts. A tourist who visited that spot suddenly thought to himself, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord came just now and I would be caught up to meet Him in the air in the company of these giants of the faith." Almost immediately the thought came to him, "If this were the case, I wouldn't be thinking about these great men; I would have eyes only for Jesus."

Adapted from *Prophetic Witness*, vol. 8 no. 2 (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, February 1984), p. 18.

## **For Further Research**

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

## **Eighteen, Sermon**

### **EIGHTEEN, SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Manner of Christ's Coming

**READING:** Acts 1:9–11 ; 1 Thess. 4:13–18 ; 2 Thess. 1:6–10

**TEXT:** "... the Lord ... will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God ..." ( 1 Thess. 4:16 ).

## Introduction

The Lord's return involves the fulfillment of many interrelated predictions and is connected with an epoch of crises which includes many events. When the New Testament speaks of the end of the age it is referring to a stretch of time. This period is introduced by what is called the Parousia and concludes with what is known as the *Epiphaneia*. The Parousia refers to the coming of Christ for His saints—"the blessed hope"; the *Epiphaneia* is the manifestation of Christ with His saints—"the glorious appearing" ( Titus 2:13 ). Consider:

- I. The Manner of Christ's Coming For His Saints ( John 14:2–3 )
  1. He Will Come Secretly ( Acts 1:11 )
  2. He Will Come Suddenly ( 1 Thess 4:16 )
  3. He Will Come Savingly ( Heb. 9:28 )
- II. The Manner of Christ's Coming With His Saints ( Jude 14 )
  1. Glorious In Its Visibility ( Luke 21:27 ; Rev. 1:7 )
  2. Glorious In Its Vengeance ( Rom. 12:19 )
  3. Glorious In Its Victory ( 1 Cor. 15:25 )

## Conclusion

We have seen something of the manner of His coming for and with His saints. God keep us ever faithful until the day "When Christ who is our life appears ... in glory" ( Col. 3:4 ).

## EIGHTEEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Manner of Christ's Coming

**READING:** Acts 1:9–11 ; 1 Thess. 4:13–18 ; 2 Thess. 1:6–10

**TEXT:** "... the Lord ... will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an arch-angel, and with the trumpet of God ..." ( 1 Thess. 4:16 ).

## Introduction

We now come to an aspect of the teaching of the Second Coming which requires careful attention and clear thinking. Christ's return involves the fulfillment of many interrelated predictions and is connected with an epoch of crises which includes many events.

The end of the age is not a mere point in time, but rather a considerable stretch of time. It falls into two distinct stages. The period is introduced by the word Parousia found 24 times in the New Testament—and is most frequently translated “coming.” Its literal meaning is “presence,” referring “to the period in which [Christ] and His saints are in the ‘presence’ of each other” (J. B. Watson). The use of the term refers primarily to the coming of Christ *for* His saints. The conclusion of the end of the age is what is known as the Epiphaneia, meaning the manifestation of Christ *with* His saints. In Titus 2:13 Paul makes a distinction between the two stages. The first is “the blessed hope”; the second is the “glorious appearing.” Note how the Bible compares these two stages of the advent:

1. *The blessed hope* is the subject of New Testament revelation (see John 14:1–3 ; Phil. 3:20 ; 1 Thess. 4:15–17 );

*The glorious appearing* is the subject of Old Testament prophecy and is frequently mentioned in the New (see Zech. 14:5 ; Col. 3:4 ; Jude 14 ).

2. *The blessed hope* is the private coming of Christ to receive His church (see John 14:1–3 ; 1 Thess. 4:15–17 );

*The glorious appearing* is the public coming of Christ as King to judge and to reign (see 1 Cor. 15:25 ).

3. *The blessed hope* speaks of Christ’s coming in the air (see 1 Thess. 4:17 );

*The glorious appearing* speaks of Christ’s coming to the Mount of Olives (see Zech. 14:4 ).

4. *The blessed hope* speaks of Christ’s coming to His church (see John 14:1–3 );

*The glorious appearing* speaks of Christ’s coming to Israel (see Rev. 1:7 ).

5. *The blessed hope* speaks of Christ’s coming to a marriage (see Rev. 19:1–10 );

*The glorious appearing* speaks of Christ’s coming to a judgment (see 2 Thess. 1:1–10 ).

6. *The blessed hope* speaks of Christ’s coming as a Bridegroom to take His Bride, and to present her to Himself “... a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing ...” (see Eph. 5:25–27 );

*The glorious appearing* speaks of Christ’s coming as King to establish His kingdom and with His church to reign over the earth in righteousness (see Acts 17:31 ; Jude 14 ; 1 Cor. 15:25 ).

7. *The blessed hope* symbolizes Christ as the “Morning Star” (see 2 Pet. 1:19 );

*The glorious appearing* symbolizes Christ as “The Sun of Righteousness ...” ( Mal. 4:2 ).

Having made that distinction clear, let us move on to consider:

## **I. The Manner of Christ’s Coming For His Saints**

“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 to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” ( John 14:2–3 ). There are three things of comprehensive significance which characterize the manner of Christ’s coming for His saints.

### **1) He Will Come secretly.**

The two witnesses at His ascension said, "... 'This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven' ( Acts 1:11 ). His going was not seen by the world at large; only His own chosen few were around Him (see Luke 24:50–51 ). While there is nothing in Scripture to indicate that the world will hear the "shout," the "voice," or the "trumpet of God," undoubtedly, the rapture of the church will create a sensation in the world when it is discovered that all Christian people are missing.

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **2) He Will Come Suddenly**

"... the Lord Himself will descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" ( 1 Thess. 4:16 ). As far as we know there is nothing that must yet transpire before the coming of Christ for His church. His return is imminent. As soon as He comes a sudden change is going to affect both the living and the dead. He "... will transform our lowly [bodies] that [they] may be conformed to His glorious body ..." ( Phil. 3:21 ). This amazing change will take place "in a moment"—an indivisible part of time— "... in the twinkling of an eye ..."; that is, faster than the winking of an eye (Scientists have computed that it takes one-fiftieth of a second to blink an eye); "... at the last trumpet ..." ( 1 Cor. 15:52 )—as fast as a trumpet blast cuts the air. No wonder so many passages of Scripture warn the believer to be on the alert for the coming again of Christ (see Matt. 24:42 ; 25:13 ; Mark 13:35 ; Luke 12:40 ; 1 John 2:28 ).

### **3) He Will Come Savingly**

"... so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" ( Heb. 9:28 ). Christ's first coming was in order to bear the sins of many; His second coming will be to complete the work of salvation. At conversion the spirit is justified, during one's Christian life the soul is sanctified, and at Christ's coming the body will be glorified, thus completing the work of redemption. That is why Paul urges Christians "... to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" ( Rom. 13:11 ).

#### **2. Illustrate**

## **II. The Manner of Christ's Coming With His Saints**

"... Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints" ( Jude 14 ).. This is not the Parousia , but rather the Epiphaneia. The church by this time will have been raptured, rewarded, and made ready to return in glory with her Lord. Referring to this great event the apostle Paul says, "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" ( Col. 3:4 ). The manner of this coming with the saints will be:

### **1) Glorious In Its Visibility.**

The Lord Jesus foretold this hour when He declared, "... they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory" ( Luke 21:27 ), and John the Seer adds, "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him ..." ( Rev. 1:7 ). As we have seen already, this second aspect of the Advent will not be private and special, but rather public and general. The words used to describe it are "majesty," "glory," "power," and "judgment."

#### **3. Illustrate**

### **2) Glorious In Its Vengeance**

“... ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” ( Rom. 12:19 ). In writing these words to the Roman believers, Paul exhorted them not to avenge themselves when provoked, but rather to give place to wrath; for he envisaged the day when the Judge of all the earth would return. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, foresaw this day, saying, “... Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds ...” ( Jude 14–15 ); and Paul adds, “... the Lord Jesus [will be] revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day ...” ( 2 Thess. 1:7–10 ). Such vengeance will mean:

#### A) THE DEMONSTRATION OF GOD’S JUSTICE.

Paul encourages the troubled saints at Thessalonica to endure tribulation at the hands of evil men because the day of recompense would come, “since it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you” ( 1 Thess. 1:6 ).

#### B) THE VINDICATION OF GOD’S PEOPLE.

By God’s people here we mean the faithful remnant of the Jews, together with such Gentiles as will have been won by the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. “ ‘Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ ” ( Jer. 23:5–6 ; see also Matt. 24:4–14 ; 25:31–40 ).

#### C) THE EXTERMINATION OF GOD’S ENEMIES.

Such enemies will include all “... those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” ( 1 Thess. 1:8 ) through believing the lie of the man of sin, and those who have persecuted God’s ancient people (see 2 Thessalonians 1:7–9 ; 2:8–12 ; Matthew 25:41–46 ). At this time also the devil will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years (see Revelation 20:1–3 ).

### 3) Glorious In Its Victory

“For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet” ( 1 Cor. 15:25 ). After the mighty acts of judgment in the earth, the King of kings and Lord of lords will establish His kingdom and reign as Prince of Peace for a thousand years. Habakkuk tells us that “... the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea” ( Hab. 2:14 ), and an age of prosperity, plenty, and peace will be ushered in (see Isa. 11:1–15 ; Mic. 4:3 and Hos. 2:18 ). Then the Lord Jesus, who is our Savior now, will reign in glorious victory. It is for this purpose that “... God ... has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, ... those in heaven, ... those on earth, and ... those under the earth” ( Phil. 2:9–10 ). “... ‘All flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the Lord” ( Isa. 66:23 ).

#### 4. Illustrate

### Conclusion

We have seen something of the manner of His coming for and with His saints. God keep us ever faithful until the day “When Christ who is our life appears ... in glory” ( Col. 3:4 ).

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Charles Taylor offers a graphic picture of that day when believers throughout the world are raptured: “Every country will find itself in turmoil. Each government will have to act as quickly as possible to prevent a wild tide of anarchy and terrorism. Strong measures will be put into effect. Millions of people will suddenly disappear from the face of the earth, including all of the infant children. From all walks of life, and from virtually every phase of life, there shall be people missing.

“The freeways, subways, airports and streets will be in shambles as many engineers, pilots, bus-drivers and a multitude of private car owners shall suddenly be caught up out of this world. It will be many days before they can unscramble the mangled cars, trains and fallen aircraft.

“Remaining millions of people will be wailing, dazed and shaken by the event. They shall be frantically striving to locate loved ones in all of the rubble of broken cars and amid broken storefronts and smashed residences.

“Communications will be greatly disrupted. Many key persons shall disappear and much of the lines of communications which are still above ground will be broken by crashes of cars and aircraft. Distraught and searching multitudes will jam and overload the communication lines and systems that do remain.

“Dazed and confused pleas from bewildered men over the ‘alert’ systems will try to bring about some semblance of order. Policemen, firemen and rescue crews will work around the clock. Hospitals will overflow. Emergency shelters and first aid stations will be inadequate. The Red Cross and all other emergency units, plus the army facilities will still not be enough.

“Opportunists will add to the confusion and the misery by looting and killing. They shall feel that under such a total emergency they can get away with anything. CHAOS WILL BE ON EVERY HAND.”

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), pp. 11134114.

### **2. Illustrate**

... The survivors of a burning ship have been saved by being taken aboard a lifeboat. They are in the course of being saved while the lifeboat makes its way through the stormy sea, and when they reach the shore the work of full salvation is complete.

Our salvation is likewise in three stages: We “have been saved,” says Paul to the Ephesians ( Eph. 2:5 , 8 ); we are being saved, says Paul to the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 15:2 ), and “... we shall be saved ...” ( Rom. 5:9 ). This last stage will be effected when Jesus comes.

### **3. Illustrate**

... In 1610 Galileo first applied a telescope to the study of the heavens. It was a very small and imperfect instrument, compared with the great telescopes of our day, but it revealed to him many things never seen before by the eye of man. When he turned his telescope on Saturn, he was surprised to see what looked like globes or handles, one on each side of the great planet. We now know, of course, what they were—those wonderful rings.

As the planet rolled on its orbit, Galileo saw them dwindle away and finally disappear altogether from his view. Nothing was seen of them for years. He had made his discovery known to the world, but men only laughed in derision, doubting his word and suggesting that he was drawing on his imagination.

As time went on, and he scanned the heavens in vain, he himself began to wonder if, in some strange way, his eyes or his glass had played tricks on him. But ... he waited and watched until at last his faith and hope were rewarded and gradually the beautiful rings of the planet came into sight again—and this time so clearly that he could see what they really were.

It is now nearly two thousand years since the Lord's First Advent. What a glorious sight was there for the spiritual vision of believing souls! And then He disappeared from human view, returning to the heavenly place from which He had come. He has promised, however, that He will return and we shall see Him soon, circled with a glory not revealed at the First Advent.

J. W. W. Moeran in *Prophetic Witness*. vol. 6 no. 2. (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, February 1983), p. 14.

#### **4. Illustrate**

... On the first anniversary marking the accession of Edward VII to the throne of England, a special service was held in Canterbury Cathedral. On that occasion Queen Victoria shared with Frederic Farrar, Dean of Canterbury, how one of her chaplains at Windsor Castle had recently preached on the Second Coming of Christ. Wistfully, she confided, "Oh, how I wish that the Lord would come during my lifetime!" When asked why she felt this way, her queenly countenance lit up with deep emotion as she replied, "Because I should so love to lay my crown at His feet."

#### **For Further Research**

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

## **Nineteen Sermon**

### **NINETEEN, SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST  
**SUBJECT:** The Nearness of Christ's Coming  
**READING:** [Luke 17:20–37](#) ; [Hebrews 10:35–39](#) [Revelation 22:6–21](#)  
**TEXT:** "Behold, I am coming quickly! ..." ( [Rev. 22:7](#) )

#### **Introduction**

Every passage in the New Testament referring to our Lord's return is phrased in such a way that each generation of believers cherishes the hope that Christ will come in his lifetime to receive the church unto Himself. Among the many witnesses that testify to our Lord's Second Coming let us consider four:

- I. The Witness of the Scriptures ( 2 Pet. 1:19 )
- II. The Witness of the Savior ( John 14:3 )

### III. The Witness of the Saints ( 1 Thess. 4:17 )

1. An Indwelling Hope ( 1 Pet. 3:15 )
2. A Renewing Hope ( 1 Pet. 1:3 )
3. An Unfailing Hope ( Heb. 6:19 )

### IV. The Witness of the Signs ( Luke 21:28 )

1. Widespread Apostasy ( 2 Thess. 2:3 )
2. Widespread Anti-Godism ( 2 Tim. 3:13 )
3. Widespread Abomination ( Luke 17:26–30 )
4. Widespread Advances ( Dan. 12:4 )
5. Widespread Antagonism ( Matt. 24:6 )

## Conclusion

Having looked at four main witnesses to the Lord's return let us, as God's people, ever keep on the tiptoe of expectation, looking for and loving His glorious appearing.

## NINETEEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Nearness of Christ's Coming

**READING:** [Luke 17:20–37](#) ; [Hebrews 10:35–39](#) ; [Revelation 22:6–21](#)

**TEXT:** Behold, I am coming quickly! ...” ( [Rev. 22:7](#) )

## Introduction

Every relevant passage in the New Testament portrays the imminent return of Christ as the next great event on God's calendar, thus encouraging every succeeding generation of believers to cherish the hope that, during his lifetime, Jesus may come and receive the church unto Himself. There are many witnesses that testify to the nearness of Christ's return, and of them we shall consider four:

### I. The Witness of the Scriptures

“We ... have the prophetic word made more sure ...” ( 2 Pet. 1:19 ). In turning to the Scriptures we shall concern ourselves with the nearness of our Lord's return, rather than *the fact* of His coming. Let's look at four outstanding writers of the epistles:

*Paul* It was to the apostle Paul that the risen Lord revealed the mystery of this great truth of His soon return. In Romans 13:11–12 he says, “... awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand ...” In 1 Corinthians 7:29 he writes, “... the time is short ...”

*Peter* witnessed something of the power and majesty of the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. That vision led him to believe that the Second Coming was imminent. So he exhorts: "... the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers" ( 1 Pet. 4:7 ).

*James*, the practical and ethical writer of the New Testament, shares the same sense of urgency, for he affirms, "... the coming of the Lord is at hand" ( James 5:8 ).

*John*, who was given insight into the prophetic panorama of God's purpose for the church, the Jews, and the world, opens his Apocalypse with these words: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ ... to show His servant things which must shortly take place ..." ( Rev. 1:1 ).

These Scriptures, among many, teach that the Lord Jesus could come at any moment, of any hour, of any day, of any month, of any year, in this dispensation of grace.

## II. The Witness of the Savior

"... I will come again ..." ( John 14:3 ). When Christ was on earth He spoke concerning the fact of His coming; but it was from heaven, through John, that He gave four direct utterances alluding to His near return as the next great event for the believer. The first mention in Revelation 3:11 is related to *Christian steadfastness* — "Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may, take your crown." Because He is coming soon we are to hold fast that which He has given us so that no man shall take our crown.

### 1. Illustrate

Second, the nearness of His coming is related to *Christian obedience*— "Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book" ( Rev. 22:7 ). In the light of His imminent return, the Book of the Revelation is to be read and obeyed, for in the keeping of this commandment there is a special blessing.

Then again, He says, "... behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to His work" ( Rev. 22:12 ). This has to do with Christian rewards. It matters how we live and serve down here. If we have done it in the light of the Second Coming then we can be sure of reward; if we lived and served in dreamy unconcern then we can be sure of shameful loss. A. B. Simpson, Presbyterian minister and founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, once said: "There is a day coming when the trust that we have committed to His keeping will be returned to us a millionfold more. We shall find what a good investor of our treasures God is."

His final words in Revelation are related to *Christian readiness* — "... Surely I am coming quickly ..." (see 22:20 )—without delay—and John responds, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Is that your prayer?

The scoffer may retort that nearly two thousand years have elapsed since these words were spoken; but the believer replies that faith learns to adjust to heaven's timetable. To God, a thousand years are as one day (see 2 Pet. 3:8 ). Let us remember that it is only two days since Jesus said, "Surely, I am coming without delay."

## III. The Witness of the Saints

"... we who are alive and remain shall ... meet the Lord in the air ..." ( 1 Thess. 4:17 ). One of the outstanding evidences of a truly regenerate person is that he has:

### 1) An Indwelling Hope.

Peter speaks of "... the hope that is in you ..." ( 1 Pet. 3:15 ); and Paul, in writing to the Colossians, adds, "... Christ in you, the hope of glory" ( Col. 1:27 ). No person can claim to be a Christian without believing in the Second Coming of Christ. The very fact of the Savior's indwelling brings the joy of the indwelling hope.

## **2) A Renewing Hope.**

It is Peter again who tells us that God "... has begotten us ... to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" ( 1 Pet. 1:3 ). That is why a Christian can never be a victim to worldly pessimism, but is ever optimistic, looking on to the consummation of Christ's saving purposes (see also Rom. 8:24–25 ).

## **3) An Unfailing Hope.**

The writer to the Hebrews speaks of the glorious hope we have "... as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast ..." ( Heb. 6:19 ). First-century Christians used the greeting, "Maranatha"—the Lord is coming!—and tens of thousands of saints throughout the centuries have shared this same hope. No wonder Paul tells us there is a special crown to be given "... to all who have loved His appearing" (see 2 Timothy 4:8 ).

# **IV. The Witness of the Signs**

"... when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near" ( Luke 21:28 ). Our Lord caustically challenged the people of His day for their inability to discern the signs of the times (see Matt. 16:3 ). When we speak of "signs" we are not referring to the fixing of dates, for the Lord clearly taught that the day of His coming is unknown to Himself, to angels, and to men (see Mark 13:32 ; Acts 1:7 ). The Word of God has plenty to say about the conditions which will prevail in the latter days:

## **1) Widespread Apostasy**

"... that Day [the Day of the Lord] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition" ( 2 Thess. 2:8 ); and again: "... the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons" ( 1 Tim. 4:1 ; see also 2 Timothy 4:3–4 ; Matthew 24:11 ). Numerous apostate movements are abroad today-various forms of liberalism, and even "Christian atheism," with all their religious literature, popular sermons, and theological fads, which combine to confuse the church and deceive the world.

## **2) Widespread Anti-Godism**

"... evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse ..." ( 2 Tim. 3:13 ). Communism regards religion as "a gigantic deception." Lenin wrote that "all religious ideas are an unspeakable abomination." Russian children are taught from earliest years to hate God, the Bible, the Lord Jesus, and the church. Before World War II youngsters were encouraged to wear shoes with blasphemous pictures on the soles, so that every time they took a step they were treading the Son of God under foot. They were also instructed to carry clubs picturing Christ as a demon.

## **3) Widespread Abomination**

( 17:26–30 ; see also 2 Tim. 3:1 ). Among abominations marking the end-time there will be:

### **A) MORAL WANTONNESS.**

In the days of Noah and Lot “They ate, they drank ...” ( 17:27 ). Vast sums are spent annually on food, alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs. Never in our time has there been such lack of restraint and so much drunkenness and wantonness.

## B) MARITAL WICKEDNESS

“... *they* married wives, they were given in marriage ...” ( 17:27 ; see also Gen. 6:1–6 ). The undiscerning might say, “Well, what is wrong with that?” but a study of the days in which Noah and Lot lived reveal that the sins of fornication, adultery, homosexuality and sodomy were rampant throughout the land. Jude tells us that people gave themselves over to “strange flesh” ( Jude 7 )—a reference to intermarriage with fallen angels (see Gen. 6:2 ) which produced a race of giants. Dr. Herbert Lockyer says: “As in the days of Noah there was unnatural union between fallen angels and the daughters of men, so now in spiritism the same alliance is again prominent. Some mediums enter into what they call ‘spiritual marriages.’ Spirits make love to these women and they, in turn, enter into contract, whereby they call themselves the brides, or spiritual wives, of these supposed angelic beings. Can we not see how such an unholy and unnatural contact opens the way for the production of the Superman who is to appear in the Tribulation period? The Antichrist is to be another being similar to the ‘mighty men of old.’ ”

## C) MATERIAL WEALTHINESS

“Likewise ... they bought, they sold, they planted, they built” ( 17:28 ; see also James 5:1–3 ). In America, millionaires number more than 100,000, and the multimillionaire is no longer a curiosity.

Alongside of this there is being developed a genius for commercial and material togetherness. The business world is fast shaping up for the time when the Beast will have full control of all aspects of commerce. Banks, traffic systems, industries, and projects of all kinds are being swept into the hands of wealthy syndicates. Private ownership, with all its concern for the worker, is becoming a thing of the past.

It is a day of mechanical mass production; everything is being standardized. We are moving to the day when “... no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name” ( Rev. 13:17 ). Then will be the establishment of a universal boycott. As Dr. Lockyer says: “Sitting at a table in some great center of the world, with magnets and microphones in front of him, the Beast, with his mastermind, will control and command the whole earth.”

## 4) WIDESPREAD ADVANCES

“... the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” ( Dan. 12:4 ). Gordon Wolfenholme in his book *Man and His Future* says that “advances in the sciences are doubling accumulated information every 10 years. As the experts contemplate the future, they are disturbed by the potentialities of evil that might arise from the application of their findings. Already biological research is in a ferment, creating and promising methods of interference with natural processes which could destroy or transform nearly every aspect of human life which we value.” Paul says that in the last days men and women will be “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” ( 2 Tim. 3:7 ). A university president once said, “Freshmen bring a little knowledge into the university; seniors take nothing out, and yet knowledge accumulates.”

But with this increase in knowledge, think of the advances in automation and speed. Nahum describes a time when “The chariots ... jostle one another in the broad roads; ... They run like lightning” ( Nahum 2:4 ). Before the coming of the automobile and airplane, it was hard to understand this passage, but now there are millions of cars on the highway, and countless planes in the air at all times of the day and night.

Even more amazing is the space age into which we have been launched. Man has traveled to the moon; and one wonders how high we can build our modern Tower of Babel before God breaks through from heaven and announces, “Gentlemen, it is closing time.” Like the people after Noah’s day, we are saying, “... let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves ...” ( Gen. 11:4 ).

Now Scripture does not discourage intellectual or scientific advance, but man is morally incapable of controlling the knowledge and power which he has acquired. Our widespread advances have become a flame out of control.

## **5) Widespread Antagonism**

“... you will hear of wars and rumors of wars ... men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth ...” ( Matt. 24:6 ; Luke 21:26 ). The world has never been free from war. In 1914–1918 the whole world was at war for the first time. Then followed the unforgettable carnage of World War II, and now what about the possibility of a third World War? No statesman knows what to do. No politician is able to solve the problems which confront the world today. Men are becoming desperate and are fearful of the future.

These are some of the signs which herald the near return of our Lord. Someone has said that “coming events cast their shadows before them,” and we have been looking at some of these shadows. Jesus put it another way when He said, “... when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” ( Luke 21:28 ).

### **2. Illustrate**

## **Conclusion**

We have seen that there are four main witnesses to the nearness of the Lord’s return. As God’s people, let us ever keep on the tiptoe of expectation, looking for and loving His glorious appearing.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... A small boy was standing by a horse tied to a post. A stranger asked him, “Can that horse run fast?” “I don’t know,” said the boy, “but he can stand fast.” Steadfastness. It means not faith, but faithfulness. It is the quality of reliability, trustworthiness, which makes a person one on whom we can utterly rely and whose word will stand. *Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 12/86.22).

### **2. Illustrate**

... The May 1984 National Geographic showed through color photos and drawings the swift and terrible destruction that wiped out the Roman cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum in A.D. 79. The explosion of Mount Vesuvius was so sudden, the residents were killed while in their routine: men and women were at the market, the rich in their luxurious baths, slaves at toil. They died amid volcanic ash and superheated gases. Even family pets suffered the same quick and final fate. It takes little imagination to picture the panic of that terrible day.

The saddest part is that these people did not have to die. Scientists confirm what ancient Roman writers record—weeks of rumblings and shakings preceded the actual explosion. Even an ominous plume of smoke was clearly visible from the mountain days before the eruption. If only they had been able to read and respond to Vesuvius’s

There are similar “rumblings” in our world: warfare, earthquakes, the nuclear threat, economic woes, breakdown of the family and moral standards. While not exactly new, these things do point to [the soon return of our Lord and] a coming Day of Judgment ( Matt. 24 ). People need not be caught unprepared. God warns and provides an escape to those who will heed the rumblings.

“Signs of the Times,” *Leadership*. vol. 6, no. 4 (Wheaton, Ill., Fall 1985), p. 76.

### 3. Illustrate

... Harold Wildish tells a lovely story of a father who had to leave his home and go on a long journey. Just before he left his three year old son asked him, “Daddy, when will you be coming back?” The father knew that he would not return until the end of September and that it would be useless to talk about seasons to his little boy, for he would not know the difference between them. So he said, “When you see the leaves on the trees turning red and brown and beginning to fall to the ground, then you can be sure that Daddy is coming back very soon.

The next day the father left home. During the summer months the boy would go for walks with his nurse and talk about his absent Daddy. The weeks went by. September came, and slowly the leaves began to change, although the boy did not notice it. Then one night there was a strong windstorm and leaves came down, filling the sidewalks and gutters. The next morning when the little fellow went out he saw them. Letting go of his nurse’s hand, he went among the leaves, kicking them with his shoes and shouting, “Hurrah! Daddy’s coming soon?”

Likewise, all over the world there is an expectation. The leaves are turning brown and are beginning to fall. Jesus said, ‘When ye see these things’ be gloomy? No! chins up! “Lift up your heads!” The great future of every child of God may be dawning, “for the coming of the Lord is drawing near.”

### For Further Research

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

## Twenty Sermon

### TWENTY, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Challenge of Christ’s Coming

**READING:** Titus 2:11–15 ; 1 John 3:1–3 ; 1 Thess. 2:17–20

**TEXT:** “... the grace of God ... has appeared ... teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” ( Titus 2:11–13 ).

### Introduction

The Spirit of God has a twofold purpose in the teaching of the Second Coming. One is to comfort the believer, the other is to challenge him (see 1 Thess. 4:18 and Rom. 13:11–12 ). The challenge of Christ’s coming should affect the Christian spiritually and practically in the following areas:

- I. The Christian's Personal Expectancy ( Titus 2:11–13 )
  1. An Expectancy of Faith ( 1 Thess 4:14 , 16 )
  2. An Expectancy of Hope ( Heb. 6:19 )
  3. An Expectancy of Love ( 2 Tim. 4:8 )
- II. The Christian's Personal Examination ( 2 Pet. 3:11 )
  1. A Life of Holiness ( 1 John 3:3 )
  2. A Life of Harmony ( 2 Pet. 3:14 )
  3. A Life of Happiness ( Phil. 4:4–5 )
- III. The Christian's Personal Evangelism ( Matt. 24:46 )
  1. The Return of Christ Hastens the Advent Day ( 2 Pet. 3:12 )
  2. The Return of Christ Gladdens the Advent Day ( 2 John 8 )

## Conclusion

May the challenge of His coming so affect our daily expectancy, examination and evangelism that doctrine will become duty and God's purpose will be gloriously realized.

## TWENTY, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Challenge of Christ's Coming

**READING:** Titus 2:11–15 ; 1 John 3:1–3 ; 1 Thess. 2:17–20

**TEXT:** "... the grace of God ... has appeared.... teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" ( Titus 2:11–13 ).

## Introduction

Reading through the New Testament—particularly the Epistles—it would appear that the Spirit of God has a twofold purpose in presenting the blessed truth of the Second Coming. On the one hand, the teaching is designed to comfort the believer (see 1 Thess. 4:18 ); on the other, to challenge him (see Rom. 13:11–12 ).

There are those who allege that occupation with this glorious theme of the Second Advent can lead us to be so heavenly-minded that we're no earthly good. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The prophetic Scriptures were given for practical ends. In them there is nothing speculative, fanciful, or unreal. Throughout they keep in touch with the needs of human life. The Epistle to the Thessalonians was written to comfort the bereaved; Peter wrote to people growing weary and careless through a deferred hope; and the Book of Revelation (the Apocalypse) was given by our Lord to encourage the persecuted to endure. In this study we shall see how the challenge of Christ's coming affects:

## **I. The Christian's Personal Expectancy.**

Paul tells us that "... the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" ( Titus 2:11-13 ). The phrase, "looking for the blessed hope," sums up the personal expectancy of the believer. According to the New Testament, it is:

### **1) An Expectancy of Faith.**

Writing to the Thessalonians Paul says: "... if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.... For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout ..." ( 1 Thess. 4:14 , 16 ). Christ's coming is not a flight of fancy, but a fact; not a craze, but a conviction. If we believe that Christ lived, died, and rose from the dead, then we must be consistent and believe that He will come again. So our expectancy is one of faith, based upon the promises of Christ, the preaching of the apostles, and the predictions of the Scriptures. The more we dwell on HIS coming, the stronger becomes our faith.

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **2) An Expectancy of Hope.**

The writer to the Hebrews speaks of it as the "... hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast ..." ( Heb. 6:19 ). This hope is not elusive, vain, mythical, or visionary; it is real, tangible, and vital. The believer is not told to wait for death, or even heaven; he is to anticipate the certain return of Christ who is "... the hope of glory" ( Col. 1:27 ).

### **3) An Expectancy of Love.**

Paul tells us that there is a crown of righteousness laid up for all who love His appearing (see 2 Tim. 4:8 ), or as Moffatt renders it, "for all who have loved and longed for His appearance." Weymouth translates it, 'for all who love the thought of His appearing.' Notice it is not only the appearing, but the very thought of it. Do our innermost beings rise in adoring praise at the thought of Christ's return? If not, then we have not faced the challenge of His coming. Jesus said, "Watch therefore.... lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping" ( Mark 13:35-36 ). Let us see to it that we ever maintain such watchfulness, for nothing is more criminal than to sleep at the post of duty.

#### **2. Illustrate**

## **II. Christian's Personal Examination.**

Having spoken of the tremendous events which will mark the appearing of Christ, Peter asks, "... what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" ( 2 Pet. 3:11 ). The searching and challenging truth of the coming again of Christ demands:

### **1) A Life of Holiness.**

John reminds us that "... everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" ( 1 John 3:3 ). The writer to the Hebrews says 'Pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord' ( Heb. 12:14 ). And it was our Savior who declared, "Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God" ( Matt. 5:8 ). If believers are not purifying themselves the reason is clear: they are not daily examining

their thoughts, words, and deeds in the fear of God. The soon return of Christ is one of the greatest incentives to a life of holiness.

## **2) A Life of Harmony**

“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things [that is, the coming again of Christ], be diligent to be found by Him in peace ...” ( 2 Pet. 3:14 ). In another place Paul pray, “... the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” ( 1 Thess. 5:23 ). For such a harmony to be realized, all the powers of spirit, soul, and body must be brought under the supreme control of the sovereign will of God, just as the complex parts of a great organ are brought under the masterful touch of the player. There is no discord in heaven; therefore, there must be harmony in the heart and life of the believer who continually sings the song of the Advent.

## **3) A Life of Happiness.**

When Paul commands “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice,” it is because he is about to add, “... The Lord is at hand” ( Phil. 4:4–5 ).

Writing to Christians undergoing fiery trials, Peter says, “Beloved, do not think it strange.... but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” ( 1 Pet. 4:12–13 ). Why this jubilant rejoicing? Because of the coming again of the Lord Jesus to reward all who have suffered as true Christians. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” ( Matt. 5:12 ). Those who know the powerful imprecations of the Advent teaching in their lives will tell you that it turns hardness to happiness, persecution to pleasure, and suffering to glory.

## **III. The Christian’s Personal Evangelism.**

The Master clearly stated what the believer ought to be doing, in view of His appearing. He said, “Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find ... doing” ( Matt. 24:46 ). Again and again He referred to a rewarding day for service well done. The same teaching is found in the epistles. In the light of this:

### **1) The Return of Christ Hastens the Advent Day.**

Peter speaks of “looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God ...” ( 2 Pet. 3:12 ). God gives in the continuous present; therefore, He does not time the return of Christ in terms of man’s calendar. What He waits for is the last soul to be won after which Christ will descend to rapture His-waiting church.

James uses the analogy of the farmer and the fruit to convey this same thought: ‘ ... be patient, brethren,’ he says, ‘until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain.’ And then he makes the appreciation: “You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand” ( James 5:7–8 ).

What a new spirit and fruitfulness we would bring into evangelism if only we realized that we hasten or hinder the coming of Christ by our attitude to this great task of winning souls to Christ.

### **3. Amplify**

### **2) The Return of Christ Gladdens the Advent Day**

“Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward” ( 2 John 8 ). Let us never forget that part of the thrill of going to heaven will be the inestimable joy of presenting to the Savior those whom we have won through our evangelism down here. Looking back on his gospel campaign in Thessalonica, Paul could say, “... what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” ( 1 Thess. 2:19 ).

Every soul is saved to serve, and failure to fulfill this high and holy calling will mean unspeakable shame and loss at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Either we will hear His “... Well done, good and faithful servant; ... Enter into the joy of your Lord” ( Matt. 25:21 ) or else we shall experience the unutterable shame which John speaks of when he says, “... little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” ( 1 John 2:28 ). If Christ were to return today would you be able to say “Here I am, and the children You have given me”; or would your lament be:

Must I go, and empty-handed?

Must I meet my Savior so?

Not one soul with which to greet Him:

Must I empty-handed go?

Charles C. Luther

## Conclusion

May the challenge of His coming deeply affect our personal expectancy, examination, and evangelism. Only in this way shall the doctrine of the Advent become a duty, and the purpose of this revelation become a glorious realization.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... It is told of Michelangelo, one of the rarest geniuses the human race has ever produced, that after having spent laborious years painting the frescoes on the roof of the Sistine Chapel in Rome, he had so acquired the habit of looking upward that it became a permanent physical trait. He always went about with his eyes directed to the skies. Ought not we, who love and look for our Lord's Appearing, to adopt such a stance as we go through life? At any moment the heavens may be rent asunder to make way for the return of our glorious Redeemer. “And unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation” ( Heb. 9:28 ).

*Prophetic Witness*, vol. 6, no. 5 (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, May 1982). p. 18.

### 2. Illustrate

... Our absent Lord has given special commendation to those who not only wait for His return, but also earnestly watch for Him. The difference between these terms is ‘illustrated by the story of a fishing vessel returning home after many days at sea. As they neared the shore, the sailors gazed eagerly toward the dock where a group of their loved ones had gathered. The skipper looked through his binoculars and later identified some of them: “I see Bill's Mary, and there is Tom's Margaret and David's Anne.: One man became concerned

because his wife was not there. Later, he left the boat with a heavy heart and hurried up to the hill to his cottage. As he opened the door, she ran to meet him, saying, "I have been waiting for you!" He replied with a gentle rebuke, "Yes, but the other men's wives were WATCHING for them!"

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 8.12/86).

### 3. Amplify

... Somehow we have lost our concern for the individual. We have come to think of masses. It is here that we can trace the curse of Communism and Socialism. These ideologies try to obliterate the importance and influence of the individual. Christianity teaches us this value. But are not we Christians in danger of becoming engrossed with organization? We convene conferences, form societies, issue manuals, pass resolutions with the object of dealing with people en masse. But while we are here and there, the individual goes. We need a baptism of love for souls, a love to win them one by one for the Master. In the words of Leon Tucker:

Lord, lay some soul upon my heart,

And love that soul through me;

And may I nobly do my part

To win that soul for Thee.

*Moody Monthly*. Quoted in *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 655. Used by permission.

### For Further Research

For Bibliography on prophetic books, see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

## Twenty-one Sermon

### TWENTY-ONE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE CHURCH  
The Redemption of the Church (1)

**READING:** 1 Thess. 4:13-18 ; 1 Cor. 15:35-58 2 Cor. 5:1-11

**TEXT:** "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" ( 1 John 3:2 ).

### Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 10:32 the apostle gives a classification of mankind which aids us in considering the object of Christ's coming. In the verse referred to Paul says, "Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God." Here he divides mankind into three categories: the Jews, the Gentiles or nations, and the church of God. In God's prophetic plan He has specific purposes of grace, government, and glory for each group.

The object of Christ's coming for the church is fourfold: 1) to complete the redemption of the church; 2) to conduct the review of the church; 3) to consummate the reunion of the church; and 4) to commence the reign of the church. Let's look at the first of these:

I. The Glorification of Sleeping Saints ( 1 Thess. 4:16 )

1. The Good State ( Rom. 8:28 )
2. The Better State ( Phil 1:22 )
3. The Best State ( 1 Cor. 15:35–58 )

II. The Glorification of Living Saints ( 1 Thess. 4:17 )

1. The Glory of Conversion ( 2 Cor. 4:6 )
2. The Glory of Communion ( 2 Cor. 3:18 )
3. The Glory of Confession ( Acts 6:15 )
4. The Glory of Consummation ( 1 John 3:2 )

### Conclusion

A day is coming when the church of God will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air to live eternally with Him, free of satanic attacks. What a prospect for the child of God. May that day of victory dawn soon!

## TWENTY-ONE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE CHURCH  
The Redemption of the Church (1)

**READING:** 1 Thess. 4:13–18 ; 1 Cor. 15:35–58 ; 2 Cor. 5:1–11

**TEXT:** "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" ( 1 John 3:2 ).

### Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 10:32 the apostle gives a classification of mankind which aids us in considering the object of Christ's coming. In the verse referred to Paul says, 'Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God. Here he divides mankind into three categories: the Jews, the Gentiles or nations, and the church of God. In God's prophetic plan He has specific purposes of grace, government, and glory for each group.

The object of Christ's coming for the church is fourfold: 1) to complete the redemption of the church; 2) to conduct the review of the church; 3) to consummate the reunion of the church; and 4) to commence the reign of the church. Today we shall look at the first of these objects: THE REDEMPTION OF THE CHURCH.

In Scripture, the redemptive work of Christ is always viewed in terms of what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will yet do. This threefold aspect is clearly illustrated in the first chapter of Ephesians, verse

seven: “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” The word “redemption” there covers the past and present experience of the believer and of the church. In the phrase, “we have redemption,” Paul includes forgiveness and freedom, or justification and sanctification.

But then look at verses 13 and 14 ( Ephesians 1 ), where he goes on to say that, having heard and believed the gospel, believers are “... sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession ...”

The apostle also speaks of this final aspect of redemption in the following Scriptures: Romans 8:2 — “... waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body”; 1 Corinthians 1:30 — “... Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption”; Ephesians 4:30 — “... do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

If the past and present aspects of redemption are justification and sanctification, the future aspect is that of glorification. This will take place at the Second Advent and will involve the following.

## **I. The Glorification of Sleeping Saints.**

“The dead in Christ” are referred to, by the apostle, as “... those who sleep in Jesus” ( 1 Thess. 4:16 ). Like us, the believers at Thessalonica were profoundly disturbed about their departed loved ones. It is quite obvious, from reading the letter, that they must have assumed that the Lord Jesus would return before any of them saw death; so Paul wrote to comfort and correct them on this point. If we gather together the statements he has made throughout his epistles on this subject, we learn that there are three states which a believer may enjoy:

### **1) The Good State**

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” ( Rom. 8:28 ). This is the state into which we are brought by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. After hearing and believing the gospel we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (see Eph. 1:13 ).

### **2) The Better State.**

Paul was “hard pressed” to decide whether to “... live on in the flesh ...” or “... to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” ( Phil. 1:22–23 ). While there is little room for dogmatism on what this state is, there are certain facts which are clearly revealed. When a loved one dies his *spirit* goes to the Father. The Bible says, “Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it” ( Eccles. 12:7 ). The Lord Jesus could say, “... into Your hands I commend My spirit” ( Luke 23:46 ), and Stephen could pray, “... Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” ( Acts 7:59 ). The *soul* goes into the presence of Christ, for it is “... absent from the body and ... present with the Lord” ( 2 Cor. 5:8 ), while the *body* goes to the grave.

#### **1. Illustrate**

This “better state” is one of:

#### **A) SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS.**

Paul says he is willing “... to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” ( 2 Cor. 5:8 ). Literally, it means to be “at home” or “on speaking terms” with the

#### **B) SPIRITUAL CONTENTEDNESS.**

As we have seen already, Paul speaks of this state as being “far better” ( Phil. 1:23 ).

### C) SPIRITUAL COMMUNION.

In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul reveals that he had an experience in which he was caught up to Paradise. There he heard “... inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (vv. 2 , 4 ).

From this and other Scriptures it would appear that our departed loved ones not only enjoy the presence of the Savior, but commune with Him. There is some evidence to believe that they are aware of what goes on down here. Moses and Elijah, on the Mount of Transfiguration, spoke of the decease of the Lord Jesus as if it were something they had been following with interest all the way along; and the writer to the Hebrews tells us that, as runners in the race, we are “... surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses ...” ( Heb. 12:1 ). Needless to say, what the departed saints see on earth they view from *heaven’s point of view*. We see hanging threads and unsightly knots; they see a perfect tapestry!

#### 2. Illustrate

#### 3) The Best State.

This is the state into which all the dead in Christ (including Old Testament saints) will be ushered, when the Lord descends from heaven with a shout. Paul describes it in vivid and glorious detail (see I Corinthians 15:35–58 ). In essence, he teaches that even though the body is sown in corruption, dishonor and weakness, it will be raised in incorruption, glory, and power. Even though it is sown a natural body it will be raised a spiritual body. Just as the grain of wheat goes into the ground in one form and then springs into life in another, so at the coming of Christ all who have been laid to rest will be given a spiritual body through which to express their redeemed personalities. A study of the post-resurrection appearances of the Lord Jesus will help us to understand what that body will be like.

Paul further tells us that just as the sun has one glory and the moon another, and the star yet another, so our bodies are going to reflect the glorious likeness of the Lord Jesus (see Philippians 3:20–21 ).

#### 3. Illustrate

## II. The Glorification of the Living Saints.

The Bible makes it clear that there will be believers who are physically alive when the Lord Jesus comes back again. Paul refers to them as “... we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together ... to meet the Lord in the air ...” ( 1 Thess. 4:17 ). The glorification of the living saints is going on now, but it will be wonderfully consummated when Jesus returns. There is:

#### 1) The Glory of Conversion

“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” ( 2 Cor. 4:6 ). Anyone who has been involved in soul-winning will know something of this glory in the face of a new convert. In one sense, there is nothing more wonderful to see this side of heaven.

#### 2) The Glory of Communion.

Paul tells us that “... we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” ( 2 Cor. 3:18 ). As we

gaze into the mirror of God's Word and see the glory of Christ reflected, we catch something of this glory as the Spirit operates upon us. After Moses communed with God upon the mountain, he came down with face aglow, and it is recorded that he "... did not know that the skin of his face shone ..." ( Exod. 34:29 ).

#### **4. Illustrate**

### **3) The Glory of Confession.**

Stephen was a man who walked with God. As he stood before the people to confess his Master and defend His cause, we read that "... all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel" ( Acts 6:15 ). History testifies to this glory shining from the faces of many martyrs since then.

### **4) The Glory of Consummation.**

John says, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" ( 1 John 3:2 ). This is the full and final glory which will be manifested when the living saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Paul calls this "... the glorious liberty of the children of God" ( Rom. 8:21 ). Although the order is sleeping saints first, and living saints second, there is no shred of evidence to indicate that there is an interval between. In fact, Paul says that this glorification of sleeping and living saints will all take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ..." ( 1 Cor. 15:52 ). Corruption will put on incorruption, and mortality will put on immortality.

#### **5. Illustrate**

## **Conclusion**

This is the completion of the redemption of the church. It only remains to point out that the meeting place for this redeemed church will be in the air. Why is the air so specifically referred to? The answer is clear and simple. Until that moment the devil will still be "... the prince of the power of the air ..." ( Eph. 2:2 ). When our Lord Jesus Christ returns for HIS church we are told that the voice of the archangel will be heard from heaven, together with the shout of the Lord and the trumpet of God. Michael's voice will awaken and call together not only the church, but all Old Testament saints who have their part in the first resurrection. This great company, led by our triumphant Lord, will then pass right through the sphere of satanic control, thus driving the great enemy and accuser of the brethren out from his place of power. From this moment onward the church will be free from satanic attack. What a prospect this is for the child of God! May that day dawn soon!

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... When a joint USA/French effort discovered the ill-fated luxury liner *Titanic* resting upright in more than 13,000 feet of water, the question arose whether to raise it or let it rest forever in the deep. The leader of the expedition said, "I see nothing to gain. The souls have now been located, and they're fine where they are." While their bodies were temporarily left at the bottom of the ocean when the ship sank April 14, 1912, their souls were summoned to God. Only He knows exactly where each one is.

Adapted from *Sermons Illustrated*, (Holland, Ohio, 12/85.28).

### **2. Illustrate**

... A few hours before entering heaven Dwight L. Moody caught a glimpse of the glory awaiting him. Awakening from sleep, he said, "Earth recedes, heaven opens before me. If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling me, and I must go!" His son who was standing by his bedside said, "No, no, father, you are dreaming." "No," said Moody, "I am not dreaming. I have been within the gates: I have seen the children's faces." A short time elapsed and then, following what seemed to the family to be the death struggle, he spoke again, "This is my triumph; this is my coronation day. It is glorious!"

G. W. Ridout. *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 159–160. Used by permission.

### **3. Illustrate**

... Ben Franklin wrote the following epitaph for his own tomb: "The Body of Benjamin Franklin, Printer, Like the Cover of an Old Book, Its Contents Torn Out and Stripped of Its Lettering and Gilding, Lies Here, Food for Worms. Yet the Work Itself shall not be Lost; for it will, as He Believed, Appear once More in a New and More Beautiful Edition, Corrected and Amended by The Author."

*Wesleyan Methodist*. Quoted in *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations*, pp. 163–164. Used by permission.

### **4. Illustrate**

... The story is told of an old violinist who was very poor, but who brought much joy to others through his playing. Asked to explain why his music evoked a responsive chord in the hearts of his listeners, he lovingly fingered his instrument and commented, "Ah, a great deal of sunshine must have gone into this wood, and what has gone in comes out."

How much of God's sunshine has entered your life? How much time have you spent in the radiance of His presence? It is only too true of all of us that if more of God's radiance had entered our souls we should be better able to radiate peace and hope to the crowds around us.

Adapted from *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations*, pp. 94–95. Used by permission.

### **5. Illustrate**

... When Alexander the Great invaded Samaria he commanded the king that statues of himself as world conqueror be set up at various strategic places all over the domain. Graven images were repugnant to the Samaritans, and as a consequence the king dangerously decided to disobey the imperial order. After a while Alexander returned and was furious to find that no statue of himself had been sited in the whole area. Indignantly, he demanded of the king where the statues were. For answer, the king shouted, "Alexander!" and instantly small boys appeared from all over the place, each called "Alexander!" Flesh and blood was a better memorial than stone and metal. When Christ, incomparably the greatest Conqueror of all, comes back to earth, living replicas of Him will emerge all over the planet. "when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" ( 1 John 3:2 ).

*Prophetic Witness*. vol. 6, no. 4. (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, April 1983), p. 10.

## **For Further Research**

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

# Twenty-two Sermon

## TWENTY-TWO, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**READING:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE CHURCH  
The Review of the Church

**READING:** Rom. 14:7–13 ; 1 Cor. 3:1–15 ; 2 Cor. 5:1–11

**TEXT:** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” ( 2 Cor. 5:10 ).

### Introduction

The review of the church is an intensely solemn and searching aspect of prophetic truth—a subject not popular in public preaching or private discussion. Only as the church faces up to the doctrine of the Judgment Seat of Christ will she live righteously and effect a purifying influence in a perverse generation.

- I. The Period of This Judgment ( 1 Cor. 4:5 )
- II. The Place of This Judgment ( Rom. 14:10 )
- III. The People of This Judgment ( 2 Cor. 5:10 )
  1. As a Sinner ( John 5:24 )
  2. As a Son ( John 1:11–12 )
  3. As a Servant ( Matt. 25:14 )
- IV. The Purpose of This Judgment
  1. To Review Believers ( 2 Cor. 5:10 )
  2. To Reward Believers ( 1 Cor. 3:8 )

### Conclusion

The solemnity and challenge of this great subject should send us to our knees in repentance, confession, and dedication in order that our lives may be lived wholly for His glory.

## TWENTY-TWO, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE CHURCH  
The Review of the Church (2)

**READING:** Rom. 14:7–13 ; 1 Cor. 3:1–15 ; 2 Cor. 5:1–11

**TEXT:** “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” ( 2 Cor. 5:10 ).

## Introduction

Our last study dealt with the first object of Christ's coming: the redemption of the church. In this study we shall see from Scripture how the second object of Christ's coming is to conduct THE REVIEW OF THE CHURCH. This is a solemn and searching aspect of prophetic truth—a subject not popular in public preaching or private discussion. Only as the church faces up to the doctrine of the Judgment Seat of Christ will she live righteously and effect a purifying influence in a perverse generation. Consider:

### I. The Period of This Judgment

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts; and then each one's praise will come from God” ( 1 Cor. 4:5 ); “... you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just” ( Luke 14:14 ).

Remember that it was when the day of David's rejection was over (before the day of his glory and kingdom) that the men who had faithfully served their master were called before him for review and reward (see 2 Sam. 23 ; 2 Chron. 11 and 12 ). In a similar way, the time of the Judgment Seat of Christ will be after the day of the Savior's rejection and before His appearing in glory with His saints. A comparison of relevant Scriptures show that the reward of faithful servants is linked with the Parousia (Rapture) and the day of Christ (before the Marriage Supper of the Lamb; see 1 Cor. 1:8 ; 2 Cor. 1:14 ; Phil. 2:16 ; 1 Thess. 2:19 ; 3:13 ).

### II. The Place of This Judgment

“... we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” ( Rom. 14:10 ; see also 2 Cor. 5:10 ). The theory of a general judgment of saint and sinner is unbiblical. The Spirit of God is careful to make a clear distinction between the *bema* (the Judgment Seat) and the *thronos* (the Great White Throne judgment; see Rev. 20:11 ). The former was a raised platform from which the umpire watched the Grecian games and later determined and rewarded the successful contestants. Paul makes an analogy to the Judgment Seat of Christ as the place where believers are going to appear for the appraisal of their life and work here on earth. The latter is a throne that is to be suspended in space, when heaven and earth have fled away, and the unsaved will be raised from the dead to be judged “... according to their works ...” This judgment is followed immediately by “the second death” ( Rev. 20:11–15 ).

### III. The People of This Judgment

“... we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ ...” ( 2 Cor. 5:10 ). The pronoun “we” is a reference not only to the apostle, but all Christians throughout the centuries. (see Rein. 14; 1 Cor. 3 ; 2 Cor. 1:1 ; 5 . Note that the believer is subject to a threefold judgment:

#### 1) As a Sinner.

This judgment is past. His sins have been judged and punished already in the person of the Lord Jesus. The Savior said, “... he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” ( John 5:24 ). And Paul reminds us that “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus ...” ( Rom. 8:1 ).

#### 2) As a Son.

This judgment is present. The purpose of this judgment is not to decide sonship, for the believer is already a son (see John 1:11–12 ). It is rather to discipline the son when he is disorderly or disobedient. The Hebrew

writer says, “For whom the Lord loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives” ( Heb. 12:6 ). The severest forms of this judgment have as their ultimate object restoration and not condemnation (see 1 Cor. 5:5 ; 11:32 ).

### **1. Amplify**

#### **3) As a Servant This judgment is future.**

The believer has been entrusted with his Master’s goods (see Mat. 25:14 ; therefore, he is under obligation to use them rightly for His Master’s glory (see 1 Pet. 4:10 ), if he expects to receive a reward in the day of reckoning.

## **IV. The Purpose of This Judgment.**

The New Testament reveals that the purpose of the Judgment Seat of Christ is twofold:

### **1) To Review Believers**

“... we must all appear [or be manifest] before the judgment seat of Christ ...” ( 2 Cor. 5:10 ). The Word of God teaches that believers will be reviewed for:

#### **A) THEIR MOTIVES**

“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts ...” ( 1 Cor. 4:5 ). Moffatt renders this: “The hour of reckoning is still to come, when the Lord will bring dark secrets to the light and reveal life’s inner aims and motives.” How solemn to realize that the plans, purposes, and motives of our hearts will be made manifest in that day. Are we ready for such a revelation and inspection? Remember, *why* we do things is as important as *what* we do.

### **2. Illustrate**

#### **B) THEIR CONDUCT**

“... we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in [and through his] body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” ( 2 Cor. 5:10 ). Writing to the Romans, Paul reminds them that “... none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself.” In the light of this, he exhorts believers not to judge or despise each other, since we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (see Rom. 14:7–12 ). Some Christians imagine they can live anyway they wish, once they are saved. Nothing could be farther from the truth. God will never condemn sin in the sinner and condone it in the saint.

#### **C) THEIR SERVICE**

“... each one’s work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is” ( 1 Cor. 3:13 ). That which is done through the body can be good or bad; therefore, service to be reviewed will be either good or bad service.

#### **i) The Good Service**

“... if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones.... each one’s work will become manifest ...” ( 1 Cor. 3:12–13 ). Only service that is based upon the true foundation will qualify for judgment.

The service that will win the Savior's approval and gain the servant's reward is "... gold, silver, precious stones ..." ( 1 Cor. 3:12 ).

The "gold" speaks of *spiritual service*, for it symbolizes the nature of God and is accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit. How important, then, to know the fullness and anointing of the Holy Spirit for everything we do! The "silver" speaks of *sacrificial service*; it is typical of Christ's atonement and redemption (see Exod. 30:11–15 ). Service, to be acceptable to God, must be redemptive, and rendered by the believer in the strength of his gratitude to Christ for His Calvary love. The "precious stones" speak of *steadfast service*. The stones here do not refer to a variety of jewels, as is sometimes supposed, but denotes the numerous marble and granite stones of great buildings, such as the magnificent temple of Diana at Ephesus, which was considered fireproof and indestructible. As such, these stones represent the steadfast and immovable work in which the believer is to abound (see 1 Cor. 15:58 ).

The apostle reminds us that fire will test every man's work. This fiery test is undoubtedly the scrutiny of the Judge. In his vision of the glorified Christ on the Isle of Patmos, John saw that His eyes were "... like a flame of fire" ( Rev. 1:14 ).

## **ii) The Bad Service**

Is described as "wood, hay, straw" ( 1 Cor. 3:12 ). These perishable materials have their own symbolic "Wood" speaks of *careless service* . Why use gold, silver, or precious stones, says the slothful servant, when wood will do? It represents man's independent skill, energy, and power. "Hay" speaks of *worthless service* . It appears showy and bulky, but costs nothing in terms of sacrifice. "Stubble" speaks of *useless service* (see Job 21:18 )—tasks which are done with base ends in view. Such service will go up in smoke and flames, with nothing but charred embers of a careless, worthless, and useless life to press into the pierced hands of the Master.

## **3. Illustrate**

### **2) To Reward Believers**

"... each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor" ( 1 Cor. 3:8 ). *The New Testament makes it clear that there may be:*

#### **A) THE GAINING OF REWARDS**

(see 1 Corinthians 3:14 ; Matthew 25:21–23 ). These are spoken of in Scripture as crowns; and there are six of them, representing places of privilege and authority in the Savior's eternal kingdom (see Luke 19:17–19 ; Rev. 5:10 ; 20:4 ).

### **i) The Golden Crown**

(see Rev. 4:4 ). This is the believer's crown—one that need not be earned. It is the status symbol of a raptured and glorified believer.

### **ii) The Incorruptible Crown**

(see 1 Cor. 9:25–27 ). This victor's crown will be awarded to those who have been faithful to the principles of the gospel, as established in the Word of God, and have endured the sacrifice of self-denial in order to be approved of God.

### **iii) The Crown of Righteousness**

(see 2 Tim. 4:8 ). It is one thing to bet, eye in the coming of Christ, but another to live in the light of that coming, and so love His appearing.

#### **iv) The Crown of Rejoicing**

(see 1 Thess. 2:19–20 ). This crown will be awarded to all who have given themselves to the task of personal and public evangelism. Whatever part the believer plays in the conversion of a soul will be recompensed in the day of Christ.

#### **v) The Crown of Glory**

(see 1 Pet. 5:1–4 ). This is the shepherd’s crown to be given all who have shared in the vital ministry of under-shepherding.

#### **vi) The Crown of Life**

(see James 1:12 ). This is the reward of all who have endured persecution, testing, and even death for the Master’s sake (see Matt. 5:10–12 ).

### **4. Illustrate**

#### **B) THE LOSING OF REWARDS**

(see 2 John 8 ; Rev. 3:11 ; Col. 2:18 , RV ). To live carelessly as Christians now is to lose our rewards in a day to come.

### **5. Amplify**

This will mean facing:

#### **i) A Deserved Shame at the Judgment Seat of Christ.**

John encourages us so to live that a ... when He appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming” ( 1 John 2:28 ). To live out of fellowship with the Lord exposes the child of God to the possibility of embarrassment and shame at the coming again of Christ.

Five years before Jim Elliott was martyred by the Auca Indians he penned this note in his diary, “When it comes time to die, make sure all you have to do is to die.”

#### **ii) A Deserved Sorrow at the Judgment Seat of Christ**

“If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” ( 1 Cor. 3:15 ). Scripture reveals that failure to submit to those whom the Lord has set over us in the church will be a source of grief to them and loss to us at the Judgment Seat of Christ (see Heb. 13:17 ).

#### **iii) A Deserved Status at the Judgment Seat of Christ**

“... Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” ( Rev. 3:11 ; see also 3:21 ). In this warning Jesus implies that neglect of spiritual opportunities will mean a lost crown in that day and, consequently, a diminished status, dignity, and responsibility in the reign of Christ over the earth.

Someone may ask, “If it is possible for saved and glorified saints to experience such emotions as grief, shame, and loss, will heaven be the happy place that it is depicted to be?” The difficulty is admitted, but the warnings stand. The fact is that the individual who has lived a life of carnality or backsliding down here will be happy to get what he deserves at the Judgment Seat of Christ because the Judge of all the earth has done right (see Gen. 18:25 ).

## **Conclusion**

The solemnity and challenge of this great subject should send us to our knees in repentance, confession, and dedication in order that our lives may be lived wholly for His glory.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Amplify**

... That “Prince of Preachers,” Charles Spurgeon, said on one occasion, “Sometimes God sends His love letters in black-edged envelopes.” He allows us to taste the bitterness of want and the desolation of bereavement. If you have lived many years you have passed through the narrows. We have all been there. It looks as if things have got out of hand, and somehow or other we have been forgotten. When there is no one at hand to say it to you, say it to yourself, ‘God is faithful, who will not suffer the pain to exceed the measurement of my endurance.’”

Rev. John MacDeath, Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 260. Used by permission.

### **2. Illustrate**

... The legend is told of a desert wanderer who found a crystal spring of unsurpassed freshness. The water was so pure he decided to bring some to his king. Barely satisfying his own thirst, he filled a leather bottle with the clear liquid and carried it many days beneath the desert sun before he reached the palace. When he finally laid his offering at the feet of his sovereign, the water had become stale and rank due to the old container in which it had been stored. But the king would not let his faithful subject even imagine that it was unfit for use. He tasted it with expressions of gratitude and delight, and sent away the loyal heart with gladness. After he had gone, others sampled it and expressed their surprise that the king had even pretended to enjoy it. “Ah!” said he “it was not the water he tasted, but the love that prompted the offering.” Many times our service is marked by multiplied imperfections, but the Master looks at our motives and says “It is good.”

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 8.14/86).

### **3. Illustrate**

... Inflation after World War I was so severe in Germany that money was virtually worthless. People carried millions of deutschmarks in shoe boxes when they went to the store to purchase a simple item like buttons. To put it scripturally, they “suffered loss.” There is a spiritual parallel. A day is coming when believers will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and their works will be judged. If we have served faithfully we shall receive a reward; if we have misspent our time on earth we shall suffer loss.

### **4. Illustrate**

... Henry C. Morrison, a 40-year veteran of missionary service in Africa, was returning to the States and happened to be traveling on the same ship as Theodore Roosevelt. As the boat entered New York harbor, the

President received a great fanfare; Morrison got none, and he became quite dejected about it—until a small voice whispered to him, ‘Henry, you’re not home yet.’”

## 5. Amplify

... Have you become discouraged? Have you allowed something to keep you from being what you know you should be? Have you allowed depression or disaster to make you lose heart and to slacken your effort? If so, remember the Word of the Lord: “That no man take thy crown.” Be diligent; in season and out of season. Be faithful in the face of storm, as well as in times of sunshine, for if there is “no battle, there will be no victory; no cross, no crown.”

Henry J Westermeyer, in *Christian Observer*. Q oted in *300 0 Illustrations for Christian Service*, p. 568. Used by permission.

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

# Twenty-three Sermon

## TWENTY-THREE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ’s Coming: THE CHURCH  
The Reunion of the Church (3)

**READING:** Revelation 19:1–10

**TEXT:** “... Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb ...” ( 19:7 ).

### Introduction

The reunion of the church is referred to as “... the marriage supper of the Lamb ...” ( 19:7 ). This is a subject of infinite tenderness and instructive truth. The bridal relation of the church to her Lord is a truth which is figuratively pictured in the Old Testament and factually presented in the New Testament. Let us look at:

- I. The Marriage Couple ( 19:7 )
  1. The Bridegroom ( 19:7 )
  2. The Bride ( 19:7 )
- II. The Marriage Company ( 19:9 )
  1. The Wedding Party
  2. The Wedding Guests ( 19:9 )
  3. The Wedding Servants

- III. The Marriage Ceremony ( 19:7 )
  - 1. A Solemnized Presentation of the Bride ( Eph. 5:27 )
  - 2. An Organized Introduction of the Bride ( Matt. 10:32 )
- IV. The Marriage Celebration ( 19:7 )
  - 1. A Pleasurable Reunion ( Rev. 19:7 )
  - 2. A Powerful Revelation ( 2 Thess. 1:7–10 )
  - 3. A Peaceful Reign ( Rev. 20:1–2 , 4 )

## Conclusion

A day of reunion is coming, and how we live now will determine how we look then (see Rev. 21:2 ). The glory of that day will depend on our individual contributions of fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints. God enable us to make ourselves ready now.

## TWENTY-THREE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE CHURCH  
The Reunion of the Church (3)

**READING:** Revelation 19:1–10

**TEXT:** "... Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb ..." ( 19:7 ).

## Introduction

We have seen already that the object of Christ's coming is to complete the redemption of the church and to conduct the review of the church. The third object of His coming is to consummate THE REUNION OF THE CHURCH. This reunion is referred to in Revelation 19:7 as "... the marriage supper of the Lamb ..." and is a subject of infinite tenderness and instructive truth. Most Bible teachers take it for granted that this theme is so familiar that it needs no explanation, but this is not so.

Before we deal with the various aspects of the marriage of the Lamb, it is important to make a general observation. The bridal relation of the church to her Lord is a truth which is often figuratively pictured in the Old Testament and factually presented in the New. Who can read the early chapters of the Bible without reveling in the story of Isaac and Rebekah or, later, of the romance of the Shepherd-lover with the maiden of Shulam, as recorded in the Song of Songs? Then there are the repeated foreshadowings of Christ and His church in the relations of Israel with Jehovah.

When we come to the New Testament, we find that the marriage of the Lamb was one of the themes on which Jesus loved to dwell. There is the story of the marriage of the king's son (see Matt. 22:1–14 ), and later on the parable of the ten virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom (see Matt. 25:1–13 ). In the Epistles, Paul, in particular, treats the same subject when he commands husbands: "... love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it" ( Eph. 5:25 ). Such prophecies as these find their fulfillment in the passage we are about to consider. Let us look at:

## I. The Marriage Couple

“... the marriage of the Lamb has come, and HIS wife has made herself ready” ( 19:7 ). These are not difficult to distinguish, for they stand out clearly as the Bride and Bridegroom.

### 1) The Bridegroom

“... the marriage of the Lamb has come ...” ( 19:7 ). Ordinarily, the greatest interest in a wedding centers on the bride, but in this case the focused attention will be on the Bridegroom. If there is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents, how much greater will be the joy of heaven when the marriage of the Lamb takes place!

It is clear from Scripture that the Bridegroom is our Lord Jesus Christ, as illustrated in the parable of the King’s Son (see Matt. 22:11–14 ). Also in the story of the ten virgins, the Lord is spoken of as the Bridegroom: “... Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!” ( Matt. 25:6 ). John the Baptist spoke of Christ as the Bridegroom, and himself as the friend of the Bridegroom (see John 3:29 ). Jesus also referred to Himself as the Bridegroom, saying, “... Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? ...” ( Matt. 9:15 ). So without any doubt the Bridegroom is Christ. The hymnist put it well when she

The Bride eyes not her garment

But her dear Bridegroom’s face;

I will not gaze at glory

But on My King of grace.

Not at the crown He giveth

But on His pierced hand;

The Lamb is all the glory

Of Immanuel’s land.

Anne Ross Cousin

### 2) The Bride

“... His wife has made herself ready” ( 19:7 ). Although the Bride (the church or saints from Pentecost onward) was chosen for Christ before the foundation of the world (see Eph. 1:4 ), the marriage could not take place until Christ had assumed humanity. It was not until after the incarnation of the Lord Jesus that Paul could say, “... I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” ( 2 Cor. 11:2 ).

There have been many long betrothals, but none has lasted as long as that of Christ to His church. Nearly two thousand years have passed and the church still waits for her wedding day.

#### 1. Illustrate

There is reason to believe that the midnight cry will soon be heard: “... Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!” ( Matt. 25:6 ). When that moment arrives the Bride will have made herself ready, and she

will be "... arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints" ( 19:8 ). The question arises as to when the church clothes herself. Certainly this does not take place until after the Judgment Seat of Christ, for the false works will have been consumed by fire at that time (see 1 Cor. 3:11–15 ). This is undoubtedly the fiery judgment which Peter speaks about in I Peter 1:7 when he says, "that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." The righteous acts which withstand the flames will constitute the beautiful wedding garments in which the saints will be clothed. This, of course, is where the distractions will appear between those who have been faithful to their Lord while here upon earth and those who have lived selfishly and uselessly without a thought of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

## **II. The Marriage Company**

"... Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! ..." ( 19:9 ). From this passage and other relevant portions of Scripture, we learn that the marriage company will consist of:

### **1) The Wedding Party;**

... that is, the Bride and Bridegroom, the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

### **2) The Wedding Guests.**

It is obvious that the guests are not the Bride, for the Bride would not be called or invited to the wedding. Yet John is told to write and say, "... Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! ..." ( 19:9 ). It seems fairly evident, therefore, that the guests must be the Old Testament saints who are raised from the dead at the coming again of Christ for His church. These will include such Old Testament characters as Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David, and the prophets. Then there will be also the blood-washed multitude who come out of the tribulation, after the church has been raptured (see Rev. 7:14–17 ). We see, then, that the guests will represent all the righteous of the past ages and dispensations who are not included in the Bride, which is the church.

### **3) The Wedding Servants.**

These will undoubtedly be the angels and heavenly hosts who will watch and serve at their Master's bidding. What they see now of God's manifold wisdom, through the church, will be even more wonderful then (see Eph. 3:10 ).

## **III. The Marriage Ceremony**

"... the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready" ( 19:7 ). It would seem from this passage that the marriage will take place in heaven after the Judgment Seat of Christ and before the appearing of Christ with His saints at the revelation. The character of the ceremony, who shall perform it, and what vows the Bride and Bridegroom will take, are not disclosed; but it is quite evident from the study of the Word that there will be:

### **1) A Solemnized Presentation of the Bride.**

This is the moment when Christ, in the presence of His Father, will present to Himself "... a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but ... holy and without blemish" ( Eph. 5:27 ). This will consummate the union of Christ and His Bride.

### **2) An Organized Introduction of the Bride.**

After the marriage is solemnized, the Lord Jesus Himself will introduce His Bride to the Father, according to His promise in Matthew 10:32 — “... whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.”

There is a sense in which the Lord is ever representing us before the Father, for He is our Advocate; but this official introduction will take place after the fiery trial of the Judgment Seat of Christ has rid us of all that is unreal and unbecoming.

## **IV. The Marriage Celebration**

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory ...”; and again: “... Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb! ...” ( 19:7 , 9 ). What a supper this will be! The feasts of Belshazzar and Ahasuerus will be but poor meals in comparison.

### **2. Illustrate**

The celebration of this great event will include:

#### **1) A Pleasurable Reunion.**

The saints of all time will be gathered together in the presence of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The pleasure of such an experience as this is just unimaginable to our finite minds. If seeing the Lord Jesus by faith now brings “... joy inexpressible and full of glory” ( 1 Pet. 1:8 ), what will it be like to see Him face to face and to meet the redeemed saints of all ages personally? No wonder the hosts of heaven will be invited to “... be glad and rejoice and give Him glory ...” ( 19:7 ).

#### **2) A Powerful Revelation.**

Immediately following the marriage supper, the Lord Jesus will return with His saints to a world of indescribable rebellion and corruption. Paul speaks of this event when he says: “... the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His *power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be among all those who believe ...*” ( 2 Thess. 1:7–10 ). This revelation of glory, power, and judgment is vividly described in the remaining verses of Revelation 19 , where the Lord Jesus is depicted as riding upon a white horse, His eyes as a flame of fire, and on His head many crowns. His garments are dipped in blood, and the armies that follow Him are clothed in fine linen, white and clean (see 19:11–14 ). This vivid and frightening description is merely another way of telling forth the same day of judgment in which the saints will share. Having overthrown the armies of Satan and consigned the beast and the false prophet to the lake of fire (see 19:20–21 ), the marriage of the Lamb Will be further celebrated. by:

#### **3) A Peaceful Reign.**

In all the years of recorded world history, the world has only been at peace 8% of the time or a total of 286 years. Over 8000 treaties have been made and broken ( *Sermons Illustrated*, 4/87.26). How welcome, then, will be the prospect of a peaceful reign! John goes on to say: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.... And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God ... And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years” ( Rev. 20:1–2 , 4 ). What this peaceful reign portrays and promises will have to be the subject of a future study. Suffice it to say

here that it will be a period of unparalleled prosperity, felicity, and activity, to the glory of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion

Although some believe that the language which depicts these events is highly symbolical, remember that symbology, like typology, presupposes spiritual reality. How we live now will determine how we look in that day of reunion. Let us make ourselves ready so that at the marriage supper of the Lamb we are as "... a bride adorned for her husband" ( Rev. 21:2 ). The glory of that day will depend on our individual contributions of fine linen, clean and white—the righteous acts of the saints.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... Those who have read the letters of Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661), Scottish divine and Covenanter, will know that He longed for the Second Coming of Christ. Listen to him as he prays: "Oh, when will we meet? Oh, how long is it to the dawning of the Marriage Day? O sweet Jesus, take wide steps! O my Lord, come over mountains at one stride! O my Blessed, flee as a roe or a young hart upon the mountain of separation. Oh, if He would fold the heavens together like an old cloak, and shovel time and days out of the way, and make ready in haste the Lamb's wife for her Husband."

T. S. Rendall, "Bringing Back the King." *The Prairie Overcomer* (Three Hills, Alberta, Canada: Prairie Bible Institute, September 1964), p. 341.

### 2. Illustrate

... In order to raise money for charity, a West German hotelier at Marienheide near Cologne prepared a table some 2,606 feet long. An estimated 20,000 guests came to the party and lined up for a long, sumptuous meal at what its promoter billed as the longest buffet table ever set. According to the Bible, God has arranged and announced a great supper. The invitation has gone out, "Come; for all things are now ready" ( Luke 14:17 ). There is room at this banquet for all peoples of the world. God loves the world—that's why He welcomes the world to His supper table.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 4/87.13).

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

## Twenty-four Sermon

### TWENTY-FOUR, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE CHURCH  
The Reign of the Church (4)

**READING:** [Revelation 19:11–20:6](#)

**TEXT:** “... Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” ( [Rev. 19:6](#) ; see also [1 Cor. 15:25](#) ).

## **Introduction**

Having looked at the redemption, the review, and the reunion of the church, we now come to THE REIGN OF THE CHURCH. Consider:

- I. The Inauguration of the Reign ( 19:11–19 )
  1. The Punishment of the Anti-Christian Peoples of the World ( 2 Thess 1:7–9 )
  2. The Banishment of the Antagonistic Peoples of the World ( 19:20 ; 20:1–3 )
- II. The Administration of the Reign ( 19:6 )
  1. The Haul of Administration ( 1 Cor. 15:25 )
  2. The Seat of Administration ( Luke 21:24 )
  3. The Means of Administration ( Heb. 1:14 ; Rev. 20:4 )
- III. The Manifestation of the Reign ( 19:6 )
  1. A Reign of Power ( 19:15 )
  2. A Reign of Peace ( Isa. 9:6–7 )
  3. A Reign of Prosperity ( Amos 9:13–15 )

## **Conclusion**

This, then, is the future which is held out to the believer. What it will be to reign with Christ is indescribably wonderful. Paul says, “... I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” ( Rom. 8:18 ). May we be faithful in suffering now so that we may enjoy reigning with Him then.

## **TWENTY-FOUR, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**READING:** The Object of Christ’s THE CHURCH  
The Reign of the Church (4)

**READING:** [Revelation 19:11–20:6](#)

**TEXT:** “... Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” ( [19:6](#) ; see also [1 Cor. 15:25](#) ).

## **Introduction**

We now come to the fourth aspect of truth concerning the object of Christ's coming for His church. Having looked at the redemption, the review, and the reunion of the church, the Word of God shows us how this leads to THE REIGN OF THE CHURCH.

As most of this relates to the millennium, it is only fair that we should point out that students of prophecy are divided on this subject. The three main viewpoints are known as A-Millennialism, Post-Millennialism and Pre-Millennialism. The word "millennium" comes from two Latin words, *mille* and *annus*, which simply means "a thousand years." A-Millennialism means "without the millennium"; Post-Millennialism means "after the millennium"; and Pre-Millennialism means "before the millennium."

*A-Millennialists* teach that there will be no millennium or "golden age" on earth during which Christ will reign with His church. They believe that all Old Testament promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church today, and that this age is to culminate with the Advent of Christ, when the righteous dead and wicked dead will be raised together; and that following the Day of Judgment there will be a new heaven and earth. However, this interpretation raises more problems than it solves. True, the Puritans and some of the church fathers as far back as St. Augustine supported this view, but it is well known that the Puritans were weak in eschatology. Furthermore, the A-Millennialists err grievously in discarding the promises to Israel concerning an earthly kingdom, ascribing them to the church. The church has a heavenly calling and hope, not an earthly prospect; whereas Israel is an earthly people and still has an earthly future, as will be shown in a later study. Once again, A-Millennialists are inconsistent in literalizing one set of promises that refer to Christ's first coming, while they spiritualize those that relate to His Second Advent.

*Post-Millennialists* believe and teach that there will be a millennium ushered in by efforts of the church, and that following the period of universal peace and prosperity Christ will return to reward His own, judge His enemies, and establish the new heaven and new earth. This school of thought is quite strong in many evangelical circles, but they seem to ignore a scriptural truth that conditions will not improve during this present age, but will become worse until the coming of Christ (see 2 Tim. 3, 2 Thess. 2 and Luke 18:8). It must be pointed out that differences of interpretation do not constitute error or heresy, provided they do not detract from the glory of the person of Christ or the certainty of His ultimate purposes for mankind.

*Pre-Millennialists* hold that Christ's coming will bring about the millennium, that He will reign over the earth a thousand years from the throne of His father David, and that this period separates the resurrection of the just from the resurrection of the wicked.

## **I. The Inauguration of the Reign**

( 19:11–19 ). The reign of Christ will be inaugurated by a revelation of glory, power and judgment. Even Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied this event (see Jude 14–15 ). At this glorious appearing there will be:

### **1) The Punishment of the Anti-Christian Peoples of the World**

"... the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished forever with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" ( 2 Thess. 1:7–9 ). This overthrow will be swift, terrible, and irresistible. This immense battle of Armageddon is vividly and dramatically described in, Revelation 16:16–21 ; 19:11–21 ; see also Ps. 2:9 ; Isa. 11:4 , etc.

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **2) The Banishment of the Antagonistic Powers of the world**

“Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, to which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone” ( 19:20 ). The “powers” that have enjoyed undisputed sway immediately prior to the glorious appearing are “the beast,” “the false prophet,” and “Satan.” The beast (or Antichrist) and the false prophet are not just systems, but persons whom Satan will have used to deceive and corrupt the unbelieving world. They will be cast into the lake of fire without dying and will still be there when Satan joins them a thousand years later ( 19:20 ; 20:1–3 ).

Satan has four different names of comprehensive significance:

**A) AS THE DRAGON, HE IS THE DESTROYER.**

Peter tells us that “... like a roaring lion, [he seeks] whom he may devour” ( 1 Pet. 5:8 ).

**B) AS THE OLD SERPENT, HE IS THE DECEIVER.**

That is how he is named in the early chapters of the Bible when he entered the Garden of Eden to deceive Adam and Eve (see Gen. 3 ). He “... deceives the whole world ...” ( Rev. 12:9 ).

**2. Illustrate**

**C) AS THE DEVIL, HE IS THE ACCUSER,**

... ever slandering God to man and man to God (see Gen. 3:4–5 and Job 2:4–5 ). It is in this sense that he is called “... the accuser of [the] brethren ...” ( Rev. 12:10 ).

**D) AS SATAN, HE IS THE OPPOSER,**

... the implacable adversary of God and man, opposing the outworking of the purposes of God, and ever seeking to hinder the true well-being of the human race.

From such a description we see that he is a person. Praise God, he is to be bound with a chain and cast into the bottomless pit. Objection has been raised as to the possibility of binding a spirit with an iron chain, but the word “iron” is not used. It is simply a great chain, and we are told in other passages that spirit beings can be bound. In 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 we read that angels who sinned and did not keep their proper domain are “... reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.” What is important to recognize is that Satan will be restricted in his operations a thousand years, and that represents the victory of this tremendous overflow of evil.

## **II. The Administration of the Reign**

“... Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns? ( 19:6 ). Having inaugurated the reign, Christ and His church will rule over the earth for a thousand years. The Bible speaks of:

### **1) The Head of Administration.**

Paul tells us that Christ “... must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet” ( 1 Cor. 15:25 ). In the Old Testament, Daniel, the prophet, foretold this event (see Dan. 7:13–14 ); and the New Testament opens with the visitation of the angel to Mary who predicted: “... the Lord God will give [Jesus] the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:32–33 ).

### **3. Illustrate**

Whether Christ will sit in person on the throne in Jerusalem, or whether He will rule through another is not clear. Several passages of Scripture seem to teach that King David will be raised and placed on the throne again, and that the Children of Israel will seek him; but it may mean that the Lord Jesus Himself will be named David. On the other hand, it is quite possible that King David will reign as Regent and will be called King or Prince, as circumstances may require (see Hosea 3:5 ; Jer. 30:9 ; Ezek. 34:23 ; 37:24–25 ).

Those who object to the visible reign because it involves the anomaly of intercourse between men in the flesh and those clad in resurrected and glorified bodies must remember the post-resurrected appearances of our Lord during those forty days. He not only appeared to His disciples, but talked, walked, ate, and drank with

So the Head of Administration will be Jesus Himself—King of kings and Lord of lords.

#### **2) The Seat of Administration.**

This will be Jerusalem. The Lord predicted that Jerusalem would "... be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" ( Luke 21:24 ). Then the city was to be rebuilt. The prophet Ezekiel gives us a detailed description of the restored land and city in Ezekiel 48:1–35 .

#### **3) The Means of Administration.**

Even though angels are "ministering spirits" ( Heb. 1:14 ) and the restored Jewish remnant will bless the nations throughout the millennial reign, the main administrative duties will be relegated to the church ( 20:4 ; see also Luke 22:28–30 ; 1 Cor. 6:2–3 ; 2 Tim. 2:11–12 ). Details of how resurrected saints will participate in this reign are not disclosed. The only hint we have is in the parable of the pounds (see Luke 19:11–26 ), where faithfulness in stewardship is rewarded with greater authority.

### **III. The Manifestation of the Reign**

"... Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!" ( 19:6 ). Old and New Testaments are full of descriptive language regarding the features that will mark the millennial reign of Christ. Note that it will be:

#### **1) A Reign of Power**

"... He ... will rule ... with a rod of iron ..." ( 19:15 ). This iron rule will characterize both the swift and terrible judgment at the battle of Armageddon and also the reign of righteousness throughout the thousand years. Try to visualize the absolute government of a Monarch so wise as never to make one single mistake; so equitable as to deal justice to all; so tender-hearted as to rule gently; so good and benevolent as to seek only the glory of God and the well-being of His subjects. What a kingdom!

#### **2) A Reign of Peace**

"... His name will be called ... Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end ..." ( Isa. 9:6–7 ). This universal peace will signal:

#### **A) THE INTEGRATION OF NATIONS**

"He shall judge between many peoples, And rebuke strong nations afar off; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war any more" ( Micah 4:3 ; see also Ps. 46:9–10 ). Nikita Khrushchev, the Russian premier from

1958–1964, saw a figurative fulfillment of this prophecy when he visited the John Deere factory near Des Moines, Iowa. The plant was built early in World War II for manufacture of machine-gun bullets. Today it produces farm implements ( *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, p. 799). The spiritual and social implications of such a state of peace are treated in great detail in the prophecy of Ezekiel (see Chapters 40 , 44 , etc.).

## B) THE LIBERATION OF NATURE.

Animals as well as the ground share the curse of sin; but in that day “The wolf ... shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them” ( Isa. 11:6–9 ; 33:24 ). The curse also will be banished from the earth (see Isa. 55:13 ; 35:1 ). The New Testament shows that these promises are to be understood literally (see Rom. 8:21 ); the fruitfulness and blessedness of Eden are to be restored.

### 3) A Reign of Prosperity.

The millennium will be marked by a marvelous prosperity which will affect both health and wealth. Concerning health, life will be prolonged. “... the child ‘shall die one hundred years old ...’” ( Isa. 65:20 , 22 ; Zech. 8:4 ). Patriarchal years will be restored and men shall live as long as they did before the flood. This, undoubtedly, will be due to climatic or atmospheric changes and to the healing and life-giving qualities of the new river which will flow from the sanctuary (see Ezek. 47:12 ). Concerning wealth, the mountainsides will be covered with productive vineyards and pastures will sustain vast herds of cattle. The harvests will be so great and abundant that “... the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed ...” ( Amos 9:13 ; see also Joel 3:18 ).

#### 4. Illustrate

Scripture teaches that the power of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is cosmic in its effects. This is one of the greatest arguments for the millennial reign of Christ. Only then will it be demonstrated that He can lift the curse from men and women, animals, and the earth itself.

## Conclusion

This then is the future which is held out to the believer. To reign with Christ will be indescribably wonderful. No wonder Paul says: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revving of the sons of God” ( Rom. 8:18–19 ). May we be faithful in suffering with Him now so that we may enjoy reigning with Him then.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... Some years ago New York audiences at the Hayden Planetarium watched spectacular presentations of how the world might one day come to an end. To the accompaniment of ominous music and script they saw five theoretical portrayals of the destruction of the earth. Stars plummeted to earth, cities burst into flames, tidal waves and earthquakes swept the earth with disaster, and mankind was destroyed from the face of the earth. Did these catastrophic imaginative pictures startle the audiences to prepare for eternity? Some who viewed them said that if they knew such a doom were truly impending, they would spend the last minutes in reverence; others said, in a last mad splurge. Most seemed to agree that if the world was to end, they would prefer not to have any

advance notice! And so, unprepared, they would be swept into eternal destruction. “The End of the World,” *Prophetic Word* (Brooklyn, NY, October 1949), p. 517.

## 2. Illustrate

... Nature provides a fitting illustration of Satan’s tactics. Observers tell us that in the spring of the year the cuckoo bird can be seen mimicking the flight of the sparrow hawk. Flapping, gliding, and soaring like a natural predator, this imposter frightens songbirds and distracts them to the point that they leave their nests unattended. She then moves in and devours an unguarded egg, leaving one of her own in its place.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 11/85.26).

## 3. Illustrate

... In Princeton University in New Jersey there used to be a frame that originally contained a portrait in oils of King George III of England. During the War of Independence a cannon-ball destroyed the portrait, and later a picture of George Washington was placed in the frame. Just so, when the Millennium comes, within the framework of world politics, instead of the dark malevolent face of the Devil, which now leers at us from the contemporary scene, there will appear the bright benevolent face of Christ.

*Prophetic Witness*. vol. 6, no. 4 (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, April 1983), p. 10.

## 4. Illustrate

... As soon as Jerusalem was captured in 1917 by General Allenby, a British geologist began to investigate the riches of the Dead Sea. Scientists inform us that in that desolate spot there lies embedded from twelve to thirteen hundred billion dollars worth of recoverable salts ... there is two hundred and sixty million dollars worth of bromine, so useful for medical purposes; of potash there is seventy billion dollars worth; and of magnesium chloride eight hundred twenty five billion dollars worth, and vast values of other minerals. We are told that the wealth that lies embossed on the earth at that point is worth more than all the known gold that has been dug from the bowels of all the earth. What these minerals may mean to the world, especially in that prophetic day when we are told that the deserts are to blossom as a rose, is ... almost beyond the wildest dreams of men ...”

Adapted from *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), pp. 385–387. Used by permission.

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

## Twenty-five Sermon

### TWENTY-FIVE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST  
**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ’s Coming: THE JEWS  
The History of the Jews (1)

**READING:** Genesis 12:1–9

**TEXT:** “Now the Lord had said to Abram: ... I will make you a great nation; I will bless you ... And in you all the famines of the earth shall be blessed” ( 12:1–3 ).

## Introduction

Dr. A.T. Pierson says that “the history of the Jew should be spelled His Story-God’s story of choice, grace, and judgment.” There are seven aspects of Jewish history, as revealed in Scripture, which we will cover in this study:

- I. The History of Their Election ( 12:1–3 , 7 )
  1. Abraham’s Call ( 12:1 )
  2. Abraham’s Commission ( 12:2–3 )
  3. Abraham’s Country ( 12:7 )
- II. The History of Their Redemption ( Ps. 111:9 )
  1. A Redemption by Grace ( Exod. 3:7–8 )
  2. A Redemption by Blood ( Exod. 12:12–13 )
  3. A Redemption by Power ( Exod. 6:6 )
- III. The History of Their Provision ( Rom. 9:4–5 )

*The Privilege of Adoption, Glory, Covenants, Decalogue, Ministry, Promises, Fathers*
- IV. The History of Their Rebellion ( Deut. 31:27 )
- V. The History Of Their Dispersion ( Amos 9:8–9 )
- VI. The History Of Their Protection ( Amos 9:8 )
- VII. The History of Their Suspension ( Rom. 11:25 )

## Conclusion

No understanding of prophecy can leave out a consideration of the history or destiny of the Jews. We thank God not only for Jews in general, but for The Jew in particular, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

## TWENTY-FIVE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ’s Coming: THE JEWS  
The History of the Jews (1)

**READING:** Genesis 12:1–9

**TEXT:** “Now the Lord had said to Abram:.... I will make you a great nation; I

will bless you ... And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed”  
( 12:1–3 ).

## Introduction

When Frederick the Great asked his court chaplain for a single irrefutable proof of God, he replied, “The Jew, Sire!” From any point of view the Jew stands out as a remarkable figure; he cannot be explained on purely natural grounds. Dr. A. T. Pierson asserts that “the history of the Jew should be spelled His Story—God’s story of choice, grace, and judgment.” There are seven aspects of Jewish history, as revealed in Scripture, which we shall cover in this study:

## I. The History of Their Election

“Now the Lord had said to Abram:.... ‘I will make you a great nation; I will bless you.... And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed’.... Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land.’ And there he built an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him” ( 12:1–3 , 7 ). The origin of many nations is obscure, but the origin of the Jewish nation can be traced with accuracy. The whole world knows that Abraham was the first Hebrew. In Genesis 12 we learn of:

### 1) Abraham’s Call

“... the Lord ... said to Abram: ‘Get out of your country, From your kindred And from your father’s house, To a land that I will show you ’ ” ( 12:1 ). This call of God to Abraham was an act of sovereign grace, a miracle. It was not Abraham seeking God; on the contrary, God broke into his dark heart with the light of His revelation. Biblical faith, as someone has beautifully expressed it, is ‘the echo of the Word of God in the soul of man.’ It presupposes a revelation; all that man is capable of is to respond to God’s self-disclosure.

The name “Hebrew” comes from “Eber,” (see Gen. 10:21 ) who was an ancestor of Abraham, so that those descended from him were called Hebrews. ‘The biblical record quite definitely indicates that ‘ *ibri* ’ is derived from Eber, the name of one of Shem’s sons ( Gen. 10:21 ; 11:14 , 16 ). Abraham is identified as a descendant of Shem, of Eber’s line ( Gen. 11:26 ).... The Old Testament does link Abraham, via Eber, to Shem, and thus Abraham is designated as the one through whom Noah’s prophecy concerning Shem was to be fulfilled. ‘Hebrew’ ( ‘ *ibri* ’ ) became the name by which the covenant people were designated in contradistinction to the Egyptians and Philistines ( Gen. 39 – Exod. 10 ; 1 Sam. 4:19 ) *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Moody Bible Institute, p. 643). The term “Jew” is a contraction of Judah. No one was called a Jew until the tribe of Judah was brought into existence. The term “Israel” was introduced when God changed Jacob’s name to Israel. Since the captivity, the terms “Israel” and “Judah” have been used interchangeably-and rightly so when we remember that Abraham was the father of Isaac, who was the father of Jacob, who was the father of Judah (see Matt. 1:2 ).

### 2) Abraham’s Commission

“... I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” ( 12:2–3 ). God had a threefold purpose in calling Abraham and establishing the nation of Israel: 1) to be a repository of His truth in the world; 2) to be the channel for the coming of a personal Redeemer; 3) to be a national witness to Himself before other nations. The history of the Jews shows how each of these divine purposes has been partially or totally fulfilled.

### 3) Abraham’s Country

“... the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your descendants I will give this land’ ...” ( 12:7 ). Later when Abraham was 90 years old God reaffirmed: “... I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you ... for an everlasting covenant.... I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger ... as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God” ( 17:7–8 ). Passages like this are numerous throughout the Scriptures. To be consistent, we must interpret the im mediate, as well as the ultimate, fulfillment of these promises made to Abraham.

## **1. Illustrate**

## **II. The History of Their Redemption**

“... He has sent redemption to His people; He has commanded His covenant forever; Holy and awesome is His name” ( Ps. 111:9 ). Recall how the family of Jacob was forced to go to Egypt because of famine. There they multiplied and prospered until a new king arose who did not know Joseph (see Exod. 1:8 ). The people of God became the slaves of Egypt and were cruelly treated before God intervened on their behalf in a mighty act of redemption. We learn that God’s deliverance was:

### **1) A Redemption by Grace**

“... I have surely seen the oppression of My people ... I know their sorrows.... I have come down to deliver them ... and to bring them up from [Egypt] to a good and large land ... flowing with milk and honey ...” ( Exod. 3:7–8 ). Just as Abraham was chosen by a sovereign act of grace, so Israel was delivered by a similar act of grace; the work was wholly of God.

### **2) A Redemption by Blood**

“... I will pass through the land of Egypt ... and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast.... And when I see the blood [on the houses where you are] I will pass over you ...” ( Exod. 12:12–13 ). God’s only way of salvation involves the shedding of blood (see Heb. 9:22 ). From the very beginning the Jews had to learn this in order that they might recognize that the only Lamb of God who finally bears away the sin of the world is Jesus their Messiah (see John 1:29 ).

### **3) A Redemption by Power**

“... say to the children of Israel: ‘I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, ... I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments’ ” ( Exod. 6:6 ). Picture the helpless children of Israel, trapped with the Red Sea before them, the insuperable barriers on either side of them, and the approaching Egyptians behind them. But God said to Moses, “Go forward” ( Exod. 14:15 ) and the miracle happened: the sea divided and the people went over on dry ground. Throughout their wilderness wanderings they proved the continued power of God in the pro, ion of their physical and spiritual needs.

## **III. The History of Their Provision**

“... Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, ... the promises ... the fathers ...” (see Rom. 9:4–5 ). No other nation has been accorded such privileges and blessings as God gave to Israel. Because they were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and therefore His special people, God granted them:

### **1) The Privilege of Adoption**

... or sonship, (see Rom. 9:4 ). God referred to Israel as His son, His ‘firstborn (see Exod. 4:22 ; Hosea 11:1 ). He adopted these people to Himself in a filial relationship of life and fatherly care.

## **2) The Privilege of the Glory**

(see Rom. 9:4 ). This is the Shekinah glory that appeared in the midst of His people ( Exod. 24:16–17 ). It was the visible symbol of God’s presence with the children of Israel.

## **3) The Privilege of the Covenants**

(see Rom. 9:4 ). These were not the two tablets of stone, but the several agreements God made with Abraham and his descendants (see Gen. 12:1–3 , 7 ; 13:14–17 ; 15:1–21 ).

## **4) The Privilege of the Decalogue**

(see Rom. 9:4 ). Man has made millions of laws since the tablets of stone were handed to Moses on Mount Sinai over 3,000 years ago, but he has never improved on God’s Law. The Ten Commandments are not the laws: they are The Law—the principles by which man may live with God and man.

## **5) The Privilege of the Ministry**

(see Rom. 9:4 ). This is an allusion to the priestly service of the tabernacle and the temple which educated the children of Israel in spiritual worship and witness.

## **6) The Privilege of the Promises**

(see Rom. 9:4 ). To Israel was given the messianic promises concerning a Deliverer in the person of Jesus Christ (see Deut. 18:15 , 18–19 ).

## **7) The Privilege of the Fathers**

(see Rom. 9:4–5 )—a reference to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

In addition to these seven special privileges there were the material blessings which God lavished upon His people—plentiful water, wheat and barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil, honey; a land in which they would eat bread without scarcity; where they would lack nothing (see Deut. 8:7–9 ). But the nature of sinful man is such that he turns against the very hand that blesses him. Observe:

## **IV. The History of Their Rebellion.**

Moses had to say to the Levites: “for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord, then how much more after my death?” ( Deut. 31:27 ). Jewish history shows that Israel prostituted her unique position. Her history has been marked by idolatry, disobedience and unbelief (see Deut. 4:25–31 ) as a seed under Abraham (see Rom. 4 ); as a family under Jacob (see Gen. 49 ); as a nation under Moses (see Exod. 12:14 ); as a kingdom under Saul ( 1 Sam. 10 ). As a result of this departure from God, the Jews became captives under Shalmaneser (10 Tribes, 2 Kings 17 ) and under Nebuchadnezzar (2 tribes, 2 Kings 25 ). Even though they became a restored remnant under Cyrus (see Ezra 2 ), God’s judgment was upon them from that day.

## **V. The History of Their Dispersion.**

Amos foretold this in the closing chapter of his prophecy (see Amos 9:8–9 ). Israel became known as “the tribe of the wandering foot and weary breast.”

There are two facts regarding the dispersion which make the dispersion all the more wonderful. The first is its *continuance*. The scattering of the Jews began before the destruction of the second temple; and long before the time of Christ there were more Jews in the dispersion than in Palestine. The times of the Gentiles commenced with Nebuchadnezzar. and the primary cause of the dispersion was idolatry (see Deut. 4:25–31 ). As a result, Israel has remained in dispersion ever since. Though Jews have returned to Palestine in great numbers, there has been no reestablishment of the Davidic throne. and Jerusalem has continued to be trampled by the Gentiles.

The second factor in the dispersion is its *universality*. Go from one end of the earth to the other and you will always find the Jew. The political history of this dispersion is sketched for us in Genesis 49 , while the ecclesiastical history is unfolded in Leviticus 23 .

## **VI. The History of Their Protection**

“... ‘I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,’ Says the Lord” ( Amos 9:8 ). Lehmann Strauss has written: ‘God is faithful: no man can destroy the Jew. We might as well try to destroy God as destroy Israel. In spite of all the persecutions, Israel is still a nation, and the Jew is indestructible.

1. The king of Egypt could not destroy him ( Exod. 1:15–22 ).
2. The waters of the Red Sea could not drown him ( Exod. 14:21–31 ).
3. The gallows of Haman could not hang him ( Esther 5:14 ; 8:1–2 ).
4. The great fish could not digest him ( Jonah 1:17 ; 2:10 ).
5. The fiery furnace could not burn him ( Dan. 3:16–28 ).
6. The lions could not devour him ( Dan. 6:1–28 ).
7. A prophet could not curse him ( Num. 28:8 ).
8. The nations could not and cannot now absorb him ( Esther 3:8 ).
9. The dictators cannot annihilate him ( Isa. 14:1–2 ).”

The reason for his indestructibility is that God has said, “For I am with you ... to save you; Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, Yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, And will not let you go altogether unpunished” ( Jer. 30:11 ). In spite of their indestructibility, however, no people on the face of the earth have been subjected to more tyranny and cruelty than the children of Abraham.

### **2. Illustrate**

## **VII. The History of Their Suspension.**

Writing on the present state of the Jews, Paul says, “... hardening in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” ( Rom. 11:25 ). In spite of his idolatry, disobedience and unbelief, there is

no warrant at all for the false conclusion that God's dealings with the Jews have come to an end. Indeed, Paul says, "I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew ..." ( Rom. 11:1-2 ). Today the Jew is blind, bitter, and boastful; but this will not go on forever. In our next study on "The Destiny of the Jews" we will discover what a glorious future God has for His ancient people. In the meantime, and until Jesus comes, we must "pray for the peace of Jerusalem ..." ( Ps. 122:6 ), and in our preaching of the gospel make sure that our message is addressed to "... the Jew first and also ... the Greek" ( Rom. 1:16 ). While God, in grace, is reaching out to the Jews as individuals, He will not deal with them as a nation until the right hour strikes. Jesus must first come again for His church. The Jews must be tested yet once more through the fires of tribulation. Until then, they are, in a real sense, in a state of suspension.

## Conclusion

We have seen that no understanding of prophecy can leave out a consideration of the history or the destiny of the Jews. Indeed, as someone has stated, "an understanding of the Jews harmonizes the interpretation of Scripture." We thank God not only for Jews in general, but for *The Jew* in particular, who became our Savior, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... In the nineteenth century people who passed the Rothschild mansion in the fashionable quarter of London noticed that the end of one of the cornices was unfinished. The question may be asked: Could not the richest man in the world afford to pay for that cornice, or was the lack due to carelessness?

The explanation is a very simple yet suggestive one when it is known. Lord Rothschild was an orthodox Jew, and every pious Jew's house, tradition says, must have some part unfinished, to bear testimony to the world that its occupant is only, like Abraham, a pilgrim and a stranger upon the earth.

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1005.

### 2. Illustrate

... In the Middle Ages, in many lands, a "badge of shame" was placed on the Jews. In some places, it was a patch of red or yellow worn on the breast or arm, on the shoulder or on the hat. They were confined, like corralled beasts in ghettos. German states considered them as slaves of the emperor, and they were outrageously taxed and plundered. In most European countries, they were prohibited from owning land, and were excluded from the schools and the universities.... England ... banished all Jews from the realm in 1020.... In the year 1298, great persecution swept Europe and hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed. In 1350, the Black Plague engulfed Europe, killing one-fourth of the population. Jews were blamed and one-half of the Jews in Europe were murdered. In 1353, Jews were totally banished from France. Spain and Portugal also refused them entrance. Germany banished all Jews from Prague in 1560. Spain in 1492 forced 800,000 Jews into the sea, most of whom died from exposure and drowning. In 1411, the Roman Catholic church instituted the *Inquisition*. Tens of thousands died. Jews were scarcely considered human beings.

During the [rule of the] Russian czars, an estimated 5 million Jews were in Russia. Fierce persecution broke out and tens of thousands were killed. In 1881, Alexander III, head of the Russian Church, publicly stated the Russian policy with regards to Jews: one-third to die, one third to be forced to emigrate, and one-third to join the Russian church. World War I found the Jews under great suffering. As the Russians advanced into eastern

Europe, Jews in the occupied areas were tried as spies and many sent to Siberia ... Most of the Jews were living in eastern Europe at the outbreak of World War II, and about half a million ... were in Germany. It was Hitler's aim not only to exterminate all the German Jews, but to kill all Jews in Europe. His reign of terror, in which five to six million Jews were killed, is one of the blackest in the pages of history. When Hitler was through with them, six out of every 10 Jews in Europe were killed.... Israel today is a country of 3.8 million in a sea of 100 million enemies. She can count on few reliable friends in the rest of the world. Ibid, pp. 636–637.

But in spite of being the object of human hatred and divine judgment, the Jew still survives.

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

## Twenty-six Sermon

### TWENTY-SIX, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE JEWS  
The Destiny of the Jews (2)

**READING:** [Romans 11](#) :1J36

**TEXT:** "For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob" ( [Isa. 14:1](#) ).

### Introduction

The theme of the destiny of the Jews is dealt with in numerous passages throughout Holy Scripture, but no chapter treats it more comprehensively than Romans 11 . God has a future for His ancient people, the Jews.  
Note:

- I. The Tribulation of the Jews ( Matt. 24:21–22 )
  1. The Sign of the Tribulation ( 1 Thess 4:13–17 )
  2. The Season of the Tribulation ( Jer. 30:7 )
  3. The Suffering of the Tribulation ( Jer. 30:7 )
  4. The Significance of the Tribulation ( Mal. 4:1–3 )
- II. The Restoration of the Jews ( Isa. 14:1 )
  1. The Preparation Which is Going to Precede It ( Isa 11:11–12 )
  2. The Revelation Which is Going to Effect It ( Rev. 1:7 )
  3. The Dedication Which is Going to Confirm It ( Joel 2:28–29 , 32 )

### III. The Vindication of the Jews ( Mal. 3:17–18 )

1. The Physical Vindication (Gen 12:2 , 7 )
2. The National Vindication ( Deut. 28:13–14 )
3. The Spiritual Vindication ( Isa. 2:2–3 )

#### **Conclusion**

What God has promised to do for His earthly people He will also fulfill in His heavenly people (the church). Both programs are definitely related to Christ.

## **TWENTY-SIX, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE JEWS  
The Destiny of the Jews (2)

**READING:** [Romans 11:1–36](#)

**TEXT:** “For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob” ( [Isa. 14:1](#) ).

#### **Introduction**

The theme of the Jews is dealt with in numerous passages throughout Holy Scripture, but no chapter treats it more comprehensively than Romans 11 . As the Scofield Bible points out:

1. The salvation of Paul proved that there is a remnant (v. 1 ).
2. The doctrine of the remnant further substantiates the destiny of the Jews (vv. 2–6 ).
3. The present national unbelief was foreseen and foretold (vv. 7–10 ).
4. Israel's unbelief is the Gentile opportunity for the gospel (vv. 11–25 ).
5. Israel, at the present time, is judicially broken off from the good olive tree—which is Christ (vv. 17–22 ).
6. The true Israel of God is to be grafted into that tree once again (vv. 23–24 ).
7. The promised Deliverer will come out of Zion and the nation will be saved (vv. 25–29 ).

No one can reflect upon these seven salient points without recognizing that there is a future for God's ancient people, the Jews. To be as comprehensive as possible in the treatment of this subject, we shall consider the destiny of the Jews under three main headings:

#### **I. The Tribulation of the Jews.**

Speaking of this coming event the Lord Jesus said: “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” ( Matt. 24:21–22 ). The word “tribulation” means “to press together” or “to press hard upon” and refers to times of oppression, affliction, and distress. The word is translated in the Authorized Version by such equivalents as “affliction,” “anguish,” “persecution,” “trouble,” and “burden” ( Mark 13:19–24 ; John 16:21 ; 2 Cor. 8:13 ; Col. 1:24 ; Phil. 4:14 ). Now while the Jewish people have been associated with suffering from earliest times, nothing they have ever endured compares with what awaits them during the Great Tribulation. Note:

### **1) The Sign of the Tribulation**

(see 1 Thess. 4:13–17 ). The Great Tribulation will begin with the Rapture of the church and will end with the revelation of Christ at His Second Coming in glory. With the departure of the saints, the Man of Sin—the Antichrist—the antitype of Nimrod, Nebuchadnezzar, and the Caesars—will appear on the scene. He will first promise to restore the nation of Israel to their land. Then when, by deception, he has gained their confidence, he will turn upon them with unparalleled hatred, persecution and cruelty.

#### **1. Exegete**

### **2) The Season of the Tribulation**

“Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, But he shall be saved out of it” ( Jer. 30:7 ). This period of the Tribulation is referred to as “... the time of Jacob’s trouble ...” ( 30:7 ). The key to the time and duration is found in the 9th chapter of Daniel, known as the “Seventy Weeks of Daniel” (see vv. 20–27 ). The 69th week ended with the cutting off of the Messiah ( Dan. 9:25–26 )—fulfilled at the cross. This leaves only one week (seven years) of Jewish official history, during which time the nation is to be dispossessed of Jerusalem. Our Lord-predicted this when He declared, “... they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles are fulfilled” ( Luke 21:24 ).

At this present hour the State of Israel (since 1948) enjoys a new significance. “Even Reformed Judaism, which initially denied Jewish nationhood, is now tending toward more particularistic interpretation of Jewish existence. Peoplehood in terms of Jewish ethnicity and culture is the present trend in Jewry” ( *Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 3, Zondervan, 1975, p. 5). But a day is coming when all that will change. The Seventieth Week will begin with the ratification of a treaty under the Antichrist, the prince of the restored Roman Empire. The Antichrist will rebuild the temple and restore the ancient ritual. However, the covenant made with the Jews for the period of seven years will be broken in the middle of the week (namely 3–1/2 years, 42 months, or 1,260 days; see Dan. 9:27 ; Rev. 11:2–3 ). The sacrifices will be taken away and Israel’s tribulation will begin. During the first part of the Tribulation the Jews will be protected (see Dan. 12:7 ; Rev. 12:14 ); but from the taking away of the daily sacrifice, right through to the death of the two witnesses, Israel will suffer her greatest sorrow (see Dan. 9:27 ).

#### **2. Amplify**

### **3) The Suffering of the Tribulation**

“Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, But he shall be saved out of it” ( Jer. 30:7 ). The severity and incomparable anguish accompanying the Tribulation are referred to throughout Old and New Testaments. Our Savior used superlative language to describe it ( Matt. 24:21 ). It will exceed the flood of Noah’s day, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the siege of Jerusalem, the French Revolution, the upheaval of Russian Bolshevism, and the purge and war in Germany. The Book of Revelation particularly concerns itself with this period of anguish and suffering. From Chapter 4–13 almost

nothing else is mentioned. Zechariah tells us that two parts, or two-thirds of the Jews shall be cut off. We recall that one-third perished under Hitler, but two-thirds shall perish under the Antichrist (see Zech. 13:8–9).

#### **4) The Significance of the Tribulation**

“ ‘For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,’ Says the Lord of hosts, ‘That will leave them neither mot nor branch. But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do this,’ Says the Lord of hosts” ( Mal. 4:1–3 ). “The time of Jacob’s trouble” Will be used of God to purge out the rebels and to make willing the hearts of His people Israel. Throughout Old Testament Scriptures the warnings of God are always accompanied with the promises that He will save a remnant to Himself. The dark night of Israel’s suffering, therefore, is to be followed by the sunrise of Israel’s glory.

During this period of the tribulation 140,000 of the tribes of the children of Israel are going to be sealed, or preserved for God (see Rev. 1:7–8 ), Some prophetic scholars maintain that these Jews will be the evangelists who preach the gospel of the kingdom during the Tribulation period. They base their view of prophecy on Matthew 10 , Where we read that in the midst of persecution and opposition there are going to be those who will be unashamed of the Messiah. Jesus said, “...whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” ( Matt. 10:32–33 ). The passage reveals that these faithful messengers “... will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes” ( Matt. 10:23 ).

Thank God, however, that this period will terminate with the coming again of the Lord Jesus with His saints in glory and power. Then will be ushered in what we shall call:

## **II. The Restoration of the Jews**

“For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel, and settle them in their own land. The strangers will be joined with them, and they will cling to the house of Jacob” ( Isa. 14:1 ). The end of Israel’s national history is not tribulation, but restoration. There are multiplied passages in the Old Testament that speak of that restoration. In almost every instance these verses inseparably link the life of the Jews with the land of the Jes. To simplify our understanding fo this, consider the restoration of the Jews in terms of:

### **1) The Preparation Which is Going to Precede It**

“It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord shall set His hand again the second time To recover the remnant of His people who are left... He will set up a ban-her for the nations, And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, And gather together the dispersed of Judah From the four comers of the earth” ( Isa. 11:11–12 ). While the full restoration of Israel in the Promised Land will not be realized until after the Tribulation, we cannot but observe that there is a regathering of God’s people taking place before our eyes. Prophecies made centuries before Christ are now coming to pass. As the late Dr. John W. Bradbury has pointed out:

1. There is a reawakening of Israelites all over the world.
2. The unification of Jewry in exile is becoming a worldwide condition.
3. Besides the political Zionism, about which so much is written, there is a spiritual Zionism which is a clear return to the prophecies of God’s Word.

4. The miracle of statehood has been accomplished.
5. The ghettos of the world are emptying, pouring their masses of Jews into the land of Israel.
6. Israel is a social state, rather than a religious one, which means that the dead orthodoxy of the ghetto will not prevail there.

Let us remember that Israel has been established as a sovereign state for the first time since the Babylonian Captivity. In 1917, when British General Allenby conquered the Turks and drove them out of Jerusalem, the door was opened for the Jews to return to their Promised Land. This was confirmed by the Balfour Declaration in the same year. At that time there were no more than about 50,000 Jews in Palestine. Since then, the sons of Jacob have returned to Palestine in ever-increasing numbers. The Second World War added impetus to this movement toward the Promised Land. In 1947 Britain gave up its mandate. The very next year, on May 14, 1948, the armed forces occupying Palestine evacuated to the ports. The next day, May 15, Israel raised the Star of Judah and declared itself an independent state. Its population numbered 650,000. This event was followed by war with the Arabs, but in spite of overwhelming opposition, the infant state overcame her enemy. Nothing like it has happened in modern history; Israel was victorious. The land, of course, is still divided, but this will not continue forever (see Joel 3:1–2).

In the meantime, *agriculturally*, the land of Palestine has seen the greatest prosperity. Thousands of acres have been brought under cultivation. *Educationally*, the Israeli state has become the home of culture and intellectual power. The Hebrew University near Jerusalem, on Mount Scopus, has on its faculty some of the most brilliant minds in all the world. Religiously, there is a growing hunger for God and the coming Messiah. Even though some have described the new state of Israel as an atheistic one, this is not true. There are over 400 synagogues in Tel Aviv alone, more than 2,400 in all Israel. (Needless to say, these figures change continually; but they were the available statistics at the time these notes were originally prepared.) Prophecies like Ezekiel 36:24–38 are being fulfilled.

## **2) The Revelation Which is Going to Effect It**

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him ...” ( Rev. 1:7 ). John here quotes Zechariah 12:10 to describe the fulfillment of that great moment in the history of the Jews when the purified remnant, emerging from the Tribulation, will recognize in the Lord Jesus their own Messiah. Paul tells us that with this revelation of the Son of God in power and great glory “... all Israel will be saved, as it is written: ‘The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins’ ” ( Rom. 11:26–27 ). So thrilling was the anticipation of this event that John adds, “Even so, Amen” ( Rev. 1:7 ).

### **3. Illustrate**

## **3) The Dedication Which is Going to Confirm It**

“And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions; And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.... And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, As the Lord has said, Among the remnant whom the Lord calls” ( Joel 2:28–29 , 32 ). Part of this prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Its ultimate realization will be at the restoration of the Jew. Evidences of their individual and national dedication will be demonstrated by a spirit of repentance (see Rev. 1:7 ), a spirit of obedience (see Deut. 28:8–9 ), and a spirit of allegiance (see Micah 4:5 ; Jer. 30:22 ). Words fail

to describe the miracle which will be performed in the hearts of this restored remnant. Suffice it to say that everything which God promised and purposed for them will be gloriously fulfilled in that day.

### **III. The Vindication of the Jews**

“ ‘They shall be Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them As a man spares his own son who serves him.’ Then you shall again discern Between the righteous and the wicked, Between one who serves God And one who does not serve Him” ( Mal. 3:17–18 ). Dwight Pentecost in his book *Things to Come* maintains that “Scripture is unintelligible until one can distinguish clearly between God’s program for His earthly people Israel, and that for the church.” Therefore, it is important that we do not spiritualize predictive promises which relate to God’s ancient people, the Jews. Both Old and New Testament make it very clear that following the restoration of the Jews:

#### **1) There Will be the Physical Vindication of the Jews.**

God said to Abraham, “I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing.... To your descendants I will give this land ...” ( Gen. 12:2 , 7 ). That promise will be literally vindicated in the physical blessing, both of the Jew and his land. The rivers shall throb with life (see Ezek. 47 ); the desert shall blossom as the rose (see Isa. 35 ); and the people will possess all that God has promised them (see Obad. 1:18–20 ). The twelve tribes will be united never to be dispossessed again (see Ezek. 37 ).

#### **2) There Will be the National Vindication of the Jews**

“And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only, and not be beneath, if you heed the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today, and are careful to observe them. So you shall not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them” ( Deut. 28:13–14 ). Promises like this made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David, will be gloriously fulfilled. Israel shall no longer be the tail, but the head among the nations; in a very real sense, Israel will be nationally vindicated

#### **3) There Will be the Spiritual Vindication of the Jews**

“... in the latter days ... the mountain of the Lord’s house Shall be established on the top of the mountains ... And all nations shall flow to it, ... out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” ( Isa. 2:2–3 ). In that day Israel will occupy the place of religious leadership in the world (see Isa. 60:1–5 ). The Jews will become God’s witness during the Millennium (see Isa. 44:8 , 21 ), and the Gentiles shall come up to worship at Jerusalem (see Zech. 14:16–21 ). So Israel will become the channel of blessing that God promised to Abraham long, long ago (see Gen. 12:2 ). This vindication will not conclude with the end of the Millennium, for Israel shall reign beyond the thousand years with her Messiah in an endless kingdom (see 2 Sam. 7:28–29 ; Ps. 89:3–4 ).

### **Conclusion**

What a destiny awaits the Jews! And what God has promised to do for His earthly people He will also fulfill in His heavenly people. Both programs are definitely related to Christ. As someone has put it: ‘To the Kingdom He is the promised Seed, the Channel of Israel’s hope; the Absent Nobleman, the Coming Judge and King, the Heir to the throne of David, the Sunrise of a coming tomorrow. TO the church He is the Heavenly Bridegroom of her heart, the Head of her body, the Chief Cornerstone of the temple of her worship, the living High Priest of her ministries, the Bright and Morning Star of her hope.’ So whether it is for the Jews, God’s earthly people, or

whether it is for the church, God's heavenly people, the prayer of all of us is, '... Even so come, Lord Jesus!' ( Rev. 22:20 ).

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Exegete**

... the term "Antichrist" as found throughout the Bible and show the difference between one who denies Christ (anti-Christ) and the person who will appear at the end-time. Explain something of his personal traits, e.g. high intelligence ( Rev. 13:18 ; Dan. 7:8 ); speaking ability ( Dan. 7:8 ; Rev. 13:5 ); crafty political talents ( Dan. 9:27 ; Rev. 17:12-13 , 17 ); physical appearance ( Dan. 7:20 ); military genius ( Rev. 13:4 ; 17:14 ; 19:19 ); morals ( Dan. 7:25 ; 11:36-38 ; 2 Thess. 2:4 , 8 ; Rev. 13:6 ).

### **2. Amplify**

... By way of parentheses, it is interesting to note that when the Jews captured the Old City of Jerusalem in 1967 they came into possession of the site for a future "Third temple." In fact, a special school, called "Yeshiva Avodas Hakodesh," founded by Rabbi Hirsh Ha-Cohen, was founded and dedicated in December, 1970 to train young Israelis of the tribe of Levi in ancient rites of sacrifice. Only students who could trace their ancestry to Aaron are admitted. There they learn the laws of ancient animal sacrifice and how to perform the practices which existed in the ancient temple.

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations.* Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), pp. 633, 634.

### **3. Illustrate**

... One of Hans Andersen's tales tells of an emperor who wanted to see how his people behaved in his absence. So he dressed up as a beggar and visited the city. They threw him out. A few days later, when he came in triumph in his golden carriage. everybody bowed low as it passed; but when they looked into the carriage to see the emperor, they were astonished to see the face of the beggar they had treated so badly!

People have rejected Jesus for two thousand years. They have dismissed Him as a "mere man," with no claim on their allegiance. But like the citizens in the story, they will see that the "mendicant" is indeed the Messiah. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" ( Acts 1:11 ). "They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" ( Zech. 12:10 ). "Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him" ( Rev. 1:7 ).

David Pawson in *Prophetic Witness*. vol. 6, no. 8 (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, August 1982), p. 14.

## **For Further Research**

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

# Third Quarter

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## Twenty-seven Sermon

### TWENTY-SEVEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE NATIONS  
The Times of the Gentiles (1)

**READING:** Daniel 2:1–45

**TEXT:** "... there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known ... what will be in the latter days ..." ( 2:28 ).

## Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 10:32 Paul divides the human race into three categories: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God. The Bible reveals the history and destiny of each in relation to the personal return of Christ. Having considered the return of Christ in relation to the church and the Jews, we now give attention to the subject of the Gentiles.

- I. The Rise of the Gentile Powers ( Luke 21:24 )
  1. The Rise of the Babylonian Empire ( 2:3-33 )
  2. The Rise of the Medo-Persian Empire ( 2:32 )
  3. The Rise of the Grecian Empire ( 2:32 )
  4. The Rise of the Roman Empire ( 2:33 )
- II. The Fall of the Gentile Powers ( Luke 21:24 )
  1. The Cutting of the Stone ( 2:45 )
  2. The Falling of the Stone ( 2:45 )
  3. The Growing of the Stone ( 2:35 )

## Conclusion

We have seen in brief compass what we mean by “the times of the Gentiles.” We have traced the rise and fall of world empires. Man may try to do what he can to establish universal power and peace, but only when Jesus comes will we know undisputed power and lasting peace. Let us see that He reigns personally in our hearts and lives by the power of the ungrieved, unquenched Holy Spirit. Only then shall we be ready and unashamed at His coming.

## TWENTY, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ’s Coming: THE NATIONS  
The Times of the Gentiles (1)

**READING:** [Daniel 2:1–45](#)

**TEXT:** “... there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known ... what will be in the latter days ...” ( [2:28](#) ).

## Introduction

In 1 Corinthians 10:32 Paul divides the human race into three categories: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God. The Bible supplies the history and destiny of each and reveals the eschatological relevance that each has to the personal return of Christ.

We have already considered the return of Christ in relation to the church and the Jews. Now we shall give attention to the subject of the Gentiles. Speaking of the rise and fall of world powers, the Savior employed the phrase, "... the times of the Gentiles ..." ( Luke 21:24 ).

## 1. Exegete

### I. The Rise of the Gentile Powers

"... the *times* of the Gentiles ..." ( Luke 21:24 ). In biblical history, the story of the nations begins long before that of Israel. It has its beginnings immediately after the flood when Shem, Ham, and Japheth came out of the ark. We read that "These three were the sons of Noah, and from these the whole earth was populated" ( Gen. 9:19 ). As the Gentile nations increased, God, in His sovereign planning, raised up His chosen people Israel to mediate and regulate His purposes of blessing to the rest of the world (see Deut. 32:8 ). For a time Israel fulfilled this role in world affairs, but because of repeated sin against God she lost her place of privilege and power. From that time, world government has been in the hands of Gentile powers. While this situation is to be reversed and Israel is to be restored in coming days, the fact remains that we now live in a Gentile-dominated world.

The most important passages in Scripture on this subject are Daniel Chapters 2 and 7 . The two visions which are described and interpreted there give first the rise and then the fall of Gentile powers. Consider first:

#### 1) The Rise of the Babylonian Empire.

Describing the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel says that the head "... was of fine gold ..." ( 2:32 ), and then he interprets it in these words: "You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory.... you are this head of gold" ( 2:37 , 38 ). Later in Daniel's vision he describes this same Babylonian Empire in terms of a beast. He affirms, "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it" ( Dan. 7:4 )

Comparing these passages reveals that there are three symbols of the Babylonian Empire: the golden head, the lion, and the lion with eagle's wings. If you turn to Isaiah 14 you will find Babylon described as "the golden city (v. 4 ). The prophet Jeremiah writes, "Babylon was a golden cup in the Lord's hand ..." ( Jer. 51:7 ). The 4th chapter of Jeremiah describes the kingdom of Babylon as the lion that has come up from the thicket (see v. 7 ); so the lion is the symbol of Babylon.

The eagle also is a symbol of Babylon—"... I am raising up the Chaldeans [Babylon] They fly as the eagle ..." ( Hab. 1:6 , 8 ). In the British Museum in London you will see the winged lion in stone that once guarded the doors of the palace in Babylon.

Thus the Bible teaches and history confirms that Babylon was the first of the four Gentile world powers.

#### 2) The Rise of the Medo-Persian Empire.

Daniel further describes the image as having a chest and arms of silver (see 2:32 ). Interpreting these words he declares: "... after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours ..." ( 2:39 ). In the vision of the beast this second kingdom is pictured as follows: "... like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: ' ... Arise, devour much flesh!' " ( Dan. 7:5 ).

Here again are three symbols of the Medo-Persian Empire: the silver breast and arm of the statue, the devouring bear, and the ram with two horns which were broken by the male goat ( 8:3–14 ). Scholars tell us that

the Immortal Guards of Persia wore silver corselettes. We also learn that the Medo-Persian Empire—and especially the Medes—were as cruel and devouring in their slaughter as the wild and voracious bear. Another point of interest is that the king of Persia rode at the head of the army wearing a golden helmet shaped like a ram's head and set with sparkling jewels.

Once again, the Bible teaches and history confirms, that the Medo-Persian Empire was the second prophetic kingdom.

### **3) The Rise of the Grecian Empire.**

Referring again to the image, Daniel tells us that "... its belly and thighs [were] of bronze" ( 2:32 ). Interpreting these words, the prophet portrays "... a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth" ( 2:39 ). In terms of the beast, Daniel informs us that "... there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it" ( Dan. 7:6 ). Once again we see three symbols: the bronze part of the image, the winged leopard or panther, and the male goat (see Chapter 8 ). When classical writers speak of the Grecian army, they speak of it as "brazen-coated Greeks." The leopard or panther is a small animal, but strong and exceedingly swift. The four wings give quadruple power and stand as a symbol of extraordinary speed.

Alexander, like Napoleon, was capable of great endurance. The distinctive feature of his strategy was the swiftness of his march and his ability to out-manuever his opponents. The concept of the goat is very closely associated with the history of the Grecian army. Alexander of Macedon himself named his son, Aegus, the son of a goat. Even the waters of the Mediterranean that rolled between Greece and Asia Minor have been called the Aegean Sea, which simply means the Goat Sea, or the Sea of the Goat.

Thus we discover that the Bible teaches and history confirms that Greece was the third great world power.

### **4) The Rise of the Roman Empire.**

Daniel further indicates that "... its legs [were] of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay" ( 2:33 ). "The fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters all things; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.... And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile" ( 2:40 , 42 ). In the vision of the beast, Daniel says that he saw "in the night visions ... a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns" ( Dan. 7:7 ).

We see that the fourth part of the image had three characteristics: the two legs, the ten toes, the mixed condition of iron and clay. Without doubt thin symbolism speaks of the Roman Empire. As children we used to read of the 'iron legions of Rome.' The fourth empire, Rome, included all the territory of the three kingdoms: the Grecians, the Medo-Persians, and the Babylonians. In other words, the Roman Empire became and has continued to be the greatest Gentile power the world has ever known.

There are those who see in the two legs the division of the Roman Empire into two equal parts, and the ten toes into a second and final division of ten kingdoms.. The mixture of iron and clay, in the ten toes, is representative of monarchy and democracy which cannot unite. Historically speaking, a thousand years after the prophecy, Rome was divided into two great halves under the brothers, Valentinian and Valeus. The Western Empire had its capital at Rome; the Eastern Empire had its capital at Constantinople. The Western Empire continued for 400 years after Christ and then began to break up under the invasions of Teutonic hordes into smaller states. Many believe that the ten kingdoms are yet to be revived under the leadership of the Man of Sin before the final destruction of the Gentile world powers.

## II. The Fall of The Gentile Powers

“... *the* times of the Gentiles ...” ( Luke 21:24 ). In his vision Daniel saw the destruction of the great image. He says a “... stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and ... it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold ...” ( 2:45 ). In the second vision he describes the same act of judgment when he declares: “I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed” ( Dan. 7:13–14 ). To the anointed eyes of the Bible student, “the stone” and “the Ancient of Days” are one and the same person. One symbol denotes His power; the other His wisdom. Three things are said about the stone:

### 1) The Cutting of the Stone

“... the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands ...” ( 2:45 ). In this figurative language we have the story of the supernatural birth of the Lord Jesus through the chosen line of Israel and then of Judah. Matthew Henry, the well known Bible commentator, once remarked, “The God who took a motherless woman out of the side of a man took a fatherless man out of the body of a woman.”

#### 2. Amplify

In Psalm 30:7 we read, “Lord, by Your favor You have made my mountain stand strong ...” The words, “my mountain” are a reference to the chosen people over whom David ruled as king and out of whom the Lord Jesus was born supernaturally. Referring to Himself as this Stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, Jesus said, “... whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder” ( Matt. 21:44 ). Therefore it is evident that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Stone cut out of the mountain.

### 2) The Falling of the Stone

“... the stone ... broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold ...” ( 2:45 ). This is clearly a reference to the Second Advent of our Savior Jesus Christ. Quite obviously, the destruction of the Gentile powers did not occur in the first Advent of Christ. On the contrary, our Lord was put to death by the sentence of an officer of the fourth empire, which was then at the zenith of its power. Since the crucifixion, the Roman Empire has followed the course marked out in the vision, but Gentile world dominion still continues and the crushing blow is suspended. But after the revival of the Roman Empire and the rise of the Man of Sin, as described in Daniel 7:1–28 and Revelation Chapters 13–19 , the Lord from heaven is going to descend with great power and glory and mete out judgment upon the world powers. This will be the battle of Armageddon (see Rev. 16:14 ; 19:21 ).

### 3) The Growing of the Stone

“... the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” ( 2:35 ). As we have seen, a mountain is one of the biblical symbols of a kingdom (see Isa. 2:2 ). After the battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation period, the Lord Jesus is going to set up His millennial kingdom, and His glory shall cover the whole earth as the waters cover the sea. In the language of Daniel, the Son of Man, who is the Ancient of Days, shall be given “... dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed” ( 7:14 ).

#### 3. Illustrate

## Conclusion

We have seen in brief compass what we mean by "... the times of the Gentiles ..." ( Luke 21:24 ). We have traced the rise of world empires and also the fall of those empires. Man may try to do what he can to establish universal power and peace, but not until Jesus comes shall we know undisputed power and lasting peace. As we anticipate that tremendous day, let us see to it that He who shall reign universally reigns personally in our hearts and lives by the power of the ungrieved, unquenched Holy Spirit. Only then shall we be ready and unashamed at His coming.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Exegete

... the term "the times of the Gentiles." Show that it is a span of time which began when Judah was taken into captivity in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar, and that it will continue until "a Stone ... cut out without hands"—namely, our Lord Jesus Christ—returns and crushes the Gentile world powers to dust (see 2 Chron. 36:5–7 ; Dan. 2:34 , 45 ; Luke 21:24 ; Rev. 16:19 ).

### 2. Amplify

... More than nineteen hundred years ago there was a Man born contrary to the laws of life. This Man lived in poverty and was reared in obscurity. He did not travel extensively ... In infancy He startled a king; in childhood, He puzzled doctors; in manhood He ruled the course of nature ... The names of the past proud statesmen of Greece and Rome have come and gone. The names of the past scientists, philosophers, and theologians have come and gone; but the name of this Man abounds more and more. Though time has spread nineteen hundred years between the people of this generation and the scene of His crucifixion, yet He still lives. Herod could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. He stands forth upon the highest pinnacle of heavenly glory, proclaimed of God, acknowledged of angels, adored by saints, and feared by devils, as the living, personal Christ, or Lord and Savior. He is the incomparable Christ, the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands.

### 3. Illustrate

... Nikita Khrushchev once boasted that he would exhibit the last Soviet Christian on television by 1965. Khrushchev has since gone to give account of himself to the Judge of all mankind, and his deadline for the extinction of Christianity in Russia has also passed. Throughout history, so-called big men and little men have strutted across the stages of life defying God. But as Psalm 145:13 promises, "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations."

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 11/85.19).

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 811.

## Twenty-eight Sermon

### TWENTY-EIGHT, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE NATIONS  
The Judgment of the Nations (2)

**READING:** [Matthew 25:31–46](#) ; [Revelation 20:11–15](#)

**TEXT:** “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened ... And they were judged, each one according to his works” ( [Rev. 20:12–13](#) ).

## Introduction

To conclude our study on the Lord's return, as it relates to the nations, it is necessary that we should examine two scenes of judgment in which Gentile powers are involved. The first is the premillennial judgment of the nations of the world; the second is the postmillennial judgment of the peoples of the world.

### I. The Premillennial Judgment of the Nations of the World ( Matt. 25:31–32 )

1. The Season of This Judgment ( Matt. 25:31 )
2. The Significance of This Judgment ( Matt. 25:32–33 )
3. The Sentence of This Judgment ( Matt. 25:32–33 )

### II. The Postmillennial Judgment of the Peoples of the World ( Rev. 20:11–15 )

1. The Season of This Judgment ( Rev. 20:10 )
2. The Significance of This Judgment ( Rev. 20:11–14 )
3. The Sentence of This Judgment ( Rev. 20:13 , 15 )

## Conclusion

The judgment of the nations ultimately comes down to the individual. God must judge sin. A terrible day awaits those who prefer to continue in their sins, rather than accept salvation and holiness in Christ. After the Great White Throne Judgment John envisions “... a new heaven and a new earth ...” ( Rev. 21:1 ) in which righteousness dwells. Such teaching as this should lead us into holiness of life and busyness of service for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Remember, He may come today!

## TWENTY-EIGHT, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE COMING OF CHRIST

**SUBJECT:** The Object of Christ's Coming: THE NATIONS  
The Judgment of the Nations (2)

**READING:** [Matthew 25:31–46](#) ; [Revelation 20:11–15](#)

**TEXT:** “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened ... And they were judged each one according to his works” ( [Rev. 20:12–13](#) ).

## Introduction

To conclude our study on the Lord's return, as it relates to the nations, it is necessary that we should examine two scenes of judgment in which Gentile powers are involved. The first is what we shall term the premillennial judgment of the nations of the world; the second is the postmillennial judgment of the peoples of the world.

## **I. The premillennial Judgment of the Nations of the World**

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats” ( Matt. 25:31–32 ). To help us understand this poetic description of the terrible day of judgment let us consider these verses under three simple headings:

### **1) The Season of This Judgment**

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory” ( Matt. 25:31 ). The same scene is described in Matthew 24:30–31 and seems to indicate that the judgment period coincides with the end of the Tribulation on earth, immediately prior to the millennial kingdom and messianic reign. Jesus speaks of that time when the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give her light, the stars will fall from the skies, and the heavens will be shaken. “Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven ...” ( Matt. 24:29–30 ).

### **2) The Significance of This Judgment**

“All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left” ( Matt. 25:32–33 ). Students of prophecy are divided on the interpretation of these verses, but it seems that this judgment is to be distinguished from the Great White Throne judgment. In this instance, there is no resurrection, for the persons to be judged are the living nations. Also we do not read of any books being opened. Three classes of people are mentioned in connection with the judgment: “sheep,” “goats,” and “brethren” ( Matt. 25:32 , 40 ). Another important observation is that this judgment takes place on earth.

An these details are in contrast with the Great White Throne judgment, to which we shall refer later (see Rev. 20:11–15 ). The judgment here is based upon the treatment accorded by the nations to those whom Christ calls “My brethren” ( Matt. 25:40 ). These “brethren” are the Jewish remnant who will have preached the gospel of the kingdom to all the nations during the Tribulation. The Savior referred to this evangelistic outreach when He said, “... the gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” ( Matt. 24:14 ). There is also a reference to this same activity in Revelation 7:1–8 .

### **3) The Sentence of This Judgment**

“All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left” ( Matt. 25:32–33 ). As these verses reveal, the sentence of this judgment has to do with two groups— “sheep” and “goats.”

#### **A) THE SENTENCE AS IT PERTAINS TO THE SHEEP**

“Then the King will say to those on HIS right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” ( Matt. 25:34 ). The sheep-like character of those who are pronounced blessed and invited to inherit the kingdom implies that these people have given satisfactory evidence of:

### **i) A Relationship to Christ**

“... ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, *inherit* the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” ( Matt. 25:34 ). An inheritance is a legacy left to a family member or friend. The implication, therefore, is that among the nations, during the Tribulation period, there will be people out of every tribe on earth who shall own Christ as Savior and Messiah (see Matt. 24:30 ). Such people will not be those who heard the gospel during the day of grace and rejected it. These Christ-rejecters will have been sent a “... strong delusion, that they should believe the lie [and] ... be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” ( 2 Thess. 2:11–12 ).

### **ii) A Righteousness in Christ**

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirst and give You drink?’ ” ( Matt. 25:37 ). God’s basis for righteousness in every age is the cross work of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Pet. 3:18 ; 2 Cor. 5:21 ). When the King identifies “sheep” with “the righteous,” He is recognizing that they have been made righteous through His atoning death at Calvary’s cross.

### **iii) A Responsibility to Christ**

“ for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me” ( Matt. 25:35–36 ). These words reveal a truth often overlooked by evangelicals who disparage what they call “the social gospel.” The Savior discloses that in the many acts of kindness which these people will show to those described as “My brethren” ( Matt. 25:40 ) they are, in fact, ministering to the Lord Himself.

#### **1. Illustrate**

This does not, in any way, exclude the work of direct evangelism; on the contrary, these social ministries complement all true gospel work. This passage furnishes six out of the list of seven practical works of mercy in Christian ethics, the seventh being found in the care and nurture of the fatherless, as mentioned in James 1:26–27 .

We see then that in this threefold basis the sheep will be pronounced blessed and invited to inherit the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. They will be set on the right hand of the King and enjoy life eternal (see Matt. 25:46 ).

## **B) THE SENTENCE AS IT PERTAINS TO THE GOATS**

“And He will set ... the goats on the left” ( Matt. 25:33 ). If the right hand is the symbol of acceptance, then the left hand is the symbol of rejection. Quite clearly, the ground of rejection is the absence of any evidence of a relationship to Christ, a righteousness in Christ, or a responsibility to Christ. To these the King shall say, “... Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels”; and again: “... go away into everlasting punishment ...” ( Matt. 25:41 , 46 ).

#### **1. Illustrate**

## **II. The Postmillennial Judgment of the Peoples of the World.**

This is biblically known as the Great White Throne judgment—the final judgment of the wicked. The most famous portion of Scripture on this subject is Revelation 20:11–15 . Following the same procedure as Point 1, observe:

## 1) The Season of This Judgment

“... the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” ( Rev. 20:10 ). This verse and those that immediately precede it clearly indicate that this judgment will take place at the end of the millennial reign of Christ. After a thousand years a strange episode will take place. Satan will be loosed from his prison and will go out once again to deceive the nations, assembling them to war (see Rev. 20:7–8 ). This uprising of the enemy, however, will be met with a judgment which is sudden, swift, overwhelming, and final. With the destruction of God’s enemy, Satan will then be seized and cast into the lake of fire and brimstone to be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The question is often asked as to how we can account for this last rebellion after the peaceful reign of one thousand years. There is no conclusive answer. Suffice it to say that such a long period of imprisonment falls to alter the evil character of the devil and leaves the unregenerate man unchanged. It must be remembered that during the millennial reign the population explosion will undoubtedly include great multitudes who obey Christ only from fear and not from love.

## 2) The Significance of This Judgment

“And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them” ( Rev. 20:11 ; see also vv. 12–14 ). From a study of these verses we note three things that John the apostle sees:

### A) THE APPEARING OF A THRONE

“Then I saw a great white throne ...” ( Rev. 20:11 ). The throne is described as great because of its immeasurable power; there is no higher authority in the universe. All decisions made there will be final!

It is described as white because of its immaculate purity. Unlike earthly courts, there will be no partiality or cruelty; only divine holiness and absolute justice will characterize the sentences handed down.

It is described as a throne because of the One who sits upon it. Having demonstrated His right to assume all authority in heaven and in earth, by virtue of His life, death and resurrection, the Father “... has committed all judgment to the Son” ( John 5:22 ; see also Acts 17:31 ).

This throne must not be confused with the Judgment Seat of Christ, referred to in 2 Corinthians 5:10 . The Great White Throne is for the Christ-rejecter, while the Judgment Seat of Christ is for the believer. This Great White Throne will be suspended in space, for we are told that from the face of the Judge the very earth and heaven will flee away (see Rev. 20:11 ). Even scientists today are speaking of the “non-eternity of the universe.”

### B) THE GATHERING OF THE DEAD

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God ...” ( Rev. 20:12 ). That includes everyone. Observe that they stand before God; they are now beyond kneeling or praying. This is surely an appalling thought, but in that day men and women will stand in the unapproachable light of God’s holiness without a Savior and without an Advocate. The gathering of the dead will be from the grave, the sea, and Hades. It is estimated that some fifty million die annually, and doubtless this figure will increase as the population grows. Wherever those bodies are buried they are not lost to God. He will reunite spirit, soul, and body to stand before His Son as the Judge of all the earth.

## C) THE OPENING OF THE BOOKS

“... and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” ( Rev. 20:12 ). We are not told how many books are included here, but it is clear that the books refer to the record of the unbelievers’ works, while the Book of Life contains the names of those who are saved. The purpose of the books is not to determine who will go to hell, for that matter will have been settled and sealed by each sinner during his lifetime and then finalized by death. On the contrary, the purpose of the books and the sentence pronounced upon the wicked is to determine the various degrees of punish-merit.

Dr. Gerald B. Stanton, in his book *Kept from the Hour* (Zondervan), suggests that the books out of which unbelievers will be judged may include the following:

1. *The Book of Divine Purpose*—God’s best for each life, if only the person had trusted Christ.
2. *The Book of Human Memory*. By the operation of the Holy Spirit, every sin, every opportunity for salvation, will be brought to remembrance.
3. *The Book of Divine Omniscience*. Nothing that any person could ever think, speak, or do is ever lost to the omniscient God (see Matt. 12:36–37 ; Rom. 2:16 ).
4. *The Book of the Scriptures*. The Bible is the statute book of heaven, and He will therefore justify or condemn everyone who will stand before the Great White Throne (see John 12:48 ); Rev. 19:15 ).

### 3) The Sentence of This Judgment

“... And they were judged, each one according to his works ... And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire” ( Rev. 20:13 , 15 ). There are several points of terrible impressiveness which stand out in these verses. There is the silence of those judged; there seems to be little or no conversation. The records are infallible and the facts conclusive. Then there is the awful brevity of the judgment. Death and hell are east as the two things most hateful in the place of God’s eternal wrath (see Rev. 20:14 ). There are the degrees of punishment, for the Word says, “... they were judged, each one according to his works” ( Rev. 20:13 ). As Jesus taught during His earthly ministry, some will be beaten with many stripes, others with few (see Luke 12:47–48 ). It will be more tolerable for some than for others (see Matt. 10:15 ; 11:22–24 ). Worst of all, is the finality of this judgment: conscious eternal torment in the lake of fire (see Rev. 20:15 ). This is the second death from which there is no return and no reprieve.

#### 3. Illustrate

In the light of these solemn considerations Christians should rejoice that their names are written in heaven; the unsaved should rejoice that a Savior has been provided and they now have an opportunity to be saved for time and eternity.

### Conclusion

We have seen what is meant by the judgment of the nations. Ultimately, it comes down to the individual. If God is God He must, of necessity, judge sin. A terrible day awaits all those who prefer to continue in their sins, rather than accept salvation and holiness in Christ. Only after such judgments as we have considered will God be able to introduce the eternal state in which righteousness dwells (see Rev. 21:1 ). As we anticipate the coming of the Lord, let us remember that, for the believer, it is going to mean unspeakable satisfaction; for the

backslider, unutterable shame; for the unsaved, unending separation. Such teaching as this should lead us into holiness of life and busyness of service for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Remember, He may come today!

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Several years ago a farmer from southern Illinois dressed in casual clothing arrived at Chicago's Moody Bible Institute and asked if he could look around. A student was assigned to escort him on an extended tour of the building. The student and everyone else was especially kind to him, although he was a complete stranger. A few days later the Institute received a letter expressing thanks for the courtesy shown him and commending them for the Christian spirit he had seen in students and faculty. He enclosed a check for \$2,000.

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1478.

### **2. Illustrate**

... For over 20 years a fire has been burning deep within the earth of Centralia, a small community of 1,200 residents in the heart of Pennsylvania's anthracite coal fields. Fifteen different federal, state, and local agencies have spent more than \$3.5 million to extinguish the fire without success. Persons can touch the earth and feel the heat. Deep holes and crevices vent hot, smoky air and noxious gases. One citizen said: "Standing by a hole, you can hear the fires roaring. It's an eerie sound, like the beating of a thousand wings." Government officials have indicated that they are no longer willing to put out the fire; it is a futile task. As flames continue to burn without restraint, townspeople plead for someone to save their community ... The Bible warns ... of an even greater fire that burns forever for those who reject Christ— "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire."

*Sermons Illustrated*, (Holland, Ohio, 11/85.17).

This, then, will be the doom of all nations who have rejected the Christ of God. What a solemn thought!

### **3. Illustrate**

... One of the greatest paintings of all time is Michelangelo's *The Last Judgment*. The action of the painting centers on Christ as He raises His arm in a gesture of damnation. Though some elements of the painting appear unbiblical, at that time its message reminded people of God's holy presence, which had been forgotten in the humanism of the day. The painting pictures the dead as they are resurrected to be judged. As hell releases its captives, the Judge of Heaven reviews their works. The entire painting reflects the despair of that generation. When the painting was unveiled, a storm of conviction fell upon the viewers. All Europe trembled as the story of the power of *The Last Judgment* traveled from city to city.

*George Sweeting. Great Quotes & Illustrations* ( Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985), p. 157.

## **For Further Research**

For Bibliography on prophetic books see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, page 311.

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## Twenty-nine Sermon

### TWENTY-NINE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Christian Answer

**READING:** [1 Peter 3:13–16](#)

**TEXT:** “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” ( [3:15](#) ).

### Introduction

When Peter wrote his first epistle he was addressing his message to believers who lived in a changing world. With the imminent danger of suffering unto death it was important that they have a Christian answer ready concerning their faith and the hope that was in them. Such an answer demands:

- I. A Christ-Centered Dedication ( [3:15](#) )
  1. A Recognition of the Saving Christ as Lord ( [3:15](#) )
  2. A Resignation to the Sanctifying Christ as Lord ( [3:15](#) )
- II. A Christ-Centered Education ( [3:15](#) )

1. Academic Teaching ( 3:15 )
  2. Systematic Training ( 3:15 )
- III. A Christ-Centered Presentation ( 3:15 )
1. Reasonable ( 3:15 )
  2. Reliable ( 3:15 )
  3. Respectable ( 3:15 )

## **Conclusion**

Do you have an answer to give to a generation that is confused, frustrated, and without hope? If so, then dedicate yourself to Christ as Lord and allow Him to use your Christian education and presentation to win a lost world for Christ and His kingdom.

## **TWENTY-NINE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Christian Answer

**READING:** [1 Peter 3:13–16](#)

**TEXT:** “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” ( [3:15](#) ).

## **Introduction**

We live in a changing world marked by emerging nationalism, terrorism, population explosion, scientific breakthroughs, Star Wars, and the threat of nuclear extinction. But praise God, whatever the changes may be in this or any other age, there are immutables that are ever the same: our Master is the same, our message is the same, and our mission is ever the same. What is urgently needed today is an anointing of the Holy Spirit to relate our unchanging gospel to the changing times.

When Peter wrote his first epistle he was addressing believers who lived in a changing world and were facing the imminent possibility of having to “... suffer for righteousness’ sake ...” ( [3:14](#) ). In the light of this he urged them, in verse 15 , to have a Christian answer ready.

The day may well come when we, too, shall encounter persecution for the sake of the gospel. The cold war of clashing ideologies cannot continue without creating tensions that are bound to snap. When that day arrives we will have to take a stand and give a Christian witness in the presence of bitter hatred and vicious opposition. *Jesus* promised that the time would come when “... whoever kills you will think that he offers God service” ( [John 16:2](#) ; see also [Matt. 5:11–12](#) ). It calls for:

### **I. A Christ-centered Dedication**

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts ...”; or to quote it more accurately from the New American Standard Bible: “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts ...” ( [3:15](#) ). These words imply two very important considerations:

## 1) A Recognition of the Saving Christ as Lord

“... sanctify Christ as Lord ...” ( 3:15 , NASB ). The apostle Paul reminds us that “... no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” ( 1 Cor. 12:3 ). The implication is clear. To name Jesus as Lord is a saving act; it is where we must begin.

Paul began his Christian experience when he cried, “... Lord, what do You want me to do? ...” ( Acts 9:6 ). Ever after he made this the basis of his theology. For him, the recognition of the Lordship of Christ not only indicated the commencement of the Christian life, but also the climax of the Christian life. He looked forward to that day when “... at the name of Jesus every knee [will] bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and ... every tongue [will] confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” ( Phil. 2:10–11 ; see also Rom. 10:9–10 ).

### 1. Illustrate

## 2) A Resignation to the Sanctifying Christ as Lord

“... sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts ...” ( 3:15 , NASB ). When we glorify Christ we recognize His perfections. When we magnify Him we recognize His greatness. When we justify Him we recognize His justice; but when we sanctify Him we recognize His holiness; in other words, we hallow Christ as the Lord of holiness in our lives. Peter is teaching here the reality and purity of the indwelling Christ—an indwelling which is to be regarded not only as a subjective experience but also as a subjective expression. Because He indwells our lives we must reverence His presence and power until we reflect that holiness.

To quote Dr. Alexander Maclaren in this regard, we must “take care that our thoughts about Jesus Christ are full of devout awe and reverence. I venture to think that a great deal of modern and sentimental Christianity is very defective in this respect. You cannot love Jesus Christ too much, but you can love Him with too little reverence. And if you take up some of our luscious modern hymns that people are so fond of singing, I think you will find in them a twang of unwholesomeness, just because the love is not reverent enough, and the approaching confidence has not enough of devout awe in it. This generation looks at the half of Christ. When people are suffering from indigestion, they can only see half of the thing they look at, and there are many of us that can only see a part of the whole Christ: and so, forgetting that He is judge, and forgetting that He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and forgetting that [while] He is manifested in the flesh [as] our brother He is also God... our Creator as well as our Redeemer, and our Judge as well as our Saviour, some do not enough hallow Him in their hearts as Lord” (Alexander Maclaren, *Expository of Holy Scripture*. vol. 16. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1959, p. 119).

To sum up our thinking on this point, only as we have high conceptions of the holy Christ who indwells us shall we seek to live out the standard of holiness that He demands and deserves. Is He Lord of your life?

Lord of every thought and action,

Lord to send and Lord to stay;

Lord in speaking, writing, giving,

Lord in all things to obey;

Lord of all there is of me,

Now and evermore to be.

(From *Scripture Union Songs and Choruses* )

## II. A Christ-centered Education

“... be ready to give a defense to everyone ...” ( 3:15 ). Dedication to Christ prepares us for education, but does not educate us; we must apply our hearts and minds to wisdom under the Lordship of Christ. Our text instructs us that this involves:

### 1) Academic Teaching

“ *give* a defense [or apology]” ( 3:15 ). Originally, this was a speech made by a prisoner in his defense, but later the word came to be associated with treatises written in defense of the Christian faith. Doubtless, it is borrowed from the famous *Apologia Socratis*. Such a defense of the faith demands academic training.

It might be argued that Peter was an unlettered man; but remember that his academic teaching was under the greatest Tutor the world has ever known, and that for 3–1/2 years. Patristic, scholastic, reformed, and modern theological thought may bore you at times, but under the Lordship of Christ it can become an unanswerable argument for the faith you possess.

### 2) Systematic Training

“... be ready to give a defense ...” ( 3:15 ). Readiness to give, to speak, to witness is not the result of teaching alone, but training also. Teaching without training produces proud, cold, and dead intellectualism. An institute of learning must be married to a school of obedience. Training is the implementation of academic teaching under expert direction.

### 2. Illustrate

## III. A Christ-Centered Presentation

“... be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” ( 3:15 ). If there is a Christ-centered dedication and education, you can expect a Christ-centered presentation which is:

### 1) Reasonable

“... be ready to give a ... reason ...” ( 3:15 ). The word translated “reason” is *logos*, implying a thoughtful and reasoned explanation. So much of preaching and witnessing today is just unrelated scriptural texts and evangelical cliches. God forgive us! To reflect the divine mind is to “... bring every thought to the obedience of Christ” ( 2 Cor. 10:5 ).

### 2) Reliable

“... the hope that is in you ...” ( 3:15 ). The message of the Bible is one of hope. Summing up the teaching of the Old Testament, Paul says: “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” ( Rom. 15:4 ). The patriarchs looked on in hope, the poets sang in hope, and the prophets declared their flaming messages in hope of the coming Messiah. Then He came, lived, died, rose again, and ascended on high to return one day to consummate all the hopes of the past, present, and future.

The New Testament message is one of hope. To quote the apostle Paul again: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” ( Rom. 5:1–2 ). What a message of radiance and relevance to a world that is lost and hopeless! Ours is a message of hope and we must not forget it.

### **3. Illustrate**

No man has a reliable testimony until he says that he has *a living hope* — “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” ( 1 Pet. 1:3 ); *an indwelling hope* — “... Christ in you, the hope of glory” ( Col. 1:27 ); *an assuring hope*— “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast ...” ( Heb. 6:19 ); a purifying hope— “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” ( 1 John 3:3 ). Unless the radiance and reality of a personal experience of Christ accompanies our presentation, all the education in the world will amount to nothing.

### **4. Illustrate**

#### **3) Respectable**

“... with meekness and fear” ( 3:15 ); that is, not with arrogance and self-assertion, but with due respect toward men and reverence before God. With some hearers, the spirit in which a statement is made may matter more than its contents. Only if they are attracted by the former will they give a proper hearing to the latter.

Then adds the apostle Peter: “having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed” ( 3:16 ). The acid test of a worthy presentation of Christ is a good conscience toward God and a good commendation before men.

## **Conclusion**

We have seen what constitutes the Christian answer: a Christ-centered dedication, education, and presentation. Have you prepared yourself for the one and only answer you can give to our generation, in this hour of confusion, frustration, and tension? If you have, then dedicate yourself to Christ as Lord, and then use your Christian education and presentation to win a lost world for Christ and HIS kingdom.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Charles Haddon Spurgeon ranks among the greatest preachers of all time. On one particular Sunday evening in London, this nineteenth century Baptist movingly poured out his very soul and life in homage and adoration before his blessed Savior. At the very end, exhausted in body, his voice almost gone, he spoke these words, “Let my name perish, but let Christ’s name last for ever! Jesus! Jesus! Crown Him Lord of all! You will not hear me say anything else. These are my last words in Exeter Hall for this time. Jesus! Jesus! Crown **Him** Lord of all!” Knowing Jesus Christ as saving Lord is the first step in a Christ-centered dedication.

### **2. Illustrate**

... The most valuable training Stephen Olford ever received was in a place known as the Missionary Training Colony on the outskirts of London, England. The purpose and program of this institution was to implement all academic teaching in terms of practical obedience. It involved a daily schedule of life and

training that would test every area of Christian character and conduct. At every point of failure there had to be a close examination of the cause of breakdown and the way of victory. Looking back at the experience, Stephen Olford says that he learned more of God and His ways in his two years at the Colony than in any other similar period of his life.

### 3. Illustrate

... When two Iraqi missiles smashed into the *USS Stark* in the Persian Gulf in July of 1987, 35 American seaman were killed. Before the bodies were loaded aboard a U.S. military jet to be shipped back to the States, there was a solemn airport ceremony attended only by Mrs. Barbara Kiser, wife of one of the victims, and her 5-year old son. "I don't have to mourn or wear black," she said, "because I know my husband is in heaven. He's better off. God doesn't make mistakes." What a testimony of hope! Here was a woman who could speak from personal experience of her hope in the Lord.

### 4. Illustrate

... A Hindu convert in India could neither read nor write, but he got others to read the Bible to him. His favorite verse was John 1:12 — "As many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become the sons of God." "I have received Him," said he, "so I have become a son of God." He went back to his village radiantly happy. "I have become a son of God," he cried. His life was so transformed, and his simple witness so effective, that the villagers all wanted to become "sons of God," too.

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## For Further Research

For Bibliography on 1 Peter see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 10.

## Thirty Sermon

### THIRTY, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Suffering

**READING:** 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

**TEXT:** "... My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness ..." ( 12:9 ).

### Introduction

Suffering is a fact of life and is common to all. Some of the greatest men in the Bible underwent trial and tribulation, including Job, Jeremiah, Paul, and even our Lord Himself. We are not told specifically what "thorn in the flesh" the apostle Paul endured. Perhaps this is providential and consequential because Paul's experience can help us to understand our own sufferings and how to rise above them. Consider:

I. There is a Mystery in Suffering ( 12:7 )

1. The Mystery in Suffering is Linked with the Morality of God's Creatures ( 12:7 )

2. The Mystery in Suffering is Linked with the Mortality of God's Creatures ( 12:7 )
- II. There is an Agony in Suffering ( 12:7 )
1. The Extent of This Suffering ( 12:7 )
  2. The Effect of This Suffering ( 12:8–9 )
- III. There is a Victory in Suffering ( 12:9–10 )
1. There is a Test of Faith ( 12:10 )
  2. There is a Rest of Faith ( 12:9 )

## Conclusion

History is replete with illustrations of people who have been greatly used in the world because they have suffered. The supreme Example is our Lord Jesus Christ, who through His suffering on the cross provided us with forgiveness, freedom, and fruitfulness. Let us then kneel at the foot of that cross and bow to the Holy Spirit who enabled Him to suffer, even unto death, to produce in us the same fruits of victory. There is mystery in suffering; yes—and agony; but thank God there is also victory!

## THIRTY, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Suffering

**READING:** [2 Corinthians 12:7–10](#)

**TEXT:** "... My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness ..." ( [12:9](#) ).

## Introduction

Suffering is a fact of life. To attempt to dispute it or dismiss it is utterly foolish, for it is all around us. We see it in the home, etched in the face of an ailing loved one. We hear it from the streets in the agonizing groans of some victim mugged by thugs. We catch it in the news from war-torn areas of the world.

Suffering has been the lot of all people, including the greatest men of God who ever lived. Of these we could mention such biblical characters as Job, Jeremiah, Paul, and, of course, our Lord Himself. George MacDonald says that "the Son of God suffered unto death, not that men might not suffer, but that their sufferings might be like His."

As we consider the subject of suffering, think particularly of Paul the apostle. Throughout His life He experienced what he termed "... a thorn in the flesh ..." ( [12:7](#) ). Martin Luther maintained that this affliction represented the opposition and persecution which Paul had to face. John Calvin's view was that the thorn symbolized spiritual temptation. Our Roman Catholic friends stoutly held that the thorn suggested a sexual problem. Then there are others who argue from the Scriptures ( [Gal. 4:15](#) ; [6:11](#) ) that in all probability the thorn in the flesh was a form of eye trouble, stemming from the blinding glory that Paul experienced on the Damascus road (see [Acts 9:9](#) ). Still others speculate that his problem was malaria, epilepsy, insomnia, and particularly depression. The truth is we just don't know. This may be providential and consequential, because his experience helps us to understand our own sufferings and how to rise above

There is an answer to suffering, and this is clearly brought out in the text before us. Consider, first of all:

## **I. There is a Mystery in Suffering.**

Paul says, "... lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me ..." ( 12:7 ). We cannot read these words in the context of the Bible without coming to the conclusion that the problem of suffering is enveloped in mystery. There are, however, two facts that we need to bear in mind as we attempt to unravel the mystery:

### **1) The Mystery in Suffering is Linked with the Morality of God's Creatures.**

Paul says, "... a thorn in the flesh was given to me ..." ( 12:7 ). Strange as it may seem, his suffering is traced to the permissive action of an all-wise God. When God created angels, and later man, He did not produce robots; on the contrary, He brought into being personalities capable of moral decisions. To have done anything less would have failed to express His own character. In view of this, man is free to choose to enthrone God or to dethrone Him. The Bible teaches that Satan chose to dethrone God. Adam did likewise in the Garden of Eden and, through this moral sin of rebellion, suffering inevitably followed. Suffering, therefore, has become part of human life; something to be accepted until that day when God will remove all sin from this world and usher in "... new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells [forever]" ( 2 Pet. 3:13 ).

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **2) The Mystery in Suffering is Linked with the Mortality of God's Creatures**

"... a thorn in the flesh was given to me ..." ( 12:7 ), says Paul. In this very statement he spells out his own mortality. When Adam sinned he affected himself and the whole of the human race, for the Bible says, "... through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin ..." ( Rom. 5:12 ). Because man is mortal he is subject to all manner of infirmities. It is true that temperament, environment, bereavement, or ailment may accentuate the various forms of suffering; but the fact remains that suffering is a problem to be reckoned with. Sometimes it may mean spiritual suffering; other times, mental suffering; but, most frequently, physical suffering.

#### **2. Illustrate**

## **II. There is An Agony in Suffering**

"... a thorn in the flesh was given to me ..." ( 12:7 ). When Paul speaks of his "thorn in the flesh," he uses a word which does not appear on the surface. The term "thorn" means a "stake," and it seems as if Paul elected to use this word in order to convey the intensity of suffering which he experienced throughout his life.

### **1) The Extent of This Suffering**

"... a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me ..." ( 12:7 ). In the sovereignty of God, this "messenger of Satan" was allowed to assault and attack the apostle at every corner of the road. The word "buffet" means "to strike with the blow of the fist," and so conveys the idea of shame and humiliation. As we study the rife of the apostle, it seems that he was ever up against the devil. In Cyprus he had to face Elymas the sorcerer, who Paul described as the "... son of the devil ..." ( Acts 13:10 ). In Thessalonica the devil prevented him from visiting that church (see 1 Thess. 2:18 ). In Ephesus he tells us that he "fought with beast" ( 1 Cor. 15:32 ); and later, writing to that same church, he declares, "... we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" ( Eph. 6:12 ).

## **2) The Effect of This Suffering**

“Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you ...’” ( 12:8–9 ). As long as we are in this world we shall suffer pain. That God allows this has already been established. But the devil also employs the thorn. What determines triumph or defeat, however, is finally decided by the effect of the pain. If it leads to resistance and resentment, then the consequence is one of depression and despair. On the other hand, if the pain leads to prayerfulness and patience, then the result is one of maturity and victory. Like his Master before him, Paul prayed three times for deliverance from the thorn in the flesh. He asked for faith and persistence, but the thorn was never removed. Instead, the answer from heaven was, “... My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness ...” ( 12:9 ).

## **III. There is a Victory in Suffering**

“... most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong’ ( 12:9–10 ). Paul here reaches the climax of his subject. Suffering certainly means agony, but it can also mean victory. As long as we walk the pilgrim pathway we shall know joy and we shall experience sorrow; but the evidence of having learned the lessons in the school of obedience is that we emerge “... more than conquerors through Him who loved us” ( Rom. 8:37 ). This victory in Christ is determined by the exercise of our faith.

### **1) There is a Test of Faith**

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong’ ( 12:10 ). Imagine a man saying, “I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake.”

### **3. Illustrate**

Faith in our Lord who suffered even unto death is victory in times of affliction and depression. In the place of weakness He ministers His grace and strength.

### **2) There is a Rest of Faith**

“... most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me [or more literally], that “the dynamism of Christ might overshadow me” ( 12:9 ). Paul knew that as long as he gloried in his infirmities a tabernacle of power would overshadow him. In his weakness was the secret of his strength. On the other hand, if and when he gloried in anything other than his infirmities, that tent of power would be removed.

Electric power comes from the pressure of accumulated masses of water backed up by a dam and forced through turbines which generate electricity. Steam power comes by fire which heats water until it expands and creates pressure in a cylinder. Gasoline power is the explosion of a volatile liquid in a chamber called a cylinder, thus setting in motion a piston head and crankshaft

In a similar way, as we rest by faith in Christ to employ what He pleases to discipline our lives, we find that the very pressures He uses are transmitted into power. The moment we resist, the power is removed; as we rest in faith, the power remains. This is what we might term “the strength of suffering.” Instead of being a problem, suffering can become a redemptive power.

## 4. Illustrate

### Conclusion

History is replete with illustrations of people who have been used in the world because they have suffered. The supreme Example is our Lord Jesus Christ who, through His suffering on the cross, provided us with forgiveness, freedom, and fruitfulness. Let us then kneel at the foot of that cross and bow to the Holy Spirit who enabled Him to suffer, even unto death, to produce in us the same fruits of victory. There is mystery in suffering; yes, and agony, but, thank God, there

### Additional Annotations

#### 1. Illustrate

... Herbert Lockyer has a book entitled “Dark Threads the Weaver Needs.” It’s a book on human suffering and how we wrestle with it. Mr. Lockyer titled his book after a poem written by an unknown Christian author. That poem reads like this:

My life is but a weaving, between my Lord and me;  
I cannot choose the colours, He worketh steadily.  
Ofttimes He weaveth sorrow and I, in foolish pride,  
Forget He sees the upper and I the underside.  
Hot till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly,  
Shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason  
The dark threads are as needful, in the weaver’s skillful hand,  
As the threads of gold and silver, in the pattern He has planned.

#### 2. Illustrate

... Georgi Vins spent most of 15 years in prison—three at hard labor. He was completing his fifth year sentence to be followed by five years of exile in Siberia. Suddenly he was given a suit, a shirt, a tie and told that he was being stripped of Soviet citizenship. Within 48 hours he found himself in the United States. His mother at 68 was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison for aiding Christians. He was only 7 the last time he saw his father, who died in prison. When Bill Moyers interviewed Vins he said, “Your father died in prison, your mother was arrested. You’ve spent much of your rife in prison. You once wrote, ‘Our life has not been given for empty dreaming,’ what has it all meant? What do you think your lives signify?” His reply: “I do not regret the years I have spent, even the years of suffering. This has been the purpose of my living.”

#### 3. Illustrate

... The story is told of a man who was asked to visit a lady dying of an incurable and painful disease. He took with him a little book of cheer for those in trouble. “Thank you very much,” she said, “but I know this book.” “Have you read it already?” asked the visitor? With a smile on her face, the woman replied, “I wrote it.”

#### 4. Illustrate

... George Matheson, noted poet and man of God, lost his sight as a youth and spent 30 years in darkness. The third stanza of one of his widely-known songs reads:

O Joy that seekest me through pain,  
I cannot close my heart to Thee;  
I trace the rainbow through the rain,  
And feel the promise is not vain  
That morn shall tearless be.

He had learned to live with his darkness. More than that, he had learned to be benefitted by his handicap. His victory is seen in the words he once wrote: ‘My God, I have never thanked thee for my thorn. I have thanked thee one thousand times for my roses, but never once for my thorn. I have been looking forward to a world where I shall get compensation for my cross, but never thought of my cross as a present glory. Teach me the glory of my cross. Teach me the value of my thorn. Show me that I have climbed to Thee by the path of pain. Show me that my tears have been my rainbow.’”

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## Thirty-one Sermon

### THIRTY-ONE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Fearfulness

**READING:** 1 John 4:11–18

**TEXT:** “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear ...” ( 4:18 ).

## Introduction

Fear is as old as the existence of man, dating back to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve separated themselves from God. The Bible speaks of two kinds of fear: a filial fear which is God-given, and a slavish fear, which is the natural consequence of sin and the expectation of judgment. Such a fear can paralyze people unless a way of deliverance is found. The passage before us speaks of:

- I. The Tyranny of Fear ( 4:18 )
  1. An Ultimate Cause of Fear ( 4:17–18 )
  2. An Immediate Cause of Fear ( 4:18 )
- II. The Mastery of Fear ( 4:18 )
  1. There Must be the Confession of the Son of God ( 4:15 )
  2. There Must be the Possession of the Spirit of God ( 4:13 )
  3. There Must be the Expression of the Service of God ( 4:12 ) .

## Conclusion

God has promised us “... a spirit ... of power and of love and of a sound mind” ( 2 Tim. 1:7 ). Therefore, we do not need to live in the grip of the tyranny of fear, but we can choose to live in the glory of the mastery of fear. Step out of fear into faith by confessing the Son of God, possessing the Spirit of God, and then expressing the service of God in a life of love for others.

## THIRTY-ONE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Fearfulness

**READING:** [1 John 4:11–18](#)

**TEXT:** “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear ...” ( 4:18 ).

## Introduction

The problem of fear is as old as the existence of man. From the moment our first parents separated themselves from their Creator through an act of disobedience, man has been haunted by fear.

To obviate any confusion in our minds, however, it might be well to point out that the Bible speaks of two kinds of fear. There is a filial fear which is God-given. It enables man to reverence God’s authority, obey His commands, and hate and shun all forms of evil (see Jer. 32:14 ; Heb. 5:7 ). Filial fear is the beginning of wisdom (see Ps. 111:10 ), the secret of happiness (see Prov. 8:13 ), a feature of the people in whom God delights (see Ps. 147:11 ), and the whole duty of man (see Eccles. 12:13 ).

But the Bible also speaks of slavish fear which is a natural consequence of sin and the expectation of judgment. Solomon says, “The wicked flee when no one pursues, But the righteous are bold as a lion” ( Prov. 28:1 ). When Paul “... reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix [the governor] was afraid ...” ( Acts 24:25 ). And when the earthquake shook the foundations of the prison, Luke

tells us that the Philippian jailer "... called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' " ( Acts 16:29–30 ). Such a fear as this can possess and paralyze the lives of men and women unless a way of deliverance is found.

The passage before us speaks of:

## **I. The Tyranny of Fear**

"... fear involves torment" ( 4:18 ). Walk the streets of our metropolitan cities and observe the faces that you pass. The furrowed brows, the haggard faces, the staring eyes, and sometimes the trembling hand, are all evidence of the tyranny of fear.

What is the cause of such tyranny? The answer is twofold:

### **1) An Ultimate Cause of Fear.**

Because of "... the day of judgment.... fear involves torment ..." ( 4:17 , 18 ). Although these words are addressed primarily to Christians, it also has a message to men and women who know nothing of the grace of God, for they, too, are aware of the inevitability of death and the indispensability of divine judgment. The Bible says, "... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" ( Heb. 9:27 ). Though projects are launched to try and extend the life of mankind by biological research, yet the fact must be faced that ultimately it is appointed for men to die.

#### **1. Illustrate**

One of the greatest proofs that there is a day of judgment coming is that men and women the world over are agreed on the need of justice. Indeed, our very sense of justice—however warped and weak—is a projection of the Creator's handiwork in our lives. Let us remember that God is the Judge of all the earth (see Gen. 18:25 ); therefore, every human being will one day have to stand before the judgment throne of God to give an account of every word and action. This is why "fear involves torment" ( 4:18 ). The very thought of death and coming judgment creates fear in the hearts of those who have no confidence to stand in the day of judgment.

### **2) An Immediate Cause of Fear**

"... fear involves torment" ( 4:18 ). The Bible makes it clear that there are three main reasons why men and women fear death and judgment. These constitute the immediate cause of fear. Let us examine these reasons for a moment:

#### **A) A SENSE OF GUILT.**

When Adam and Eve tried to hide themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees of the Garden of Eden, he confessed, "... I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself" ( Gen. 3:10 ). However we may try to rationalize human sin, we are still plagued by guilt. Even the most hardened criminals will admit to a sense of guilt. The word "guilt" and its derivatives occurs some thirty times in the Bible. In the New Testament, it means to be under judgment (see Rom. 3:19 ) and worthy of punishment (see 1 Cor. 11:27 ; James 2:10 ). As someone has put it, "No great progress need be traced in the development of the concept of guilt. Cain was as guilty as David"—and we could add, you are as guilty as I am.

#### **2. Illustrate**

This is why the deeper people get into sin, the more they try to lose themselves in so-called pleasure, alcoholism, or drug addiction. Failing this, they indulge in what is known as “occupational neurosis” to try and escape from reality. Such symptoms are an evident token that they are suffering from an unconscious sense of guilt and, therefore, are under the tyranny of fear. This, in turn, leads to:

## B) A LACK OF PEACE.

Paul says, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” ( Phil. 4:6–7 ). Where there is no peace there is worry, and where there is worry there is underlying fear. The most sought after titles in literature today are books on peace, serenity, and composure. The reason for this, of course, is obvious: we are living in a fear-ridden age. While this has been true throughout the centuries, it is perhaps more acute today because of the consequences of our scientific advancements. Instead of beating our swords into plowshares, and our spears into pruning hooks (see Isa. 2:4 ; Mic. 4:3 ), we have manufactured engines of war capable of reducing our planet to a cinder.

### 3. Illustrate

## C) THE NEED OF CHRIST.

The Bible tells us that Christ “is our peace” (see Eph. 2:13–14 ). One of His favorite expressions, used when addressing individuals and groups here upon earth, was “Fear not” ( Matt. 10:28 ; Luke 5:10 ; 8:50 ). He knew that men and women “... through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” ( Heb. 2:15 ), so He came to dispel fear by cleansing their sins and giving them His peace.

Now even though there are a thousand and one subsidiary causes of fear that we could enumerate, basically they all originate from the ultimate cause of fear which is death and judgment; and then the immediate cause, which is a sense of guilt, a lack of peace, and, supremely, the need of Christ.

## II. The Mastery of Fear

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” ( 4:18 ). Here is one of the greatest statements to be found in the Bible. It tells us that the perfect love which Jesus has revealed and released in Jesus Christ is able to cast out fear and bring us peace. John gives us the secret of this mastery of fear in the verses before us:

### 1) There Must be the Confession of the Son of God

“Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God” ( 4:15 ). Since God is love, and we can never know this love until God reveals Himself in Jesus Christ, we must take the first step of confessing the Son of God. We are told that “... the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world” ( 4:14 ). Therefore, to confess that Jesus is the Son of God is to accept Christ as our Savior from sin and guilt and fear.

### 2) There Must be the Possession of the Spirit of God

“By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit” ( 4:13 ). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to make Jesus real in our lives. We can never know the Son of God, nor the wonder of His love, until we have been regenerated by the Spirit of God. When this quickening takes place we become possessed of the fruit of the Spirit which is “... love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ...” ( Gal. 5:22–23 ).

### **3) There Must be the Expression of the Service of God**

“... If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us” ( 4:12 ). By confessing the Son of God we establish the relationship of love. By possessing the Spirit of God we experience the resourcefulness of love. By expressing the service of God we enjoy the release of love. It is important to observe that nowhere in the Bible are we encouraged to be introspective in our love. Rather, we should express the service of love by seeking men and women who need to know this glorious message which banishes the tyranny of fear. A person who has a living relationship to Jesus Christ and knows the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and is busy in loving others is one who has proved the truth of those words, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear ...” ( 4:18 ).

#### **4. Illustrate**

### **Conclusion**

God has promised us “... a spirit ... of power and of love and of a sound mind” ( 2 Tim. 1:7 ). Therefore, we do not need to live in the grip of the tyranny of fear, but we can choose to live in the glory of the mastery of fear. Step out of fear into faith by confessing the Son of God, possessing the Spirit of God, and then expressing the service of God in a life of love for others.

### **Additional Annotations**

#### **1. Illustrate**

... It is an anthropological fact that the fear of death is universal, whether a person lives in a primitive land or a civilized country. Stephen Olford recalls watching brave A-Chokwe tribesmen in Africa flinging spears at one another to see who could take the most punishment before they collapsed through loss of blood. He also spoke to these same men and learned that, deep down in their hearts, they were afraid to die.

#### **2. Illustrate**

... some years ago a woman serving a life prison term confessed to three additional slayings in which she was involved ten years earlier, which had never been reported. It was only after she was incarcerated that the memory of her crimes began to affect her conscience. The “weights” of guilt were too much for her to bear and began to work on her. Even though she realized that she might spend additional time in prison or be sentenced to death she had to declare the wrong she had done in order to try and make amends for the killing of human lives.

#### **3. Illustrate**

... Professor Harold Urey, Nobel Prize winner in chemistry at the early age of 41, and whose work prepared the atomic bomb, wrote a pamphlet entitled, “I’m a Frightened Man.” As a member of the Uranium Committee on the key operation of U-235, he said: “I write to frighten you. I am a frightened man myself. All the scientists I know are frightened—frightened for their lives—and frightened for your life.”

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#### **4. Illustrate**

... Dr. Watson tells of once hearing a plain sermon in a little country church. It was a layman, a farmer, who preached, but Dr. Watson said he never heard so impressive an ending to any sermon as he heard that day. After a fervent presentation of the Gospel, the preacher said with great earnestness: "My friends, why is it that I go on preaching to you week by week? It is just this, because I can't eat my bread alone." That is the Master's burden. He cannot bear to be alone in His joy. There is no surer test of love for Christ than the longing to have others love Him.

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## Thirty-two Sermon

### THIRTY-TWO, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Temptation

**READING:** [1 Corinthians 10:6–13](#)

**TEXT:** "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" ( [10:13](#) ).

### Introduction

If ever a man lived under pressure it was Paul the apostle (see [2 Cor. 4:8–9](#) ). To him, all pressure was a form of temptation or testing, yet he always seemed to find a way of escape to victory. Therefore he qualifies, as very few do, to write on this subject. He speaks of:

I. The Certainty of Temptation ( [10:13](#) )

1. Temptation is Common to Man ( [10:13](#) )

2. Temptation is Common to Christ ( 10:13 )

## II. The Character of Temptation ( 10:13 )

1. It Exposes the Feebleness of Man ( 10:12 )

2. It Discloses the Faithfulness of God ( 10:13 )

## III. The Conquest of Temptation ( 10:13 )

1. A Turning from Self ( 10:13 )

2. A Turning to Christ ( 10:13 )

### **Conclusion**

Are you under the pressure of life's temptations? There is hope for you! Turn away from yourself and look away to Jesus who, under the greatest pressure anyone has ever faced, endured the cross for you. As you consider Him who suffered such "... hostility from sinners against Himself ..." ( Heb. 12:3 ), do not give in to temptation, but give yourself over to Jesus, and victory will be yours.

## **THIRTY-TWO, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Temptation

**READING:** 1 Corinthians 10:6–13

**TEXT:** "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" ( 10:13 ).

### **Introduction**

If ever a man lived under pressure it was Paul the apostle. This is evident from a reading of the Acts of the Apostles and some of his epistles. In one characteristic passage he talks about being "... hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; ... perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed" ( 2 Cor. 4:8–9 ). Yet this amazing man always seemed to find a way of escape. When faced with tragedy he invariably came through to victory. Paul, therefore, uniquely qualifies to speak to this subject.

Are you facing temptation? If so, are you surviving or going under? Whatever your experience, you are going to be helped by the words of Paul. To this man, all pressure was a form of temptation or testing; "... but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" ( 10:13 ). Notice:

### **I. The Certainty of Temptation**

"No temptation has over-taken you except such as is common to man ..." ( 10:13 ). Paul is quite certain that temptation is a certainty of life, and that for two reasons:

#### **1) Temptation is Common to Man**

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man ...” ( 10:13 ). In the immediate context, Paul tells us about five different kinds of temptation which have assailed man since the beginning of history:

#### A) THERE IS THE TEMPTATION TO LUST

“Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted” ( 10:6 ). The temptation of lust takes us back to Numbers 11 , where the Hebrew people despised the manna which God had provided and lusted for the fish, the cucumbers, the melons, the onions, and the garlic of Egypt (see Num. 11:5 ); in other words, the things that were outside the divine provision.

Perhaps this is one of the strongest temptations for the Christian. Despite all that God gives us, in terms of His guidance, deliverance, assurance, and sustenance, we look back to the life we once lived and long for it with fleshly desire. The tragedy of this spiritual state is that God often grants our request, but in so doing sends leanness into our souls (see Ps. 106:15 ). Is there leanness in your soul? If so, you can take it for granted that you have been craving something which is outside the purpose of God for your life. Remember that “... when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” ( James 1:15 ). God save us from the barrenness of a life of unholy desires!

#### B) THERE IS THE TEMPTATION TO IDOLATRY

“... do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, ‘The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play’ ” ( 10:7 ). This is a reference to Exodus 32 where the people became restless and impatient, because of the long absence of Moses in the holy mount. Aaron, therefore, was asked to fashion a god which they could worship and sacrifice to. It is recorded that Aaron took the golden earrings which the people provided, melted them down in the fire, and with an engraving tool made a molded calf (see Exod. 32:4 ). Not only did they claim that the golden calf was the god who had brought them out of Egypt, but they indulged in unrestrained singing and dancing (see Exod. 32:18 , 19 , 25 ). The reference here is to the festivities and debauchery which were associated with idol worship. In the very act of such worship their lower passions were unleashed.

What a warning this should be to us who live in an age of accentuated idolatry! Think of the many things people have substituted for God: an affluent lifestyle in terms of their homes, clothes, and automobiles; preoccupation with work; the adulation of film and rock stars; an excessive interest in sports, and the pursuit of pleasure. As Christians, we often go through the outward motions of attending church and reading our Bibles, but know little of inward reality. Even our churches are characterized by activity instead of ministry. Says Dr. Warren Wiersbe in his book, *Listening to the Giants*, “A Sunday bulletin that looks like an airlines timetable does not always indicate that God’s people are serving the Lord. It could mean that they are living on substitutes. The mature pastor is not against activity, because he knows that Spirit-filled people will be busy serving others; but he does not make activity the sole test of the spiritual level of the church” (Baker, p. 346).

Whenever we depend upon some thing, instead of the eternal Someone, we have fallen to the temptation of idolatry. The moment this happens our religion becomes easy. It is a matter of eating, drinking, dancing, or giving vent to our lower natures and so life’s pressures begin to mount. Oh, how the apostle John felt the pressure of this very temptation in his day, when he exhorted, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols ...” ( 1 John 5:21 ). How we need to pray:

The dearest idol I have known,

Whate’er that idol be,

Help me to tear it from Thy throne,

And worship only Thee.

William Cowper

### C) THERE IS THE TEMPTATION TO FORNICATION

“Nor let us commit sexual immorality as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell” ( 10:8 ). Read Numbers 25 carefully and observe how the children of Israel prostituted their liberty in God by courting the daughters of Moab. This was an “unequal yoke” which God had forbidden. Because they disobeyed the law of God judgment came upon the people and 24,000 perished in a day. Note that Paul mentions only 23,000. The obvious explanation is that Paul was making allowance for those slain by the judges (see Num. 25:5 ). Study the Scriptures carefully on this subject and you will find that whenever the children of Israel sought to marry outside the expressed will of God fornication and even worse sins inevitably followed.

### D) THERE IS THE TEMPTATION TO UNBELIEF

“... nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents” ( 10:9 ). Our illustrative mention here is Numbers 21 . The people had become weary of the journey and began to speak against God and Moses. They tempted God in the spirit of unbelief and so were “destroyed by serpents” ( 10:9 ).

How easy it is to become weary in well doing and to begin to tempt God by our unbelief! Instead of exercising faith in His ability to work all things for our good and His glory, we hinder His working in our lives and in our churches by calculated unbelief—and God has to judge this. Just as He sent fiery serpents in Moses’ day, so He allows Satan to attack us with his deadly poison in our day. Remember, nothing straitens God in the fulfilling of His purposes in our lives than the sin of unbelief (see Matt. 13:58 ).

### E) THERE IS THE TEMPTATION TO MURMURING

“... nor murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer” ( 10:10 ). Undoubtedly, Paul had Numbers 14:2 in mind. The occasion was the evil report brought by the ten spies concerning the giants they had seen in Canaan. This led to murmuring and God’s displeasure; so he overthrew the children of Israel in the wilderness.

This is a solemn lesson indeed! Perhaps the reason why God forbids so many Christians from entering into the fullness of the blessing of life in Canaan is because of the sin of murmuring. It means “to complain” or “to mutter against,” and is undoubtedly the most popular of all the five sins that have been enumerated in this context. God says that the penalty for this sin is exclusion from all that Canaan represents in terms of victory, fruitfulness, and rest in Christ. George Sweeting says: “Contentious tongues have hindered the work of God a thousand times over. Critical tongues have closed church doors. Careless tongues have broken hearts and [the] health of many pastors. The sins of the tongue have besmirched the pure white garments of the Bride of Christ” ( *Sermons Illustrated*, 4/87.28).

## 2) Temptation is Common to Christ

“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man ...” ( 10:13 ). We must remember that Jesus Christ was the Son of Man as well as the Son of God. As Man, He was severely tempted “... in all points ... as we are, yet without sin” ( Heb. 4:15 ). In the wilderness, Satan tempted Him in the area of the spirit, the soul, and the body; yet He triumphed gloriously. He faced temptation in the Garden of Gethsemane: the choice

of some easier plan or accepting the “cup” of suffering on Calvary’s cross. Strengthened by an angel after agonizing in prayer, He could say to His Father, “... not My will, but Yours, be done” ( Luke 22:42 ). Even while hanging on the cross, He was not beyond testing. Reviled by the two thieves and those who passed by, He was urged, if He were the Son of God, to come down from the cross and save Himself (see Matt. 27:40–44 ). If Jesus Christ was tempted like that how can we expect to be excluded from similar testing?

## II. The Character of Temptation

“... God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able ...” ( 10:13 ). An understanding of these words makes it evident that the character of temptation is designed to do two things:

### 1) It Exposes the Feebleness of Man

“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” ( 10:12 ). The application of these words of warning are clear and challenging. The Christians in Corinth were cocksure of their spiritual state; but so were the Israelites—and they reaped disaster. So will we *if we are self-confident*. In and of ourselves we can never conquer temptation. We are slow to learn this lesson so we are constantly tested in order to expose our feebleness. This is why Paul insists on the need for vigilance ( 10:12 ).

#### 1. Illustrate

### 2) It Discloses the Faithfulness of God

“... God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able ...” ( 10:13 ). Because God is omniscient He knows all the circumstances that are associated with the testings and pressures of life. He also knows our feebleness which He complements with His divine strength in order to make us victors, instead of victims, over life’s temptations. Here, then, is something on which we can rely completely—even the faithfulness of God. How exquisitely this is illustrated in the Savior’s intercessory prayer for Peter, in the hour of his temptation and fall! Even though Peter denied his Lord, *Jesus was faithful*. He promised, “... *I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail ...*” ( Luke 22:32 ).

## III. The Conquest of Temptation

“... God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” ( 10:13 ). The phrase, “a way of escape,” is a vivid word in the original language. It means a way out of a defile (a long, narrow pass, as between mountains). The idea behind the expression is that of being surrounded by an army, and then suddenly seeing an escape route to safety. In terms of the Christian gospel, that way of escape is Jesus Christ our Lord. He who faced temptation and never succumbed; He who triumphed over every assault of Satan, is the One who can lead us into conquest. The secret is twofold:

### 1) A Turning From Self

“... God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape ...” ( 10:13 ). In the moment of pressure we must recognize that in and of ourselves there is no hope. To imagine that we can stand in our own strength is to fail and ultimately fall. Like the apostle Paul, each of us must admit, “... I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find” ( Rom 7:18 ). On the other hand, there must be:

### 2) A Turning to Christ

“... God ... will ... make the way of escape ...” ( 10:13 ). In providing the Lord Jesus Christ there is no need to fall to any temptation; there is a way out. It is not the way of retreat, but the way of conquest in and through Jesus Christ our victorious Lord. *Joseph* knew this when he was given the courage to flee the seductive clutches of Potiphar’s wife (see Gen. 39:12 ); *Moses* knew this when he declined to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, and chose to be identified with the people of God (see Heb. 11:24–25 ); *Daniel* knew this when he refused to be defiled with the food from the king’s table (see Dan. 1:8 ); the New Testament saints throughout the ages have known the same victory. This is why Paul could exclaim, “... thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ ...” ( 2 Cor. 2:14 ).

## 2. Illustrate

## Conclusion

Are you under the pressure of life’s temptations? There is hope for you. Turn away from yourself and look to Jesus who, under the greatest pressure anyone ever faced, endured the cross for you. As you consider Him who suffered such contradiction of sinners against Himself, do not give in to temptation, but give yourself over to Jesus, and victory will be yours.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... Again and again a fortress has been stormed because its defenders thought it could not be. In Revelation 3:3 the risen Christ warns the Church at Sardis to be on the watch. The Acropolis of Sardis was built on a spur of rock that was held to be impregnable. When Cyrus was beseiging it, he offered a special reward to anyone who could find a way in. One day a soldier who was watching noticed a member of the Sardinian garrison drop his helmet accidentally over the battlements. He saw him climb down the precipice after it and marked his path. That night he led a band up the cliff by that very path, and when they reached the top they found the battlements completely unguarded. Life is a chancy business; we must ever be on the watch.

William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 2d ed. vol. 1. p. 144, adapted. Reproduced by kind permission of The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, Scotland.

### 2. Illustrate

... A famous explorer in South America was once driven back and forced to abandon his journey by an almost invisible foe. He was equipped to meet jaguars, serpents, and crocodiles. They proved to be no threat, but he had failed to reckon with the LITTLE fellows—the millions of “chigoes” better known as “chiggers.” Today, watch the tiny things which may spoil your testimony. Remember, “he that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much.” Be on guard against the “little foxes”—that evil thought, that hasty word, that burst of temper, that snap judgment which may bring defeat. Put on the whole armor of God by prayer, Bible study, and spiritual exercise, and you will be able to ward off enemies both large and small.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland: Ohio, 7.26/86).

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## Thirty-three Sermon

### THIRTY-THREE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Indecision

**READING:** [1 Kings 18:17–40](#)

**TEXT:** "... How long will you falter between two opinions? if the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him ..." ( [18:21](#) ).

#### Introduction

When the prophet Elijah challenged the people on Mount Carmel with the words of our text, he was exposing the fundamental problem of Israel: its indecision and compromise. Men and women were divided on whether to follow God or Baal, and as a result the nation was on the verge of moral, political, and economic collapse. As we think through the principles of this famous Old Testament narrative, observe that God's call to decision confronts men and women with:

- I. The Divine Alternative ( [18:21](#) )
  1. There was the Evidence for the True God ( [18:21](#) )
  2. There was the Evidence for the False God ( [18:21](#) )
- II. The Divine Prerogative ( [18:24](#) )
  1. The Divine Prerogative of Power ( [18:24](#) )
  2. The Divine Prerogative of Justice ( [18:38](#) )
  3. The Divine Prerogative of Mercy ( [18:39](#) )
- III. The Divine Imperative ( [18:21](#) )
  1. A Humble Repentance ( [18:39](#) )
  2. A Hearty Acceptance ( [18:39](#) )
  3. A Holy Obedience ( [18:40](#) )

## Conclusion

Here, then, is decisive Christianity: a life that costs, but counts. What is our answer to God's call to decision? Is it God, or is it Baal? May our response find expression in the words of Frances Ridley Havergal, "We are on the Lord's side, Saviour, we are Thine."

## THIRTY-THREE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Indecision

**READING:** 1 Kings 18:17–40

**TEXT:** "... How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him ..." ( 18:21 ).

## Introduction

When the rugged and fiery prophet Elijah challenged the people on Mount Cannel with the words, "... How long will you falter between two opinions? ..." ( 18:21 ), he was exposing the fundamental problem with the nation of Israel: its indecision and compromise, which resulted in moral, political and economic crises. Men and women were of two minds concerning the sovereignty and supremacy of God and, therefore, were suffering the inevitable doom of a divided house.

The historian Toynbee believes that the fall of the Roman Empire was due primarily to the loss of nerve on the part of the leading minority to make righteous decisions and then abide by them. This was true also of Athens. The same can be said of our own day. We have lost the ability and courage to make righteous decisions. God is left out of our deliberations altogether. Behind the cloak of so called open-mindedness, liberalism, and tolerance, we daily compromise the principles that exalt a nation. It is time, therefore, that we faced, personally and nationally, the great issue of Elijah's day: to follow God or Baal, and having made our decision to stand by it. As we think through the principles of this famous Old Testament narrative, observe that God's call to decision confronts men and women with:

## I. The Divine Alternative

"... How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him ..." ( 18:21 ). Elijah makes it quite plain that it is not only absurd, but impossible, for men and women to have two minds on this great question of Jehovah or Baal.

### 1) There was the Evidence for the True God

"... If the Lord [Jehovah] is God, follow Him ..." ( 18:21 ). Every Jew knew that Jehovah was the true God; the very name signified "the self-existent, eternal, almighty, and independent One." What is more, it was a common saying among the people that "Whoever can pronounce JEHOVAH is surely to be heard of God."

Then, of course, there were the inescapable associations of history with the name Jehovah. Elijah was careful to draw attention to this fact when he prayed, "... [Jehovah] Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel ..." ( 18:36 ).

*Through Abraham* the Jewish people had learned of the God of revelation, for it was supremely to Abraham that God appeared again and again in revelations of Himself (see Gen. 17:1 ).

*Through Isaac* the Jewish people had learned of the God of resurrection; for it was supremely in Isaac that God had taught the lessons of death and resurrection (see Gen. 22 ; Heb. 11:19 ).

*Through Israel* the Jewish people had learned of the God of restoration, for it was supremely in Jacob (who became Israel) that God demonstrated His power to change lives (see Gen. 32 ).

In like manner, we know that Jehovah is the true God, for in an even greater sense we have seen the evidence of the God of revelation, resurrection, and restoration in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **2) There was the Evidence for the False God**

“... if Baal, then follow him ...” ( 18:21 ). Baal was the god of man’s creation and personified a subtle system of impure worship. As “the sun god,” he was supposed to give man the freedom to do anything he liked under the sun; that is to say, he was a god of convenience, compromise, and corruption; or if you prefer, the deified projection of the self-rife in its many subtle and evil forms.

Baal is still with us today; as a matter of fact, he reigns wherever God is dethroned in human life—however religious or pagan men and women might be.

We must face this divine alternative— “... How long will we falter between two opinions? ...” ( 18:21 ). How long are we going to limp back and forth like a lame man who cannot decide on which foot to settle? Is it to be God or Baal? We must decide. God calls us to a decision.

### **1. Illustrate**

## **II. The Divine Prerogative.**

Said Elijah to the people, “... the God who answers by fire, He is God ...” ( 18:24 ). The divine prerogative would be demonstrated by an act from heaven which only an all-powerful, all-holy, and all-loving God could perform. The sign of the divine prerogative was to be descending fire upon one or the other of the prepared sacrifices.

First to perform were the followers of Baal. What a dramatic and vivid scene it must have been to watch those 450 prophets enter the contest! What pomp, color, sensuality, fanaticism, self-mutilation, and noise; yet all to no avail, for we read that “... there was no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention” ( 18:29 ). Even the stabbing irony and contempt of Elijah failed to make them succeed. In fact, every fresh attempt to supplicate Baal only served to reveal the utter emptiness, sham, and unreality of man-made worship.

At last Elijah’s turn came. He had waited until the appointed hour of the evening sacrifice, and at God’s command, in God’s name, and for God’s glory, he repaired the altar of Jehovah and carefully prepared the sacrifice. Then as an impressive safety measure, he called for twelve applications of water upon the sacrifice, until the trench around the altar was full. This completed, Elijah reverently and simply addressed God in prayer, requesting that the answer from heaven would turn the hearts of the people back to God ( 18:37 ). Verse 38 tells what happened: “Then the fire of the Lord fell ...” In that fire the people saw:

### **1) The Divine Prerogative of Power**

“... the God who answers by fire, He is God ...” ( 18:24 ). Here was a supernatural and miraculous act which no one could deny. Only an Almighty God could do this.

God certainly revealed His power in answer to the sacrifice on Mount Carmel; but even more did He reveal His power on Mount Calvary. Never was there a death accompanied by so many miraculous and supernatural evidences as the death of the Lord Jesus. It is recorded that "... when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God!' " ( Matt. 27:54 ). If we want to be convinced of the power of God we must come to Calvary and watch Jesus die. It will not be long before we say with the centurion, "Truly this [is] the Son of God!"

## **2) The Divine Prerogative of Justice**

"Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that was in the trench" ( 18:38 ). No one watched the fire that day without being convinced of the holiness of God. Every person knew that the altar and sacrifice were symbols of sin-bearing; and to see God's fire utterly consume the sacrifice, wood, stones, dust and water must have caused onlookers to tremble at the thought of God's justice.

If we turn from Mount Carmel to Mount Calvary, we see the same thing, only infinitely more terrible. When Jesus was made sin for us, the fire of God's justice fell with such a holy fierceness that He had to cry out, "... My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? ( Matt. 27:46 ). Little wonder that the writer to the Hebrews later contemplates the justice of God by remarking, "... our God is a consuming fire" ( Heb. 12:29 ).

## **3) The Divine Prerogative of Mercy**

"Now when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, 'The Lord, He is God!' The Lord, He is God!' " ( 18:39 ). They knew that if they had received the punishment they deserved the fire would have fallen upon them and utterly consumed them; but because of God's goodness and mercy, the flame had been directed to the substitute sacrifice.

This is also the message of Calvary. If we had received the due reward of our sinful deeds, then the flame of God's justice would have fallen upon us. Instead, the fire of judgment has been exhausted upon Jesus, our Substitute and Savior, and we can therefore say, "Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed ..." ( Lam. 3:22 ).

So with God's prerogative of power, justice, and mercy before us, the question is put to us, "... How long will we falter between two opinions? ..." ( 18:21 ). Whom will we choose? Is it God or Baal? In the light of the cross we cannot remain neutral.

### **2. Illustrate**

## **III. The Divine Imperative.**

Elijah insisted, "... If the Lord is God, follow Him ..." ( 18:21 ). The divine imperative was nothing less than willingness to follow the Lord wholly and only. The story before us leaves us in no doubt as to what this following involved. It demanded:

### **1) A Humble Repentance**

... on the part of the people; or the yielding of the mind to God. "... when all the people saw it, ... they said, 'The Lord, He is God!' ..." ( 18:39 ). There was to be no blind following. On the contrary, the following of God was to be the result of a clear revelation and a consequent change of mind.

We, too, will have to change our mind, and yield our mind, before we can confess that the Lord, He is God. Repentance is nothing less than a mind that takes sides with God against all that represents sin, self, and Satan; or in a word, Baal. How necessary it is that we take this first step of humble repentance. We must remember the words which came from the lips of the Lord Jesus, "... unless you repent you will ... likewise perish" ( Luke 13:3 ).

## 2) A Hearty Acceptance

... on the part of the people; or the yielding of the heart to God— "... all the people ... fell on their faces ..." ( 18:39 ). No one who saw the fire fall that day and consume the sacrifice ever forgot it. A sense of awe, of reverence and acceptance filled his heart. Similarly, once we have been to Calvary, we can never be flippant or hesitant about following the Lord Jesus. The language of our hearts must surely be:

Love so amazing, so divine,

Demands my soul, my life, my all.

Or, again, in the words of Frances R. Havergal:

In full and glad surrender,

I give myself to Thee,

And evermore to be.

From *THE KESWICK HYMNBOOK* . Used by permission of Marshall-Pickering

## 3) A Holy Obedience

... on the part of the people; or the yielding of the will to God— "... Seize the prophets of Baal! ..." cried Elijah, "... Do not let one of them escape! ..." ( 18:40 ). Elijah knew from the Word of God (see Deut. 13 ) that false prophets and anything else that would hinder the children of God from wholly following the Lord, must be slain. So he commanded that there should be no room for compromise, no tolerance of sin, evil and falsehood; all must be slain with the sword. Without a moment's delay the people obeyed and slaughtered the prophets of Baal until the Brook ran red with blood.

This is still the divine imperative. God still demands that sin must die, the old self-life must be finished with. The sword must be drawn against everything and everything that would prevent us from wholly following the Lord. Here, then, is decisive Christianity: a life that costs, but counts.

### 3. Illustrate

## Conclusion

What is our answer to God's call to decision? Remember that the divine alternative calls us to choose God; the divine prerogative calls us to prove God; and the divine imperative calls us to serve God. Is it God, or is it Baal? May your response be "Lord Jesus, in humble repentance, acceptance, and obedience, I come to Thee. Take my mind, my heart, my will. I will be 'ever, only, all for Thee.' "

## Additional Annotations

## 1. Illustrate

... When Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, went over to Germany to help the Protestant princes in the cause of the Reformation, he was sorely tried by their lack of decision and luke-warmness. On meeting the ambassador of the Elector of Brandenburg, he uttered these stirring and memorable words: “This I say unto you plainly beforehand. I will hear and know nothing of neutrality. His Highness must be friend or foe. When I come to his border he must declare himself hot or cold. The battle is between God and the devil. Will his Highness hold with God? let him stand at my side. Will he prefer to hold with the devil? then he must fight against me. No third position will be granted him.”

*Evangel Herald*. Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 118. Used by permission.

## 2. Illustrate

... At the age of 16 George Mueller of Bristol, England was imprisoned for theft; and later at the university he lived a drinking, profligate life, acting dishonestly even toward his friends. Had he continued to pursue such a course of folly we might never have heard of him and he would have perished under God’s condemnation. But at the age of 20 he came under the powerful influence of the Bible and he became a Christian. No longer was God’s wrath and justice against Him. In mercy, God transformed this thief into a new creature in Christ Jesus and he went on to become a giant in the earth in simplicity, faith, and obedience, and in breathtaking accomplishment through prayer and the Word.

## 3. Illustrate

... *Kamikaze* is the Japanese word for “divine wind.” In the year 1281 God used a “divine wind,” a typhoon to crush the invasion fleet mounted by an ambitious Mongol emperor in the wake of his conquest of China’s Sung dynasty.

In World War II the retreating Japanese organized their own Kamikaze suicide raids to take the wind out of the sails of the United States naval fleet. Altogether 1200 pilots slammed their bomb-laden planes—and themselves—into thirty-four American ships in the Pacific.

Today, we need “Christian Kamikazes” who will take the faith anywhere the “divine wind” blows—regardless of the cost. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”

Adapted from *Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 11/86.17).

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## Thirty-four Sermon

### THIRTY-FOUR, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Despair

**READING:** Deuteronomy 33:26–29

**TEXT:** “The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms ...” ( 3:27 ).

#### Introduction

These words have been described as “... the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death” ( 33:1 ). Here Moses was not only affirming his confidence in the One who had undertaken for Him in life, but the One who would undergird Him in death. Note that:

- I. The Everlasting Arms Belong to the God of Eternity ( 33:27 )
  1. The Eternal God is the Answer to Life ( 33:27 )
  2. The Eternal God is the Answer to Death ( 33:27 )
- II. The Everlasting Arms Belong to the God of Security ( 33:27 )
  1. God Gives Security in the Place of Emptiness ( 33:27 )
  2. God Gives Security in. the Place of Loneliness ( 33:27 )
  3. God Gives Security in the Place of Homelessness ( 33:27 )
- III. The Everlasting Arms Belong to the God of Ability ( 33:27 )
  1. The Extent of Those Everlasting Arms ( 33:27 )
  2. The Embrace of Those Everlasting Arms ( 33:27 )

#### Conclusion

Safe in the arms of Jesus, Safe on His gentle breast,

There by His love o’ershaded, Sweetly my soul shall rest.

Fanny J. Crosby

# THIRTY-FOUR, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Despair

**READING:** Deuteronomy 33:26–29

**TEXT:** “The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms ...” ( Deut. 33:27 ).

## Introduction

These words have been described as “... the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death” ( 33:1 ). They express one of the sublimest truths of faith that Moses had come to realize in the courts of Pharaoh, on the peak of Mount Sinai, in the hurry of the flight out of Egypt, and in the calm and glory of the divine presence. Moses had now finished His work on earth. He had given the Law, he had led the children of Israel, he had arrived in sight of Canaan. So God invited him up to Mount Nebo to see the land and then to die. As he faced his last enemy—death—Moses could say, “The eternal God is [my] refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms ...” ( 33:27 ). In that statement he affirmed his confidence in God. Millions of people since Moses have likewise found these words to be a source of comfort and consolation. Observe that:

## I. The Everlasting Arms Belong to the God of Eternity

“The eternal God is your refuge ...” ( 33:27 ). In this materialistic age it sounds almost irrelevant, if not incomprehensible, to speak of eternity; yet man, in his search for meaning cannot avoid the fact of eternity. A British theologian, D. R. Davis, wrote a book entitled *The World That We Have Forgotten*. In chapter after chapter he amassed material from church history, present human experience, and biblical doctrine to show that man in his quest for life is a creature of eternity. This is exactly what Moses is telling us here. Two thoughts need to be emphasized in this regard:

### 1) The Eternal God is the Answer to Life

“The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms ...” ( 33:27 ). It matters not how depraved man may be; man is made for God (see Eccles. 3:11 ) and has a vast emptiness without Him. This was illustrated in the 1960’s. Young people, rebelling against our materialistic society, sought satisfaction in sex, drugs, music, Eastern mysticism and occultism, only to be disappointed. Then they turned on to Jesus in what was known as the “Jesus Revolution.” These young people demonstrated a biblical principle: i.e., man was made for God; therefore, he is the creature of eternity.

An eminent Presbyterian clergyman once wrote: “I feel that if I can believe in God I believe in all that I need.” When life is hard and all the allurements of synthetic and sophisticated living have ceased to attract, only one thing really matters: that is the God of eternity.

#### 1. Illustrate

### 2) The Eternal God is the Answer to Death

“The eternal God is your refuge ...” ( 33:27 ). As we said earlier, Moses was facing death. God was about to bury him in a secret place that to this day has never been discovered or excavated. In light of his approaching death he could say, “The eternal God is [my] refuge ...” ( 33:27 ).

Death is inevitable to all (see Heb. 9:27 ). Visit a cemetery and you'll find every age represented on the inscribed tombstones. Life is but a mist which appears for a moment and then vanishes away (see James 4:14 ). This is because we are basically creatures of eternity. Life really begins when we have passed through "... the valley of the shadow of death" ( Ps. 23:4 ). The question arises as to whether or not the eternal God is our refuge; whether we are in the everlasting arms of the God of eternity?

## **2. Illustrate**

### **II. The Everlasting Arms Belong to the God of Security**

"The eternal God is your *refuge* ..." ( 33:27 ). The word "refuge" is better rendered "dwelling place." The children of Israel needed to be reminded that though they were homeless and their national future was uncertain and hidden, yet they were in the presence and security of the eternal God. Ultimately, this is the only thing that matters; outside of this refuge the world is an empty, lonely, and homeless place. That is why the everlasting arms of God gives such security.

#### **1) God Gives Security in the Place of Emptiness**

"The eternal God is your refuge ..." ( 33:27 ). Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and founder of the school of analytical psychology, has stated that "the central neurosis of our time is a sense of emptiness." Things may satisfy our bodies, and people may satisfy our souls, but only God can satisfy our spirits. Without God as our dwelling place and refuge, life is unspeakably empty. This is why people seek to drown their sorrows in business, pleasure, drugs, alcohol or, as a last resort, death. When sickness and weakness overwhelm a person this sense of emptiness is heightened—unless he has a refuge to which he can escape. The true Refuge is God Himself. He is the dwelling place, the refuge of ineffable rest and peace.

#### **2) God Gives Security in the Place of Loneliness**

"The eternal God is your refuge ..." ( 33:27 ). Next to emptiness is the sense of loneliness which comes in life and in the hour of death. Moses, alone on that mountaintop, would have experienced utter dereliction had he not been able to say from the depths of his soul, "The eternal God is [my] refuge ..." ( 33:27 ).

Just as the divine "dwelling place" answers to emptiness, so it does to loneliness. Modern man, whether young or old, seeks to escape from the haunting loneliness which pursues him night and day. Even in a crowded city, a busy office, or among members of his family, he can experience indescribable loneliness. But God is a refuge to such. The Bible says, "In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" ( Ps. 16:11 ). No fellowship or friendship can equal communion with God.

#### **3) God Gives Security in the Place of Homelessness**

"The eternal God is your refuge ..." ( 33:27 ). For nearly forty years the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness without any permanent dwelling; yet, in the midst of it all, God proved to be their dwelling place and refuge. The home speaks of security from outside pressures. It is the place of understanding and love, the place of shelter, food, and rest. All this and more God is to those who trust Him.

When Moses declared, "The eternal God is your refuge ..." ( 33:27 ), he was affirming a precious fact based on personal experience. The eternal God had been his refuge. He had known better than most men the extremes of wealth and poverty, of power and weakness, of fullness and want. He had known solitude amid the gaieties and glories of Pharaoh's court, but he had also enjoyed the divine society on the solitary slopes of Mount Horeb. He knew what Pharaoh could do for him, but he also knew what God could do for him. So he exclaims,

“The eternal God is [my] refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms ...” ( 33:27 ). For Him, God was His security.

### 3. Illustrate

## III. The Everlasting Arms Belong to the God of Ability

“... underneath are the everlasting arms ...” ( 33:27 ). Here we reach the climax of our text. Here we have a message for young and old alike. The basic thought behind this idea of the everlasting arms is that of strength, support, or ability. Whenever the hands or arms of God are referred to in Scripture they symbolize— His ability in action. Think of:

### 1) The Extent of Those Everlasting Arms

“... underneath are the everlasting arms ...” ( 33:27 ). The word “underneath” in the Bible is only used this one time. It is therefore a term big with meaning and suggestiveness; or, as someone has pointed it, “It is the index to a whole system of philosophical and theological thought.”

Even in the world of science this concept of the undergirding arms of God is wonderful to contemplate. It has been said that the great contribution of science to the sum of modern belief has been that underneath all phenomena is that which is everlasting. Throughout the centuries scientists have split the rocks, penetrated space, plumbed the hidden depths of the earth and looked into the secrets of nature in an attempt to understand the mystery of the universe, only to discover that everything holds together and rests upon that which is eternal; in other words, *the everlasting arms* .

When we come to personal experience, this truth shines even brighter. There are three “d’s” which sum up the tragedy of human experience, but underneath them all are the everlasting arms. There is the “d” of *defeat*. Because man is “... brought forth in iniquity, And in sin ...” ( Ps. 51:5 ) he is subject to defeat at every point in his life. He is no match for the world, the flesh, or the devil. The enemy of his soul is out to damn him; but even at the deepest level of defeat “... underneath are the everlasting arms ...” ( 33:27 ).

There is also the “d” of *distress*. No one can know defeat without experiencing distress. Sorrow can weigh us down until we feel we can never rise again. Such distress may lead eventually to depression. Spurgeon once said, “I suppose some brethren have neither much elevation or much depression. I could almost wish to share their peaceful life, for I am much tossed up and down; and although my joy is greater than that of most men, my depression of spirit is such as few can have any idea of. This week has been in some respects the crowning week of my life, but it closed with a horror of a great darkness, of which I will say no more than this—I bless God that at my worst, underneath me I found the everlasting arms” ( *The Great Texts of the Bible*, Scribner’s & Sons, p. 75). Illness and weakness can bring on depression—especially when accentuated by certain medications—but even in circumstances like this we can say with Spurgeon, “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

There is also the “d” of *despair* when death seems inevitable and all hope is gone. What can the world offer in such moments as these? What can atheists say, or those who scorn the gospel of Christ? In such an hour the Spirit of God can whisper, “Underneath are the everlasting arms.” The extent of those arms meets us at the level of our greatest need.

### 2) The Embrace of Those Everlasting Arms

“... underneath are the everlasting arms ...” ( 33:27 ). Those arms were outstretched on Calvary’s Cross to demonstrate that God was saying to men and women that whosoever will may come (see Rev. 22:17 ).

Beginning in Genesis and working our way through to Revelation, we could find appropriate verses that speak of the arms of God. Nothing, however, excels the story of the father and his prodigal son. You will remember that when "... he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. And ... said.... Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry" ( Luke 15:20–24 ). In the embrace of those arms there was, first of all, the *forgiveness of the father*— He "... had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him" ( Luke 15:20 ). No words could better spell out the forgiving love of God. It matters not what far country you have wandered to, or what may have been the manner of riotous living, the everlasting arms are waiting to receive you.

In the embrace of those arms was also the *fellowship of the father*— "... Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet" ( Luke 15:22 ). This certainly suggests reinstatement and fellowship within the family home. When God puts His arms around you, you're in! What a message to a generation that is torn by racism, prejudice, and anti-socialism! You may not get a welcome anywhere else, but where there are open arms to receive you they are the arms of God, as revealed in Christ; they are the arms that were scarred on Calvary's cross.

Notice again that in the embrace of those arms is the *fullness of the father*— "... bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry" ( Luke 15:23 ). Every blessing which God has offered in the Lord Jesus Christ is included in the embrace of those arms. Paul could say, "... God ... has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" ( Eph. 1:3 ). What comfort and consolation that brings to our souls! It matters not what our need may be: Jesus is adequate! In Him alone we are complete (see Col. 2:10 ). Once we are in those arms we are safe forever.

#### **4. Illustrate**

### **Conclusion**

How true are the words, "... underneath are the everlasting arms ..." ( 33:27 ). Fanny J. Crosby, who became blind at six weeks of age, proved the reality of this truth when she wrote:

Safe in the arms of Jesus,

Safe from corroding care,

Safe from the world's temptations,

Sin cannot harm me there.

Free from the blight of sorrow,

Free from my doubts and fears;

Only a few more trials,

Only a few more tears.

Jesus, my heart's dear Refuge,

Jesus has died for me;

Firm on the Rock of Ages

Ever my trust shall be.

Here let me wait with patience,

Wait till the night is o'er

Wait till I see the morning

Break on the golden shore.

From *THE KESWICK HYMNBOOK* . Used by kind permission of Marshall-Pickering

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Nearly everyone has heard the name of Helen Keller (1880–1968), U.S. writer and lecturer, who was blind and deaf from infancy. At the age of 9 her family secured a teacher who attempted to establish communication with her—without too much success. On a summer's day, her instructor took Helen to the pump and let water flow over her hand, and then tapped out on her palm “cold.” Helen grasped the message and was beside herself with joy that at last an idea had been conveyed to her by another person. Now that her curiosity had been aroused she made swift progress in her lessons, learning much about the world she could feel but could not see or hear.

Up to that point no one had been able to tell her about God, that He existed and cared for her. So her parents, who were Christians, engaged one of the greatest preachers in America at the time, Phillips Brooks, to communicate this truth to her through her tutor. Her response was remarkable. Though she had never heard a word from the outside world about such a Being she spoke up and said, “... I have been wishing for quite awhile that someone would talk to me about Him. I have been thinking about Him for a long time!” Deep within her soul God had instinctively planted the knowledge of Himself. God can be known. He is “... the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world” ( John 1:9 ).

### **2. Illustrate**

... A little boy was offered the opportunity to select a dog for his birthday present. At the pet store, he was shown a number of puppies. From them he picked one whose tail was wagging furiously. When he was asked why he selected that particular dog, the little boy said, “I wanted the one with the happy ending.” If we want to reach out for a life with a happy ending, we have no choice but to accept the living Christ as our Lord and Savior, follow Him daily, and rejoice in the eternal life that awaits us.

From *Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 11/86.19).

### **3. Illustrate**

... Charles Schultz, creator of the comic strip “Peanuts,” pictures one of his characters, Linus, tenaciously clinging to his security blanket. Wherever he goes or whatever he does, Linus must have his blanket; he feels insecure without it. This may be humorous, but actually all of us have to have our security blankets of one kind or another. “The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms” ( Deut. 33:27 ).

Carl C. Williams. *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers, (p. 5249). He is the best security blanket!

#### 4. Illustrate

... A busy mother once overheard her two young daughters talking. One asked the other, allow do you know you are safe?" "Because I am holding Jesus tight with both my hands," replied the sister. "That is not safe," said the other, "suppose the devil came along and cut off your two hands?" The little sister was momentarily troubled, then her face suddenly beamed with joy. "Oh, I forgot! Jesus is holding me, and Satan couldn't cut off His hands, so I am safe!" This little girl had grasped the meaning of our Savior's words, a ... I give them [my sheep] eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand" ( John 10:28 ).

#### For Further Research

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## Thirty-five Sermon

### THIRTY-FIVE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Death

**READING:** [Hebrews 9:24–28](#)

**TEXT:** "... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" ( [9:27](#) ).

#### Introduction

The Bible is the only book in the world which tells us where we have come from, where we are, and where we are going. It speaks with absolute certainty about God, man, sin, and death. The writer to the Hebrews reminds us that every man has an appointment with death. He speaks of:

- I. The Certainty of Death ( 9:27 )
  1. Death is Inevitable ( 9:27 )
  2. Death is Impartial ( 9:27 )
- II. The Consequences of Death ( 9:27 )
  1. The Period for the Judgment Has Been Ordered Already ( Acts 17:31 )
  2. The Person for the Judgment Has Been Ordained Already ( Acts 17:31 )

3. The Proof for the Judgment Has Been Offered Already ( Acts 17:31 )

III. The Conquest of Death ( 9:28 )

1. The Cause of Death ( Heb. 2:14 )

2. The Sting of Death ( 1 Cor. 15:55–57 )

3. The Fear of Death ( Heb. 2:15 )

## Conclusion

Are we prepared to meet God? We must remember the certainty of death; we cannot escape it for it is inevitable and impartial. There is a solemn consequence about death for it ushers us into the presence of God, before whom we have to answer for our words and works, here upon earth. There is a conquest of death effected through Christ's redemptive sacrifice on Calvary. To know Him personally is to be delivered from the cause, sting, and fear of death. We must trust Him now so that when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we will fear no evil (see Ps. 23:4 ).

## THIRTY-FIVE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** BIBLICAL ANSWERS TO PERSONAL PROBLEMS

**SUBJECT:** The Answer to Death

**READING:** Hebrews 9:24–28

**TEXT:** "... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" ( 9:27 ).

## Introduction

Unlike other books, the Bible leaves us in no doubt as to the ultimate issues of life. No one can read through its pages without being absolutely sure about God, man, sin, and death. It is the only Book in the world which tells us where we have come from, where we are, and where we are going. Only people who adopt an ostrich-like attitude to life refuse to read and study the pages of Holy Scripture concerning a subject like death. They make excuses on the basis that such a theme is morbid, introspective, and pessimistic; but the fact remains that death is inescapable ( 9:27 ). Every man has an *appointment with death* . The passage before us speaks of:

### I. The Certainty of Death

"... it is appointed for men to die once ..." ( 9:27 ). There is a fig tree in India whose branches grow to a certain height, then begin to bend and grow downward to the ground. This tree is a symbol of human life: from the dust we came and to the dust we return. In other words:

#### 1) Death is Inevitable

"... it is appointed for men to die once ..." ( 9:27 ). The psalmist asks, "What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his life from the power of the grave?" ( Ps. 89:48 ); and Solomon adds, "No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, And no one has power in the day of death. There is no discharge in that war, And wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it" ( Eccles. 8:8 ). As soon as a baby is born war is declared on death. Even though the battle may rage for seventy years or more, there is no discharge in that war.

Death fights on until it has claimed its victim. Only two men in the Bible never died—Enoch and Elijah; but that does not affect the fact that “... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” ( 9:27 ).

## **2) Death is Impartial**

“... it is appointed for men to die once ...” ( 9:27 ). Death is like the mailman who comes to the homes of the rich and the poor, and delivers to one man a wedding invitation, and to his neighbor the sad news of a friend’s decease; to one the pleasant news that his ship has arrived in port, and to the other news of disaster and bankruptcy. Death is no respecter of persons, position, or age. Paul sums it up when he says, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, ... thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” ( Rom. 5:12 ).

### **1. Illustrate**

## **II. The Consequences of Death**

“... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” ( 9:27 ). It is clear from the teaching of Holy Scripture that death is not the end of life, but rather a change of life: or to put it in another form, death is but the doorway to an afterlife. What determines the eternal destiny of a man or a woman after death is the Day of Judgment. To get rid of the doctrine of judgment a man must plunge into the gloomy absurdities of atheism, and he cannot be safe there for he still has his conscience left. No man who has any sense of justice can believe that wrong will forever go unpunished. He has a premonition that after death he must face the Judge of all the earth. The Bible says that God “... has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained ...” ( Acts 17:31 ). Notice carefully from this amazing statement that:

### **1) The Period for the Judgment Has Been Ordered Already.**

God “... has appointed a day ...” ( Acts 17:31 ). No one can read the Bible without being impressed with God’s strange work of judgment. If God in times past has not spared angels, archangels, and even His only Son, [when He “... bore our sins in His own body on the tree ...” ( 1 Pet. 2:24 )] will He spare you? As Peter puts it, “... if the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” ( 1 Pet. 4:18 ).

### **2) The Person for the Judgment Has Been Ordained Already.**

God “... has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained ...” ( Acts 17:31 ). During His ministry here upon earth Jesus made it clear that “... the Father ... has committed all judgment to the Son” ( John 5:22 ). This means that the One who now stands at the door of your heart as Savior, seeking an entrance, will one day be your Judge, if rejected.

### **3) The Proof for the Judgment Has Been Offered Already**

“... because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising Him from the dead” ( Acts 17:31 ). The fact that Jesus Christ lives today is God’s infallible proof that He will judge men and women on the “appointed Day.” You see, God is “... of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness ...” ( Hab. 1:13 ). He must therefore judge sin at the cross now, or at the throne in the final day of reckoning. We sing so lustily, “He lives, He lives.... “but we often fail to realize that His resurrection and present session are proof that the adorable Savior will be the awesome Judge at the judgment seat—for believers, and the Great White Throne—for the unsaved.

So we see that when a person slumps in his chair because of a heart attack, or is knocked down by an automobile, or is stabbed on some dark street by a hoodlum, that is not the end. He does not just pass away like an animal. On the contrary, he enters another dimension of life where he has to stand before the judgment throne of God in order to determine his eternal destiny. "... it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" ( 9:27 ).

## **2. Illustrate**

### **III. The Conquest of Death**

"... so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation" ( 9:28 ). Because sin has entered into the world, resulting in death for all the human race, God sent His Son to die on Calvary's cross in order that He might bear the sins of many and provide a salvation from:

#### **1) The Cause of Death.**

We read that the Lord Jesus became flesh and blood that "... through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" ( Heb. 2:14 ). It was Satan who introduced death into God's fair creation. This is why he is described as having "... the power of death ..." ( Heb. 2:14 ). But the Lord Jesus entered human history to "... destroy the works of the devil" ( 1 John 3:8 ). Like David, who decapitated Goliath with his own sword, our Lord Jesus Christ struck the devil a mortal blow with His own weapon of death. The devil, therefore, has no power over the children of God in respect of death. To the Christian, death is but a sleep from which he awakens to enjoy forever the glorious presence of His Lord and Savior.

#### **2) The Sting of Death.**

Paul reminds us that "The sting of death is sin ..." and then adds, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?.... But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our 'Lord Jesus Christ'" ( 1 Cor. 15:55-57 ). Because Jesus has taken the sting into His own body, all of us who believe in Him will never have to stand before the Great White Throne of judgment. For us the sting of death is gone.

## **3. Illustrate**

#### **3) The Fear of Death.**

Through the cross Jesus has effected a deliverance for "... those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" ( Heb. 2:15 ). The saints of the Old Testament could sing, "... though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ..." ( Ps. 23:4 ); and the saints of the New Testament can join with Paul in exclaiming, "... I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better" ( Phil. 1:23 ). To such, death holds no terror, but rather affords a glorious anticipation of release from the limitations of this earthly life into the liberation of the heavenly life. Indeed, in one of his figures of speech Paul describes death as "the lifting of the anchor" of a straitened life, in order to begin the voyage of the fuller life across the uncharted seas of eternity. Whitman called it: "Cool-enfolding death"; Ingersoll, "The fine serenity of death"; Shakespeare, "A necessary end." How different are the words of Scripture— "... to die is gain" ( Phil. 1:21 ).

## **4. Illustrate**

### **Conclusion**

Are we prepared to meet God? Remember the certainty of death: we cannot escape it for it is inevitable and impartial. There is a solemn consequence about death: it ushers us into the presence of God before whom we have to answer for our words and our works here upon earth. Thank God, there is a conquest of death which the Lord Jesus Christ has effected through His own redemptive sacrifice on Calvary's cross. To know Him personally is to be delivered from the very cause, sting, and fear of death. We must trust Him now so that we can say with the psalmist, "... though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ..." (Ps. 23:4).

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Some time ago a newspaper reported the death of a woman upon whom the world had lavished its choicest gifts. She came from a wealthy, distinguished family, and in each of two marriages she became the wife of a man prominent in the service of the country. A president of the United States attended her first marriage. Her beauty was such that her portrait was done by a famous American painter. Her wealth permitted her to buy the jewels of a princess. The obituary, however, said nothing about the unending life to which she has now gone. Nor did it say a word about her preparation—if any—for that life. Riches, beauty, interests, fame—all these she was forced to leave behind at the moment of death, for in the last analysis, death is not only inevitable, but impartial.

### **2. Illustrate**

... Burt Olney was a skeptic. When a young minister was called to a local church Burt attended just for the purpose of criticizing and arguing with the new pastor. After the service he said to the man of God: "You did well, but you know, I don't believe in the infallibility of your Bible." "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," was the young preacher's calm assertion. "I can prove to you that there is no such thing as judgment after death," declared the skeptic. "But men do die," the young pastor continued, "For it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." "But that's no argument, man," the skeptic protested, "Let's get down to business and discuss this matter in regular argument form." The young clergyman shook his head, "I am here to preach the Word of God, and not to argue over it." Burt Olney was greatly annoyed and turned away with the remark, "I don't believe you know enough about your Bible to argue about it anyway." "Perhaps you are right," was the calm reply, "but just remember this, sir, 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.'" Burt Olney left for home but the very tree-toads along the way seemed to sing the awful verse in his ear. The stream he crossed and the frogs in the pond seemed to croak, "Judgment, Judgment? The next morning Burt called at the parsonage. "I have come to see you about that verse of Scripture you gave me last night," he said. "I spent a terrible time since then. These words have burned their way into me. Tell me, what must I do to be saved? I've got to get rid of this torture." The Scripture was opened to him and Burt Olney, through faith in the finished work of Christ, became a new creature.

*Our Daily Bread* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, April 17, 1959).

### **3. Illustrate**

... A mother was hanging up wash in the yard while her little girl was playing on the grass. Suddenly the child jumped to her feet, crying, "Mamma, Mamma, a wasp! a wasp!" "Run into your mother's arms," commanded the mother. The little girl did just that, and all was still for a moment. The mother quietly assured her daughter that all was well. "The wasp will not sting you now." "Why?" asked the child. "Look, said the mother," showing her arm, "I have taken the sting for you."

### **4. Illustrate**

... An Oriental girl of 17 years was dying of tuberculosis in an American hospital. As death's cold fingers touched her she screamed with fear. Her Buddha seemed indifferent to her fear. The nurses had no medicine that would quiet her troubled heart. A missionary talked with her about Jesus. Over and over she read, "He that believeth on the SON hath life." She closed her tired eyes and prayed. Then as she counted the words out on her thin fingers she whispered, "The Lord is my Savior." The missionary was about to leave, but her plea arrested him—"Oh, don't go, tell me more about Jesus." He told her more and she drank in every word. She spent her waking hours reading John's Gospel. The next day he saw her again and told her of the place Jesus had prepared for her. "Are you afraid to die?" "No, the fear is all gone, I am ready to die." Early the next day her weary eyes closed, her tired heart stopped and she slipped away into His everlasting arms.

*Gospel Herald*. Quoted in *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), pp. 160–161. Used by permission.

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on Hebrews see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 3.

## Thirty-six Sermon

### THIRTY-SIX, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** LABOR DAY SUNDAY

**SUBJECT:** Spiritual Stewardship

**READING:** 1 Peter 4:7–11

**TEXT:** "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" ( 4:10 ).

### Introduction

Peter challenges his readers concerning spiritual stewardship and reminds them that "... the end of all things is at hand ..." ( 4:7 ), Christ is coming back, the days of earthly opportunity are numbered; therefore, Christians must use the gifts that God has given them with soberness, watchfulness, prayerfulness, and love. Just as they administered their master's household, so they were to serve responsibly in that greater Household—the church of God. The verses before us deal with:

- I. The Steward's Spiritual Endowment ( 4:10 )
  1. They Are Apportioned by God ( 4:10 )
  2. They Are Accountable to God ( 4:10 )
- II. The Steward's Spiritual Employment ( 4:11 )
  1. To Speak the Word of God ( 4:11 )
  2. To Support the Work of God ( 4:11 )
- III. The Steward's Spiritual Endeavor ( 4:11 )

1. Christ is Given His Rightful Place ( 4:11 )
2. Christ is Given His Rightful Praise ( 4:11 )

## **Conclusion**

We shall never be fulfilled as Christians until we understand as well as undertake what the New Testament means by spiritual stewardship. As we have learned in this study, it is an endowment, an employment, and an endeavor made possible by the grace of God for the glory of God; and “man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”

## **THIRTY-SIX, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** LABOR DAY SUNDAY

**SUBJECT:** Spiritual Stewardship

**READING:** 1 Peter 4:7–11

**TEXT:** “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” ( 4:10 ).

## **Introduction**

It is important to notice the urgency with which Peter challenges his readers concerning spiritual stewardship. “... the end of all things is at hand ... ,” he says ( 4:7 ). Christ is coming, the days of earthly opportunity are numbered; therefore he encourages them to use the gifts God has given

The office of a steward, in Peter’s day, was to administer and dispense his master’s goods for the due maintenance of the household. As applied to us, the household is the Church of God, and we are responsible to Him as good stewards. How are we fulfilling this high and holy task? If the Lord were to call us home today would we be able to give a good accounting of our stewardship? It’s something to think about and to adjust our lifestyle accordingly.

In the verses before us we have:

## **I. The Steward’s Spiritual Endowment**

“As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” ( 4:10 ). It is clear from this statement that endowments for stewards are apportioned by God and accountable to God.

### **1) They Are Apportioned by God**

“As each one has received a gift ...” ( 4:10 ). This term “gift” is represented by nine different words in the Greek which have three shades of meaning: “a present,” “an offering to God,” and “a personal endowment.” The last is undoubtedly the “gift” of our text. This endowment is the gift of the Holy Spirit, whom God gives to us at the New Birth. He not only constitutes the believer a steward, but He also sanctifies all natural and spiritual gifts for the purpose of stewardship alone. All endowments are freely, impartially, and unconditionally assigned through the manifold grace of God. Our God has no favorites. The gifts He distributes are varied, just as every individual is different one from the other. Let us earnestly seek to discover our gift(s) by praying Paul’s prayer, “... Lord, what do You want me to do? ...” ( Acts 9:6 ).

## 1. Amplify

### 2) They Are Accountable to God

“... minister ... to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” ( 4:10 ). No one receives the endowment as his own: he is but a steward. When he offers his gift to the church, it is not as a benefactor, but as a servant dispensing his Master’s goods in the interests of the community. We cannot assume these endowments for ourselves, or bury them in the ground (see Matt. 25:18 , 25–26 ). They are the Lord’s goods, and therefore they must be employed as He directs. “... it is required in stewards that one be found faithful [since] ... each of us shall give account of himself to God” ( 1 Cor. 4:2 ; Rom. 14:12 ).

According to the New Testament, a steward’s accountability will be tested by three questions:

1. *Were you faithful with your endowments?*— “... Who then is that faithful and wise steward... that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes”? ( Luke 12:42 , 43 ).
2. *Were you efficient with your endowments?*— “... minister ... to one another, as good stewards ...” ( 1 Pet. 4:10 ).
3. *Were you blameless with your endowments?*— “For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God ...” ( Titus 1:7 ).

The steward’s endowments are accountable to God. Let us see to it that we are found faithful, efficient, and blameless.

## 2. Illustrate

## II. The Steward’s Spiritual Employment

“... let him *speak* as the oracles of God ... let him do it as with the ability which God supplies ...” ( 4:11 ). It is quite clear from these words that the Christian steward has a twofold employment, namely:

### 1) To Speak the Word of God

“If [or when] anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of *God* ...” ( 4:11 ). This exhortation implies a complete surrender of the speaker’s self to the Holy Spirit so that both in public and in private his messages carry the authority of “Thus saith the Lord.” This was true of *Christ*. “... He ... taught as one having authority, and not as the scribes” ( Mark 1:22 ). *Paul’s* speech and preaching were “... in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” ( 1 Cor. 2:4 ). Peter declared: “... we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” ( Acts 4:20 ).

The steward’s employment covers the three forms of vocal expression: (1) the *ministry of prayerful preaching*: the *evangelist* (see Eph. 4:11 ); ( 2 ) the *ministry of prayerful exhorting*: speaking to edification and comfort, i.e., the *pastor* (see Eph. 4:11 ); ( 3 ) the *ministry of prayerful teaching*: declaring the whole counsel of God, i.e., the *teacher* (see Eph. 4:11 ). As one possessed of a power and a message not his own, the Christian steward who is called to speak as the oracles of God must not, cannot, will not, keep silent. His burden will be that of the apostle who declared, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! ( 1 Cor. 9:16 ).

## 3. Illustrate

### 2) To Support the Work of God

“... If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies ...” ( 4:11 ). This does not mean ministering in the sense of speaking the Word of God. It rather denotes the supporting of the work of God. All such ministry, to be real, must be bathed in prayer. The apostle says, “... in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” ( Phil. 4:6 ). threefold expression of this service includes:

#### A) THE SUPPORT OF CONSECRATED NATURAL ABILITY

“As each one has received a gift, [so] minister it to one another” ( 4:10 ). By natural ability, I mean those manifold gifts with which God has endowed us: e.g., writing, typing, organizing, leading, catering, nursing, and so on. Have we dedicated our natural abilities to God? if not, we must heed Paul’s call to full surrender: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” ( Rom. 12:1 ).

#### B) THE SUPPORT OF CONSECRATED MATERIAL ABILITY.

It is recorded of certain women who loved the Lord Jesus that they “... provided for Him from their substance” ( Luke 8:3 ). Here is a wonderful scope for hospitality in its widest sense. Have we ever noticed the emphasis that the New Testament places on the ministry of hospitality—“... to one another without gambling” ( 1 Pet. 4:9 ). What an opportunity this is for young and old! Is the home consecrated to God? Is it a center of prayer, fellowship, and witness (see Rom. 12:13 ; 1 Tim. 3:2 ; Titus 1:8 )?

#### C) THE SUPPORT OF CONSECRATED FINANCIAL ABILITY

“... If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies ...” ( 4:11 ). The verb “supplies” or “gives,” in its original classical meaning, carries the thought of paying the expenses to put on a stage play, which at Athens was a public burden. Wealthier citizens took turns in underwriting this expense.

This seems to suggest that it is the wealthy Christian who should bear the main financial burden for evangelistic crusades, church activities, and the relief of the poor. Such a well-to-do person should not be regarded as the patron of the church, but rather a responsible steward fulfilling his rightful employment.

Is our money consecrated to God? Remember, our promises to God should be as binding as those we make to a bank. If there were less deceitful giving in the Church today we would not be so busy burying the Ananiases and Sapphiras (see Acts 5:1–11 )!

### **III. The Steward’s Spiritual Endeavor**

“... that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen” ( 4:11 ). Here we have the true endeavor of all spiritual stewardship: “... that ... God may be glorified through Jesus Christ ...” ( 4:11 ). This means that:

#### **1) Christ is Given His Rightful Place**

“... that in all things God may be glorified ...” ( 4:11 ). God is only glorified when Christ is made Lord—“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” ( Phil. 2:9–11 ).

Lord of every thought and action,

Lord to send and Lord to stay;  
Lord in speaking, writing, giving,  
Lord in all things to obey;  
Lord of all there is of  
Now and evermore to be.

E. H. Swinstead

(From *Scripture Union Songs and Choruses* )

The only stewardship which counts is that which is under the control of Jesus Christ as Lord. Are there departments in our stewardship marked “ *private* ” ? We must remember, He is either Lord of all, or not Lord at

## 2) Christ is Given His Rightful Praise

“... *to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen*” ( 4:11 ). The supreme endeavor of the genuine steward is not only to give Christ His rightful place in everything, but to give Him the praise that is due. The Lord Jesus only receives praise when we speak or support as stewards, out of hearts of unfeigned love, giving thanks in all things and under all circumstances— “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me ...” ( Ps. 50:23 ); and again: “... praise from the upright is beautiful ...” ( Ps. 33:1 ). In peace, prosperity, and plenty, we readily crown Him Lord and praise His name; but what about the other times when life isn’t as rosey?

When in prison—To sing praises (see Acts 16:25 );  
When in fires—To glorify the Lord (see Isa. 24:15 );  
When in temptation—To count it a joy (see James 1:2 );  
When in death—To glorify God (see John 21:19 )

## 5. Illustrate

But there is an even greater thought in this endeavor of the steward. Christ given His rightful praise, in the last analysis, means fulfilling all that stewardship entails, and then turning to the Master and saying,

Though I’ve done my level best,  
Lord, my heart can never rest,  
Till before Thy feet I pour  
Every treasure of love’s store.  
Only thus can I express  
All the praise within my breast.

Peter wraps up this thought of spiritual stewardship with the word “Amen”—even so let it be. Can you say that as well? That is the acid test of our true endeavor as stewards.

## Conclusion

We shall never be fulfilled as Christians until we understand as well as undertake what the New Testament means by spiritual stewardship. As we have learned in this study, it is an endowment, an employment, and an endeavor made possible by the grace of God for the glory of God; and “man’s chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.”

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Amplify

... While everyone has some spiritual gift(s) (see 1 Cor. 12 ; Eph. 4:8–12 ) no one has all these gifts. Yet there are certain other “gifts” that each of us can give year-round:

*The gift of Praise*— Appropriate mention, right in front of the other fellow, of superior qualities, or of a job or deeds well done.

*The gift of consideration* —Putting yourself in the other’s shoes and thus providing your genuine understanding of his side of the case.

*The gift of concession*— Humbly saying at just the right point, “I am sorry, you are right and I am wrong.”

*The gift of gratitude*— Never forgetting to say “thank you” and never failing to mean it.

*The gift of attention*— When the other fellow speaks, listen attentively. If his words are directed to you personally meet his eye squarely.

*The gift of inspiration*— Plant seeds of courage and action in the other person’s heart.

*The gift of your personal presence*— In sickness, in trouble, or in great joy, there is nothing quite equal to your personal expression of sympathy or congratulations.

Resolve to give these gifts each day. You will be pleasantly surprised at what you will receive in return.

*The Epistle.* Quoted in *Pulpit Helps*, published by AMG International, Chattanooga, TN 37422 (December 1985, p. 6).

### 2. Illustrate

... A young man applied for a job as a farmhand. When asked for his qualifications, he said, “I can sleep when the wind blows.” This puzzled the farmer, but he took a liking to the young man and hired him. A few days later, the farmer and his wife were awakened in the night by a violent storm. They quickly began to check things out to see if all was secure. They found that the shutters of the farmhouse had been securely fastened. A good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace. The farm implements had been placed in the storage shed, safe from the elements. The tractor had been moved into the garage. The barn had been properly locked. All was well. Even the animals were calm. It was then that the farmer grasped the meaning of the young man’s

words, “I can sleep when the wind blows.” Because the farmhand had performed his work loyally and faithfully when the skies were clear, he was prepared for the storm when it broke. Consequently, when the wind blew, he had no fear. He was able to sleep in peace.

*From Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 10/85.2).

### **3. Illustrate**

... When David Hume, the infidel, was charged with inconsistency in going to listen to John Brown, the godly Scottish minister of Haddington, he replied: “I don’t believe all that he says, but he does, and once a week I like to hear a man who believes what he says. Why, whatever I think, the man preaches as though he thought the Lord Jesus Christ was at his elbow.”

*Free Will Baptist*. Quoted in *Pulpit Helps*, published by AMG International, Chattanooga, TN 37422 (April 1980).

### **4. Amplify**

... If you give to charity while you are poor, you will eventually give in days of wealth. If you do not give while you are rich, you will eventually abstain from giving because of poverty. God has willed that there be two hands in the matter of charity—one that gives and one that receives. Thank God that yours is the hand that gives. Say not, “I will miss what I give.” Be like the sheep who give their wool and have no less the next year because they have given.

*Tan Huma Rabbinic Literature*. Quoted in *Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 11/86.22).

### **5. Illustrate**

... John Wesley was 88 years old when he died. On the last day of his life, and extremely weak, he astonished those around him with these words:

I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath;

And when my voice is lost in death,

Praise shall employ my nobler powers:

My days of Praise shall ne’er be past,

While life, and thought, and being last,

Or immortality endures. *Choice Gleanings*

(Grand Rapids: Gospel Folio Press, April 19, 1978).

## **For Further Research**

For Bibliography on 1 Peter see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 10.

# Thirty-seven Sermon

## THIRTY-SEVEN, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOUTH

**SUBJECT:** The Mind of Youth

**READING:** Ecclesiastes 11:9–12:7

**TEXT:** “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’ ” ( 12:1 ).

### Introduction

With these words Solomon invites youth to think about God and to do it now in order that they might rejoice and be glad all their days (see Ps. 90:14 ). Only as young people think about God today and make Him a vital part of their lives will there be hope for the civilization of tomorrow. Three questions should be asked by every young person:

- I. What Shall I Think of My Creator? ( 12:1 )
  1. The Spirit ( Eccles. 3:11 )
  2. The Soul ( Eccles. 12:7 )
  3. The Body ( Eccles. 12:7 )
- II. Why Shall I Think of My Creator? ( 12:1 )
  1. God’s Creative Power ( Col. 1:16 )
  2. God’s Redemptive Power ( 1 Pet. 4:19 )
  3. God’s Possessive Power ( Isa 43:15 )
- III. When Shall I Think of My Creator? ( 12:1 )
  1. Youthful Impressions ( 12:1 )
  2. Youthful Innocence ( 12:1 )
  3. Youthful Interests ( 12:1 )

### Conclusion

Compare your answers to the above questions:

1. He is my God and Savior.
2. He claims my all.

3. Now, while I am young.

Did you score 100%? If not, it's time to give serious thought to your relationship with God.

## **THIRTY-SEVEN, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOUTH

**SUBJECT:** The Mind of Youth

**READING:** [Ecclesiastes 11:9–12:7](#)

**TEXT:** “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’ ” ( [12:1](#) ).

### **Introduction**

With these words the wise man invites youth to think about God, to remember his Creator. He insists that the time to do this thinking is now. Moses also saw the wisdom of knowing God in youthful days and prayed, “Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, That we may rejoice and be glad all our days!” ( Ps. 90:14 ). Never was there such a need for inculcating youth with thoughts about God as today. Only as they make Him a vital part of their lives will there be hope for the civilization of tomorrow. Three questions should be asked by every young person:

### **I. What Shall I Think of My Creator?**

“Remember now your Creator ...” ( [12:1](#) ). The word “your” is our key here. It carries the idea of correspondence between the Creator and the creature and suggests that if youth would learn of its Creator they must examine the measure of His likeness in their lives. The Bible encourages such an examination for it declares that “... God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him ...” ( [Gen. 1:27](#) ). This takes three forms:

#### **1) The Spirit**

“He has made everything beautiful in its time ... He has put eternity in their hearts ...” ( [Eccles. 3:11](#) ). This is the inherent spirit-consciousness that makes us aware of God. Somebody has called it “the vast capacity for God or the vast emptiness without Him.” By the law of correspondence we learn that our Creator is also spirit. Jesus declared, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” ( [John 4:24](#) ).

#### **1. Illustration**

#### **2) The Soul**

“... the spirit will return to God who gave it” ( [12:7](#) ); and again: “... the Lord God formed man ... and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life ...” ( [Gen. 2:7](#) ). That is our self-consciousness with a capacity to think, love, and act; in a word, *personality*. This suggests that our Creator must be the infinite personality with an all-knowing mind, an all-loving heart, and an all-powerful will. An intelligent understanding of this correspondence between the Creator and the creature should call from us a faith in the God who exists and rewards all those who diligently seek Him.

#### **3) The Body**

“... the dust will return to the earth as it was ...” ( 12:7 ). When Paul speaks of man as a tripartite being, he prays: “... may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” ( 1 Thess. 5:23 ). This is our sense-consciousness. It is the vehicle through which our personality is expressed. Even in this respect we can learn of our Creator because there came a point in time when, for the purpose of expressing Himself in terms which you and I could understand, the Creator became flesh and appeared in the likeness of men. John puts it beautifully when He says, “... the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” ( John 1:14 ); and then he adds: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” ( John 1:18 ). This is why the Lord Jesus could say, “... He who has seen Me has seen the Father ...” ( John 14:9 ).

So in answer to the question, “What shall I think of my Creator?” we have to state that the Creator is the spiritual and personal God “... who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets; [but] has in these last days spoken to us by His Son [the Christ of history] ...” ( Heb. 1:1–2 ).

## II. Why Shall I Think of My Creator?

“Remember now your Creator ...” ( 12:1 ). In asking the question “Why?” we are thinking of three aspects of the Creator’s almighty power. There is:

### 1) God’s Creative Power

“For by Him all things were created ...” ( Col. 1:16 ). This includes the universe around us as well as the universe within us. As the psalmist contemplated the world around him he wrote: “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork” ( Ps. 19:1 ); and when he examined the world within him he had to exclaim, “... I am fearfully and wonderfully made ...” ( Ps. 139:14 ). Behind our parents and secondary causes is the hand of the Almighty, to whom we owe our very existence.

This is an aspect of truth which is largely forgotten today. In the technological climate in which we are educated we tend to think of ourselves as cogs in a machine, rather than unique and scintillating personalities. It is both a biblical and physical fact that God never makes duplicates; He always makes originals. There is only one you and me. Have we ever knelt in God’s presence and thanked Him for making us just as we are—special people? Therefore, we need to develop the art, by the power of Christ, to live with the person He made, instead of comparing ourselves with others. God has made us for Himself, and we constitute a facet of the diamond of His glorious handiwork from which light can be reflected in a way it couldn’t be from anyone else. To understand this fully is to bow in worship before our Creator God. It should change our whole conception of the importance of our spirits, souls, and bodies. How can anyone deaden his spirit, destroy his soul, or defile his body, if he understands the nature and origin of his being? God has a purpose for our lives and He is the only One who can give fulfillment and meaning.

### 2. Illustrate

### 2) God’s Redemptive Power.

According to Peter, our God is “a faithful Creator” ( 1 Pet. 4:19 ). Were it not for His faithfulness and mercy we would be consumed. It is only because of His providence, protection, and provision that we continue “... to live and move and have our being” ( Acts 17:28 ). There are individuals who can recall the times they faced imminent danger, yet were spared. The Bible declares that behind every rife are both evil spirits and guardian angels (see Eph. 6:12 ; Ps. 91:11 ). Such messengers of protection are “... sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation” ( Heb. 1:14 ). More important than the protective power of God is His redemptive power. In the larger context of Peter’s reference to God as “a faithful Creator” ( 1 Pet. 4:19 ) is that glorious statement

concerning our reconciliation to God through the death of Christ our God. He states: "... if the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" ( 1 Pet. 4:18 ). Because He is a faithful Creator He is a faithful Redeemer.

### **3) God's Possessive Power.**

He Himself says, "I am the Lord, your Holy One, The Creator of Israel, your King" ( Isa. 43:15 ). As Creator and King, He claims unlimited sway over our spirits, souls, and bodies. Therefore:

Make Jesus King, thro' Him we shall live;

Our souls and our bodies to Him let us give;

His praises we'll sing, and others we'll bring,

Till the whole of creation shall make Jesus King.

J. Russell Darbyshire

There is only one answer to that poetical question, "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created" ( Rev. 4:11 ).

## **III. When Shall I Think of My Creator?**

"Remember now your Creator ..." ( 12:1 ). This is further amplified in the verse: "... now ... in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them'" ( 12:1 ). These statements combine to teach that the time for youth to think of his Creator is during the period of:

### **1) Youthful Impressions**

"... now ... in the days of your youth ..." ( 12:1 ). Youth is a time for early impressions. It has been said that earliest impressions are longest impressions. When the Lord Jesus endeavored to teach the lessons of humility and teachability, He took a little child in His arms and said, "... unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" ( Matt. 18:3 ).

### **3. Illustrate**

#### **2) Youthful Innocence**

"... Before the difficult days come...." says Solomon ( 12:1 ). While everyone is born in sin, it must be conceded that youth is the period of comparative innocence. It is a time to teach the mind that has not been poisoned, gain the ear that has not been deafened, win the heart that has not been hardened, and control the will that has not been taken captive.

All of us can remember our younger days, when the death of our favorite pet brought tears to our eyes; but now we are unmoved by the tragedy we see on television or hear over radio. We have failed to pray for unconverted friends and relatives, much less wept for their souls!

#### **3) Youthful Interests.**

Solomon continues, “Remember now your Creator ... Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them’ ” ( 12:1 ). Someone has said, “If I am to be interested in anything speak to me when I’m young.” Old age can be the enemy of interest. The challenge of life makes little appeal to the hoary-headed. The time to think of your Creator is now, in the days of youthful impressions, youthful innocence, and youthful interests.

Dr. Vance Havner use to deliver a sermon entitled “Have You Lost the Wonder?” His text was the one already referred to ( Matthew 18:3 )— “... unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” He would describe the wonder that fills the eyes, mind, and heart of a little child who is being shown around a garden, or a toy shop. He then would go on to show how easily we can become deadened to the wonders of our Creator God. Do we still enjoy the song of the bird, the glow of a sunset, the beauty of a snowflake, the sound of pounding surf, the laughter of little children? Oh, that God would ever keep us young in heart, even though we inevitably advance in age!

## **Conclusion**

To sum up, ask and answer those questions again:

1Q. What shall I think of my Creator?

1A. He is my God and Savior.

2Q. Why shall I think of the Creator?

2A. He claims my all.

3Q. When shall I think of my Creator?

3A. Now, while I am young.

May your response be:

His, by reason of creation,

His, He said the Price for me;

His, by the life-giving Spirit,

His, because I want to be.

Stephen F. Olford

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... During his student days, Stephen Olford studied the subject of anthropology. What impressed him most was the fact that wherever man is found—however primitive—he is basically religious. No wonder the Bible says, “... He has put eternity in [man’s] heart ...” ( Eccles. 3:11 ). This is why people in the bush of Africa still worship the Great Spirit, offering blood sacrifices and peace offerings in order to gain favor. Most have never heard of the Bible or of Jesus Christ the Savior, but they are religious.

## 2. Illustrate

... It is one of the marvels of nature that of all the five billion faces in the world no two are exactly alike. There are, of course, resemblances, similarities, likenesses, but, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a “double.” Not even what we call “identical twins” are precisely the same. Each face is unique. God breaks the mould after making every individual human countenance. If, as the scientists tell us, no two leaves or snowflakes are identical, surely it ought not to be too hard for us to believe in a similar vast variation of the human visage; and we might add, personality.

Ian Macpherson, “You Cannot Better the Body,” in *Prophetic Witness*. vol. 7 no. 9. (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, September 1983), p. 13.

## 3. Illustrate

... Stephen Olford recalls that the deepest impressions upon his life date back to his boyhood days in Africa (Angola). As the son of missionary parents, he knew what it was to camp and trek for weeks on end. HIS father would lead family worship at dawn, and then conduct a Bible study at dusk. One particular series he remembers was on the tabernacle in the wilderness. To this day he can still visualize the scene outside their tent, as he sat with African carriers around the campfire, listening with rapt attention to the expositions of divine truth. The missionary’s tent served to represent the tabernacle in the wilderness, the fire the brazen altar, and a canvass washbasin the laver. Those memories never left him, mainly because they were youthful impressions.

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*Series TRUTH FOR YOUTH are on cassette tapes- #7708–11.*

## Thirty-eight, Sermon

### THIRTY-EIGHT, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOUTH

**SUBJECT:** The Way of Youth

**READING:** Psalm 119:9

**TEXT:** How can a young man cleanse his way? “By taking heed according to Your word” ( Ps. 119:9 ).

## Introduction

Scholars maintain that David wrote the 119th Psalm because it breathes the language of the sweet singer of Israel. He knew what it was to be a shepherd boy on the Bethlehem fields with his sling, with his sheep, and with his God. Undoubtedly, it was during these early years that he learned that if his life were to be pure, clean, and noble, he must know the truth that is embodied in our text. Here we have spelled out for us:

- I. The Essential Problem of Youth ( 119:9 )
  - 1. The Presence of Sin in the Life ( Rom. 3:23 )
  - 2. The Practice of Sin in the Life ( John 8:34 )
- II. The Effectual Answer to Youth ( 119:9 )
  - 1. Hearing the Word ( 119:9 )
  - 2. Heeding the Word ( 119:9 )

## Conclusion

We have seen what constitutes the essential problem of youth and the effectual answer. We have asked, “How can a young man cleanse his way? ...” and we have heard the reply, “... By taking heed according to Your word” ( 119:9 ). Are you prepared to hear and heed God’s Word, even the message of the gospel, and come into a rife of salvation, sanctification, satisfaction, and service? If so, make this your prayer:

Just as I am, young, strong, and free,

To be the best that I can be

For truth, and righteousness and Thee,

Lord of my life, I come.

Marianne Hearn

## THIRTY-EIGHT, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOU

**SUBJECT:** The Way of Youth

**READING:** [Psalm 119:9](#)

**TEXT:** “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” ( [Ps. 119:9](#) ).

## Introduction

Scholars maintain that David wrote the 119th Psalm because it breathes the language of the sweet singer of Israel. He knew what it was to be a shepherd boy on the Bethlehem fields with his sling, with his sheep, and with his God. Undoubtedly, it was during these early years that he learned that if his life were to be pure, clean, and noble, he must know the truth that is embodied in our text. Here we have spelled out for us:

## I. The Essential Problem of Youth

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” ( Ps. 119:9 ). The fact that cleansing is mentioned presupposes defilement; and defilement, in turn, presupposes the basic problem of every boy and girl, man and woman. It is twofold:

## **1) The Presence of Sin in the Life**

“... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” ( Rom. 3:23 ). Only a fool would deny the fact that present in the youngest child or the oldest person is a principle that drives an individual to sin and defeat. The two words “young man” are best translated by the term “youth,” and therefore apply to a girl as well as a fellow.

That prince of expositors, Dr. G. Campbell Morgan once expounded this text. He pointed out that the Hebrew word for “young man” or “youth” is derived from a root which means “the mane of a lion.” If you know anything about the life and habitat of this monarch of the forest you will know that when the lion is at rest his mane will flop from one side to the other. In a hostile situation the lion’s mane will stand erect; in deadly conflict his mane will be splattered with blood. That is a picture of youth. Their ups and downs can be likened to the mane of a lion.

We see then that the basic problem of the human race is the presence of sin in the life. Little children look so innocent when they are sound asleep, but deep within their hearts is the presence of sin. The Bible says that we are brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin (see Ps. 51:5 ). From the very beginning of life there is a bias to sin. The Bible reminds us: “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, ... thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” ( Rom. 5:12 ).

### **1. Illustrate**

## **2) The Practice of Sin in the Life**

“... whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” ( John 8:34 ). This history of sin follows a prescribed pattern:

### **A) THERE IS THE DELIGHT OF SIN.**

The Bible speaks of “... the passing pleasures of sin” ( Heb. 11:25 ). The devil sees to it that every appearance of sin is either glamorized or rationalized.

### **B) THERE IS THE DEFILEMENT OF SIN**

“... out of the heart proceed.... the things which defile a man ...” ( Matt. 5:19–20 ). Sinful thoughts are followed by sinful words, and then, sinful deeds, until the whole life is defiled.

### **C) THERE IS THE DEFEAT OF SIN.**

Paul says: “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in men ( Rom. 7:19–20 ). Sin takes hold of our lives. We struggle in vain to do good. At last we give up in despair, crying, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” ( Rom. 7:24 ).

### **D) THERE IS THE DESTRUCTION OF SIN**

“... the wages of sin is death ...” ( Rom. 6:23 ); “... The soul who sins shall die” ( Ezek. 18:4 ); “... sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” ( James 1:15 ). This is the ultimate result of a life of sin. Death is not only the separation of the spirit from the body, but the soul from God.

## 5. Illustrate

## II. The Effectual Answer to Youth

“How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word” ( 119:9 ). These words of David mean at least two things; first:

### 1) Hearing the Word

“... taking heed *according to Your word*” ( 119:9 ). God has spoken to men and women, young and old, in His Son Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:1 puts it this way: ‘God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ...’ As Professor Emil Brunner has put it: “Jesus Christ is God’s conversation with men.” God has broken into time in the inescapable Christ of history. The Son of God has taken the sins of youth and old age to the cross and nailed them there forever. He has conquered death and emerged as the mighty, victorious Lord who wants to enter the heart of every young person who hears His voice. Indeed, He says, ‘Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me’ ( Rev. 3:20 ). People who try to change their lives from the outside are fooling themselves. Only God can change the life, and this begins when Christ comes into the heart through the hearing of the Word. The Word is not only the written Word, it is the spoken Word, in terms of flesh and blood as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ.

### 2) Heeding the Word

“... By taking *heed* according to Your word” ( 119:9 ). Are we prepared to act upon this word of the gospel? Are we prepared to hear and to heed the voice of the Son of God and live? Remember that the Bible says we are to be “... doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving [ourselves]” ( James 1:22 ). There are thousands of people who hear religious sermons from the pulpit, over radio and TV, but do nothing about it. God has not promised any cleansing or change of life until there is obedience to the word of the gospel. Heed the Word and something will happen! There will be:

#### A) SALVATION.

The apostle speaks of “... the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is Christ Jesus” ( 2 Tim. 3:15 ); and again: “... faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God’ ( Rom. 10:17 ). Saving faith is dependent upon the hearing and heeding of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### B) SANCTIFICATION.

Thinking of His disciples in all ages, Jesus prayed, ‘Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth’ ( John 17:17 ).

Stephen Olford met a naval officer during World War II and asked him if he were a Christian. He said that he was, and then told how it had come about. He had been a Cambridge undergraduate, a member of an atheistic organization in which he took great delight in debating against Christianity. Then he was called to join the Navy, and from day one he was miserable. Facing life in the raw, all sense of security had left him.

To make things worse, he shared a bunk with a radiant Christian fellow who knew his Bible and his God. One day, after fierce action from overhead bombers, he sought seclusion in his bunk. The vivid scenes of wounded and dying men were still fresh in his mind. Depressed, and overcome with fear, he picked up his mate's Bible and opened it. For the first time in his life he prayed, "O God, if You exist, speak to me from this Book. The Bible opened at the Gospel of John, and as he perused the pages the Spirit of God revealed the reality of the saving Christ. Relating the story to Stephen Olford, he exclaimed, "It was as if I could see Him with the eyes of my heart, and I prayed, 'Jesus Christ, Thou Son of God, come into my life and save me' and the miracle happened."

Olford, who at the time was an Army Scripture Reader, asked him, "Have all your intellectual difficulties been solved?" "Quite honestly," he replied, "not all of them, but I believe that the God who solved some of them will complete the work as I mature in the Christian life." Then Mr. Olford asked him an important question: "What do you consider to be the greatest argument for the authority and infallibility of the Bible?" The naval officer answered, "I believe this to be the Bible because the more I read it, the more purer and holy I become."

Yes, to hear and to heed the Word of God is not only to be saved, but to be sanctified.

### C) SATISFACTION.

Jeremiah says, "Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart ..." ( Jer. 15:16 ). Nothing is more satisfying than the full-orbed truth of God's Word that quickens our spirits, that informs our minds, that strengthens our hearts, that liberates our wills and purifies our bodies. Indeed, the answer to juvenile delinquency in our world today is Jesus Christ, the mighty Savior, who is revealed to us in this wonderful Book.

### D) SERVICE

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" ( 2 Tim. 3:16-17 ). No one can heed the doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness without becoming a man of God, thoroughly equipped for every good work. Vocational orientation is one of the products of a life that conforms to the will of God.

### 3. Illustrate

## Conclusion

We have seen what constitutes the essential problem of youth and the effectual answer to youth. We have asked the question, "How can a young man cleanse his way? ..." and we have answered it by saying, "... By taking heed according to Your word" ( 119:9 ). Are you prepared to hear and heed God's Word, even the message of the gospel, and come into a life of salvation, sanctification, satisfaction, and service? If so, make these words your prayer:

Just as I am, young, strong, and free,

To be the best that I can be

For truth and righteousness and Thee,

Lord of life, I come.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... Many years ago three scientists working for the University of Melbourne, capital of Victoria in Australia, invented a tiny television camera that could be swallowed by a patient under examination. It would then flash clear pictures upon an enlarged screen so that the internal organs, their condition and activities could be accurately seen. Hailed as one of the greatest advances in medicine and surgery, its pictures, magnified 30–40 times on a television screen, allows doctors to completely observe heretofore hidden cavities. Doctors now are able to observe what is taking place inside the patient. Science hails this as a great discovery, but it is nothing new. God's great camera, the Bible, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, has long ago given us a picture of our insides, not only the stomach, but the "heart." He even sees our thoughts (see Ps. 139:2 ). What does God's camera reveal in the natural heart? Only filth, deceitfulness and sin (see Ps. 14:3 ; Jer. 17:9 ; Rom. 5:12 ). But God's camera also provides the cure: "... he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life ..." ( John 5:24 ).

M. R. De Haan, *Our Daily Bread* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, June 7, 1960), adapted.

### 2. Illustrate

... A young man got into the habit of eating six pizzas at one sitting and finishing off a case of beer while watching television in his father's tavern. His doctor warned him that his weight was endangering his life, but he failed to listen. Within two months, this 5 foot ten inch young man was killed by a heart attack. At the time of his death he weighed 650 pounds. Six men were needed to carry his body to a hearse after he was pronounced dead. How true the Bible is when it says, "... whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption ..." ( Gal. 6:7–8 ). There is such a thing as the destruction of sin.

### 3. Illustrate

... As a boy he missed out in a common education, but was converted to God and turned to the Bible for daily reading. He learned ambition from the Bible and assayed tasks that seemed beyond his ability, and came to a place of power and influence such as has been granted to few persons of this generation. Asked about his life-work, he said, "I have no native ability beyond the ordinary, but I have found in God's Word the power that enables the commonplace man to do the uncommon things for an everlasting God."

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## Thirty-nine Sermon

### THIRTY-NINE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOUTH

**SUBJECT:** The Yoke of Youth

**READING:** [Lamentations 3:22–35](#)

**TEXT:** “It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth” ( [3:22–33](#) )

#### Introduction

The Lamentations of Jeremiah contain profound and precious disclosures of God's purpose for His people. In chapter after chapter the prophet shows that despite the trials and tears of everyday, life God is ever silently planning in love for His own. In the verses before us Jeremiah recalls the days of his youth and remembers what God put him through before he could be the man of divine appointment to his generation. From our text we learn of:

- I. The Desirability of the Yoke of Youth ( 3:27 )
  1. God Gives the Yoke ( 3:25 )
  2. Man Needs the Yoke ( 3:26 )
- II. The Discipline of the Yoke of Youth ( 3:27 )
  1. There is the Discipline of Silence ( 3:28 )
  2. There is the Discipline of Submission
  3. There is the Discipline of Suffering ( 3:30 )

### III. The Design of the Yoke of Youth ( 3:27 )

1. The Promise of God for Life ( 3:31 )
2. The Purpose of God for Life ( 3:32–33 )

## Conclusion

As long as we live on earth we are, like youth, in a constant process of development and training. Whether we are children, young men, or fathers, we are expected to accept this yoke because it is “good.” God gives it and everyone needs it. Let us not chafe at this yoke, but rather accept it gratefully and wear it obediently.

## THIRTY-NINE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOUTH

**SUBJECT:** The Yoke of Youth

**READING:** [Lamentations 3:22–33](#)

**TEXT:** “It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth” ( 3:27 ).

## Introduction

The Lamentations of Jeremiah are one of the most profound and precious disclosures of God’s purpose for His people. In chapter after chapter the prophet shows that despite the trials and tears of everyday life God is ever silently planning in love for His own. In the verses before us, Jeremiah recalls the days of His youth and remembers what God put him through before he could be the divine spokesman to his generation. He says, ‘It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth’ ( 3:27 )—words not popular in today’s society, but necessary to a correct understanding of God’s purpose for young life. Observe:

### I. The Desirability of the Yoke of Youth

“It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth” ( 3:27 ). Three times over—in vv. 25 , 26 , and 27 —we have the little word “good,” and its meaning is not difficult to follow. Jeremiah had been a young man but now he was old. As he retraces the steps through which God had led him he declares, ‘It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth’ ( 3:27 ). Jeremiah recalls that the ‘yoke’ for him was God’s method of teaching and training him. As someone has put it, ‘Early discipline begets mature dependability.’ Then he gives us two reasons for accepting the yoke:

#### 1) God Gives the Yoke

“The Lord is good to those who wait for Him ...” ( 3:25 ). The gifts of God are always desirable because the Word of God says that “... No good thing will He withhold From those who walk uprightly” ( Ps. 84:11 ). Jeremiah revels in this fact. He exclaims, ‘Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not’ ( 3:22 ). Were we to receive what we deserve, God would annihilate us before we ever reached manhood. Indeed, he goes on to say that “... HIS compassions.... are new every morning ...” ( 3:22–23 ), or more literally, “are adapted to every day’s requirements.” Then he declares, “... Great is Your faithfulness” ( 3:23 ). To him, the Lord had become his portion (see 3:24 ); therefore, he had complete confidence in his covenant-keeping God. In the light of this he acknowledges that the yoke of God’s provision is not only desirable, but absolutely essential for his life.

The Lord Jesus must have been thinking of these very words when He said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My Yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My Yoke is easy and My burden is light” ( Matt. 11:28–30 ).

### **1. Illustrate**

Let us remember this fact when we are tempted to rebel against the yoke. Quite clearly, from the words of our Savior, this yoke of God’s provision involves the *invitation* of the gospel— “come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”; then the *obligation* of the gospel— “Take My yoke upon you ...”; and then finally, the *education* of the gospel— “... learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” ( Matt. 11:28–30 ).

### **2) Man Needs the Yoke**

“It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the Lord” ( 3:26 ). Without the yoke of God’s provision no one—young or old—can ever experience or enjoy the full salvation which God has provided for all who believe. In terms of New Testament language, this yoke implies not only union with Christ, but communion with Christ; not only the fact of salvation but the fullness of salvation. So the yoke of youth is desirable. Are we prepared to accept this yoke of God’s purpose for our lives?

## **II. The Discipline of the Yoke of Youth**

“It is good for a man to bear the yoke in youth” ( 3:27 ). Undoubtedly, Jeremiah had watched many a farmer as he yoked his oxen to plow the furrows, to draw the water, or to carry the burdens. In his mind, the yoke was essentially an instrument of discipline, and is made clear in the verses that follow our text:

### **1) There is the Discipline of Silence**

“Let him sit alone and keep silent, Because God has laid it on him”; or more literally, ‘Let him sit alone and keep silence when He [Jehovah] has laid the yoke on him” ( 3:28 ). One of the great problems of youth is that of rebellion against discipline; it is a problem that is found at every stage of rife. Jeremiah had to learn that there are times in our lives when we have to accept discipline in silence.

No one demonstrated this more than our wonderful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Isaiah tells us that “... He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not his mouth” ( Isa. 53:7 ). Peter reminds us that “... when He was reviled, [He] did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” ( 1 Pet. 2:23 ). Then there was that occasion when, standing before Pilate, “... He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly” ( Matt. 27:14 ). When a young person realizes that God is ever and always silently planning for him in love, rebellion ceases and discipline is accepted quietly and obediently.

### **2. Amplify**

### **2) There is the Discipline of Submission**

“Let him put his mouth in the dust—There may yet be hope” ( 3:29 ). This was an Oriental manner of expressing submission. It is a picture of an Eastern subject, prostrate before his king. His face is laid in the dust so that he cannot answer back. How expressive of total submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. No one can acknowledge Christ as Sovereign without accepting His yoke. This calls for submission to the Savior in every area of life. In the home, children are to “... obey [their] parents in the Lord ...” ( Eph. 6:1 ). In the church,

young and old are to “Obey those who rule over [them] ...” ( Heb. 13:17 ); and in the world, Pete makes it clear that every Christian is to “... submit ... to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake ...” ( 1 Pet. 2:13 ). Have you ever accepted the yoke of submission? It is a discipline to which Jesus Christ has called us.

### **3) There is the Discipline of Suffering**

“Let him give his cheek to the one who strikes him, And be full of reproach” ( 3:30 ). How this matters up with our Savior’s words in the Sermon on the Mount: “... whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” ( Matt. 5:39 ). This is exactly what Jesus did as He steadfastly set His face to go toward Jerusalem and then on to the cross. Wicked men blindfolded Him and struck Him with a rod. They plucked the hair from His cheek, they spat in His face; but in all His suffering He never retaliated.

Nothing is more grueling and demanding, in a young person’s life, than to accept the discipline of suffering without retaliation or resentment. This is the way of discipleship. Jesus said, “... whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” ( Luke 14:27 ). The cross not only symbolizes the disciplines of silence and submission, but also of suffering. Until such discipline is accepted gladly and obediently a person is not qualified to serve Jesus Christ.

### **3. Illustrate**

## **III. The Design of the Yoke of Youth**

“It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth” ( 3:27 ). If this statement is true then, obviously, there is a hidden and holy design in this needful experience of life. The answer is not hard to find. In the concluding words of this section we have the design of God clearly outlined. The yoke of youth is the means by which young and old can experience:

### **1) The Promise of God for Life**

“For the Lord will not cast off forever” ( 3:31 ). These words are a quotation from at least two psalms ( 94:14 and 77:7 ). Jeremiah in his prophecy uses similar words (see Jer. 3:5 , 12 ). He was confident of one thing: that as long as He was under the yoke God would continue to work until He had perfected that which concerned him (see Ps. 138:8 ). This is a tremendous thought. As long as we accept the yoke of divine discipline, God will see to it that He brings to pass in our lives all that He has promised to do. This affects not only our character, but our conduct as well; not only our salvation, but our service. Our usefulness to God is proportionate to our yieldedness to Him. God only uses yokefellow. David puts it perfectly when he says, “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass” ( Ps. 37:5 ). The apostle echoes the same thought in Ephesians 2:10 — “... we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” ( Eph. 2:10 ). Young people, particularly, are concerned about their future careers. There is no need to fret or worry about this as long as they are prepared to accept the yoke of Christ. The promise is clear: “... the Lord will not cast off forever” ( 3:31 ). It may seem like God has abandoned us, but, in point of fact, He is silently planning for us in love.

### **2) The Purpose of God for Life**

“Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men” ( 3:32–33 ). These are precious words indeed! They reveal that God’s purpose for our lives is an increasing understanding of His love. So often we are tempted to complain and even doubt, when undergoing the disciplines of God, but the fact remains that “... whom the Lord loves He chastens ...” The reason for doing this is that we might be “... partakers of His holiness” ( Heb. 12:6 , 10 ). Such holiness, of course, is conformity “... to the image of [God’s] Son ...” ( Rom. 8:29 ). Paul says, “... ”

all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” ( Rom. 8:28 ).

We talk about the grief and affliction through which we pass sometimes, but that is not to be compared with the grief which our heavenly Father experiences. Look at verses 32–33 again: “Though He causes grief, Yet He will show compassion According to the multitude of His mercies. For He does not afflict willingly, Nor grieve the children of men” ( 3:32–33 ). When the surgeon picks up his scalpel to make an incision, he does not willingly desire to hurt or afflict, even though pain is involved; his purpose is to heal and restore.

The divine design in bearing the yoke of youth is not only to prove God’s promise in all the wonder of His salvation and service in our lives, but also to prove His purpose of love in making us more and more like Him Son—even Jesus Christ our Lord.

#### **4. Illustrate**

### **Conclusion**

As long as we live on earth we are, like youth, in a constant process of development and training. Whether we are children, young men, or fathers, we are expected to accept this yoke because it is “good.” God gives it and everyone needs it. Let us not chafe or shrink from this yoke, but rather accept it gratefully and wear it obediently.

### **Additional Annotations**

#### **1. Illustrate**

... John T. Faris tells the story of a man who was carrying a heavy basket. His son offered to help him. The father cut a large stick and placed it through the handle of the basket so that the end toward himself was very short, while the end toward the boy was three or four times as long. Each took hold of his end of the stick, and the basket was lifted and carried easily. The son was bearing the burden with the father. He found his work easy and light because his father assumed the heavier end of the load. So it is when we live for Jesus— “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ... for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” ( Matt. 11:29–30 ).

Ray O. Jones. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1184.

#### **2. Amplify**

... Often the best answer to our critics is to say NOTHING in return. It is much more difficult to learn to keep still than to learn to speak. If the accusation is true, you have no answer; if it is not true, it needs no answer. If you do anything worthwhile, you will be talked about. If no one talks about you, it is a sign you have never done anything worth talking about. Someone has said, “Never mind what they say about you, just so they talk about you.” It is a hard lesson to learn, but one most worthwhile—just to answer your slanderers with silence. If someone throws mud at you—wait till it DRIES—and it will just rub off. Don’t rub it in while it is wet—give it time to dry. An ancient poet was informed that a malicious enemy with a poisoned tongue was speaking ill about him to ALL THE WORLD. The poet answered, “Let him alone, it is better that he speak ill of me to the world, than that ALL THE WORLD should speak ill of me to him.” Learn to answer your accusers with silence.

*Our Daily Bread* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, n.d.)

### 3. Illustrate

... Richard Weaver, a Christian worker, earned his living in the mines. He had the higher priority, however, of trying to bring his associates in contact with the Savior and His soul-restoring Word. While most of the men were indifferent, one became offended by his witness, and finally exclaimed, ‘I’m sick of your constant preaching. I’ve a good mind to smack you in the face!’ ‘Go ahead if it will make you feel better,’ replied Weaver. The man immediately struck him a stinging blow. The Christian did not retaliate but turned the other cheek. Again the unbeliever struck him and then walked away, cursing under his breath. Weaver called after him, ‘I forgive you, and still pray that the Lord will save you!’ The next morning his assailant was waiting for him when he came to work. ‘Oh, Dick,’ he said, his voice filled with emotion, ‘do you really forgive me for what I did yesterday?’ ‘Certainly,’ said Weaver extending his hand. As he told him again the message of salvation, God opened the man’s heart, and he received Christ.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 6/86.12).

### 4. Illustrate

... In the pictures of the ancient Roman method of threshing grain, one man is always seen stirring up the sheaves while another rides over them in a crude cart equipped with rollers instead of wheels. Sharp stones and rough bits of iron were attached to these cylinders to help separate the husks from the grain. This simple cart was called a tribulum—from which we get our word “tribulation.” When great affliction comes to us, we often think of ourselves as being torn to pieces under the cruel pressures of adverse circumstances. No thresher ever yoked up his tribulum for the mere purpose of tearing up his sheaves, but to disclose the precious grain. Similarly, our loving Savior never puts us under the pressures of sorrow and disappointment needlessly.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio, 5/86.3).

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## Fourth Quarter

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## Forty Sermon

### FORTY, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOUTH

**SUBJECT:** The Gift of Youth

**READING:** [John 6:5–14](#)

**TEXT:** “There is a lad here ...” ( 6:9 ).

#### Introduction

The feeding of the five thousand is a miracle which is recorded by each of the gospel writers. The story of this little boy gives this miracle a special relevance in the ministry of our Lord. The events that took place on this memorable occasion illustrate the redemptive compassion, provision, and intention of our Savior. Consider three salient lessons that emerge from the story before us:

- I. The Availability of the Lad ( 6:9 )
  1. The Lad was Willing to Seek Jesus ( 6:9 )
  2. The Lad was Waiting to Serve Jesus ( 6:9 )
- II. The Potentiality of the Lad ( 6:9 )

1. The Potential for Fulfilling the Will of the Master ( 6:10–11 )
  2. The Potential for Supplying the Need of the People ( 6:12 )
  3. The Potential for Advancing the Cause of the Gospel ( 6:14 )
- III. The Responsibility of the Lad ( 6:9 )
1. The Lad Yielded His All to the Savior
  2. The Lad Trusted His All to the Savior ( 6:11 )

## **Conclusion**

We have seen what we mean by the gift of youth. All God wants is the availability, the potentiality, and the responsibility of an individual who is prepared to give his all. If we do our part God will do the rest and the world will be blessed.

## **FORTY, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOUTH

**SUBJECT:** The Gift of Youth

**READING:** [John 6:5–14](#)

**TEXT:** “There is a lad here ...” ( 6:9 ).

## **Introduction**

The feeding of the five thousand is a miracle which is recorded by each of the gospel writers. This fact underscores the special importance and the spiritual significance of this happening in the ministry of our Lord. In the events that took place on this memorable occasion we see the redemptive compassion, provision, and intention of our Savior illustrated. There was divine compassion because Jesus would not turn hungry people away. He asked, “... Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?” ( 6:5 ). There was divine provision because by His creative power He multiplied five barley loaves and two small fish to feed “... five thousand men, besides women and children” ( Matt. 14:21 ). There was divine intention because Jesus took on an unknown boy and through his instrumentality blessed not only multitudes by the Sea of Galilee, but countless numbers throughout the centuries. It is the story of this little boy which gives this miracle a relevance to your life and mine. Consider three salient lessons that emerge from the story before us:

### **I. The Availability of the Lad**

“There is a lad here ...” ( 6:9 ). Have you ever wondered why that boy was near the Sea of Galilee that day? How is it that he became available at the right time, at the right place, for the right use? The answer is twofold:

#### **1) The Lad was Willing to Seek Jesus**

“There is a lad here ...” ( 6:9 ). The story does not tell us what influenced this boy to follow the crowd in order to see Jesus. He may have had godly parents who encouraged him to seek the Master. On the other hand, he may have heard of some wonderful cures which the Savior had performed, and so followed the multitudes in the hope of witnessing further miracles. This is mere speculation. What is clear, though, is the fact that the boy was there just when Jesus needed him, and there was a willingness in his heart to seek the Lord. No one seeks

Jesus in this fashion without finding Him. Jeremiah 29:13 tells us: "... you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart." What is even more important, the gospel reveals that Jesus came into the world "... to seek and to save that which was lost" ( Luke 19:10 ). When a seeking Savior meets a seeking sinner it is the moment of truth. If you are seeking Jesus then you are a candidate for blessing.

## **2) The Lad was Waiting to Serve Jesus**

"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish ..." ( 6:9 ). It is evident from the story that he thought so much of Christ that when he was asked to part with his five loaves and two small fish he was ready to surrender them.

Invariably, this has been true of youth throughout the centuries. The psalmist says, "Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your Youth" ( Ps. 110:3 ; Eccles. 12:1 ). One of the reasons God is using young people today is because of their desire to serve. We wrongly judge our present generation if we suggest that they have no concern for the issues of the hour. It can be established that practically every major problem facing the world today is being tackled by young people. Their methods are not always commendable and their zeal is often misdirected, but their desire to serve is unquestionable.

Are we available to Jesus Christ? Are we willing to seek Him, and are we waiting to serve Him?

### **1. Amplify**

## **II. The Potentiality of the Lad**

"There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish ..." ( 6:9 ). That statement is highly suggestive. Those five barley loaves represented the poorest fare in any Jewish home. Barley loaves were usually given to donkeys, mules, and other livestock. Only the destitute ate barley loaves, for the staple food was usually made of wheat. Then there were those two small fish, probably caught in the Sea of Galilee, now cooked and shriveled up! This is all the boy had, but what a potential in the hands of the Master! How true are the words, "Little is much when God is in it." As we look at this narrative it is obvious that in the five loaves and the two small fish there was:

### **1) The Potential for Fulfilling the Will of the Master.**

Jesus said, "... 'Make the people sit down.' " Later we read He "... took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted" ( 6:10–11 ). The one concern of our Lord was to feed the multitude. Such was His heart of compassion that He could not send them away hungry. In the potential of that lad's lunch He saw more than enough to feed that vast multitude. Indeed, we are told that when they gathered the leftovers it filled twelve baskets! ( 6:13 ). There is nothing more wonderful in all the world than fulfilling the will of the Master.

### **2) The Potential for Supplying the Need of the People**

"... they were [all] filled ..." ( 6:12 ). One boy, five barley loaves, two small fish, and more than five thousand people were satisfied. What a miracle! This is exactly what God does when we are prepared to surrender our all to Him.

When our Savior said, "... Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" ( Mark 16:15 ) He was not using rhetoric or hyperbole. He meant exactly what He said—" ... all the world ... to every creature."

The disciples took these words so seriously that the then known world was evangelized in some thirty years after the day of Pentecost.

The basic need of men and women today is still the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no service that we can render with more urgency and a sense of importance than that of sharing the Bread of Life. Oh, that our response might be, “There is a lad here ...” ( 6:9 ).

### **3) The Potential for Advancing the Cause of the Gospel**

We read that “... those men, when they had seen the sign [or miracle] that Jesus did, said, ‘This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world’ ” ( 6:14 ). For two thousand years this story has been told and retold; and because one little boy was willing to sacrifice his lunch the cause of the gospel has been advanced. This incident is of such eternal consequence that God has seen fit to include it in the Gospel record. In God’s eyes, everything we do for Jesus Christ will abide forever. How true are those words:

Only one life, ‘twill soon be past,

Only what’s done for Christ will last.

## **III. The Responsibility of the Lad**

“There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish ...” ( 6:9 ). The Lord Jesus would have never taken those loaves and fish from the boy’s hand unless there had been a complete willingness on his part. Here was a youth who was involved in a situation of responsibility. When Andrew pointed him out, the lad knew that he could be of service and he wasn’t slow to make that known. Responsibility has been defined as “our response to God’s ability.” Somehow this lad knew that in the hands of the Savior that little parcel of food could be sanctified and multiplied; so as soon as Andrew brought him to the Savior he acted with consummate responsibility.

### **1) The Lad Yielded His All to the Savior**

“... Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish ...” ( 6:11 ). Notice that the loaves and the fish did not change or multiply at that particular moment. The emphasis here is on the willingness of Christ to accept the five loaves and two small fish.

What a glorious lesson this is for all who have eyes to see and ears to hear! Jesus Christ takes what we give to Him. It does not matter how small our contribution might be: He takes what we have. Once the talents are in His hands He sanctifies them by the power of His cleansing rife and love. We cannot read this story and have an excuse for holding back our five loaves and two small fish. We may sense our unworthiness and our utter sinfulness, but if we are prepared to yield our all to Jesus that is all that matters.

### **2. Illustrate**

### **2) The Lad Trusted His All to the Savior**

“And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down ...” ( 6:11 ). In the distribution the miracle took place. As He broke those loaves subtraction became multiplication; a lad’s lunch became a meal for over five thousand men, women and children (see Matt. 14:21 ). By His creative power, the Lord of all life compressed into a moment of time what takes months to happen naturally. This is what miracle is all about. The important thing about this story is that

the faith of the boy was involved in this miracle. It takes no imagination to realize that the boy was aware that the Savior was about to feed a multitude with his lunch; yet without hesitation he yielded his all and trusted his all to Christ. God honored that simple faith, and hungry people were

### **3. Illustrate**

## **Conclusion**

We have seen what we mean by the gift of youth. All God wants is the availability, the potentiality, and the responsibility of an individual who is prepared to give his all. If we do our part God will do the rest and the world will be blessed.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Amplify**

... What is the meaning of life? Is it how long we live, how famous we become, or how rich we are at retirement? Jesus says that the measure of life is in our service, the good we do for others. Out of this spirit has come every Christian college and school, orphanage and beneficent work in the world. George W. Truitt, the great Baptist preacher, said, "It is not the talents one has that makes him great, however many and brilliant they may be; it is not the vast amount of study that gives mental enrichment to the mind and rife; it is not in shining social qualities; it is not the large accumulation of wealth that secures peace and honor. In none of these, measured by God's standards, does greatness reside.... True greatness consists in the use of all the talents one has in unselfish ministry to others."

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 12/86.19).

### **2. Illustrate**

... "At a meeting held near Oxford, England in connection with the building of a new church, a speaker made an eloquent appeal for funds, urging the audience to give all they had upon them. All were impressed, and among them was a small boy who, when the offering was taken, placed a top and five marbles in the plate. In the vestry afterward one of the ushers was inclined to ridicule the boy's offering; but the chairman said, "I will give you twenty pounds for the top, and will take the marbles to Oxford, and will get five of my friends to give five pounds each for them." He wrote out his check for twenty pounds, and in due course forwarded the other twenty-five pounds. At the stonelaying, there was placed under the principal stone the top and five marbles from the little boy who gave all he had. So a little given for Jesus' sake will be made much by Him.

*The Family Herald and Weekly Star*. Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 305. Used by permission.

### **3. Illustrate**

... A boy at school sensed the urge to start what he called "The Order of the Mustard Seed." He gathered a group of lads around him and they began to pray that God would give them faith as a grain of mustard seed. That boy became Count Zinzendorf, and his little group was the beginning of what eventually became the Moravian movement which has pioneered missionary work worldwide. There was another little boy who gave his all to Jesus Christ while still on a farm, milking cows in the humblest of circumstances. God took that life and through it has reached more people than any other person in this generation. That little boy is the man we know today as Evangelist Billy Graham.

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## Forty-one Sermon

### FORTY-ONE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOUTH

**SUBJECT:** The Role of Youth

**READING:** 1 Timothy 4:10–16

**TEXT:** “Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” ( 4:12 ).

### Introduction

Our text is an appropriate word for young people launching out upon life’s responsibilities. The young are not to be despised: God has a role for them to play—something every new generation needs to know. There are three aspects of this role:

- I. Youth Has Something to Offer ( 4:12 )
  1. The Example of Conversation ( 4:12 )
  2. The Example of Conduct ( 4:12 )
  3. The Example of Compassion ( 4:12 )
  4. The Example of Confidence ( 4:12 )
  5. The Example of Chastity ( 4:12 )

- II. Youth Has Something to Suffer ( 4:10 )
  - 1. There is the Tyranny of Resistance ( 4:10 )
  - 2. There is the Agony of Reproach ( 4:10 )
- III. Youth Has Something to Master ( 4:13–15 )
  - 1. There is the Discipline of Time ( 4:13 )
  - 2. There is the Development of Gift ( 4:14 )
  - 3. There is the Dedication of Life ( 4:15–16 )

## Conclusion

Jesus Christ is calling for young people who will not be despised in their generation. The secret of such character is a personal relationship to a living Lord, and a quality of serving based on obedience to what He would have them do.

## FORTY-ONE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** TRUTH FOR YOUTH

**SUBJECT:** The Role of Youth

**READING:** 1 Timothy 4:10–16

**TEXT:** “Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” ( 4:12 ).

## Introduction

For young people launching out upon life’s responsibilities, Paul has an appropriate word to say in the passage before us. “Let no man despise your youth,” exhorts the apostle, and then proceeds to show why the young are not to be despised: they have a role to play—something which each new generation needs to be know.

When youthful achievements are remembered it is well to recall that Mozart was just seven when his first composition was published. Benjamin Franklin was a newspaper columnist at 16. At 22 Gladstone was a member of Parliament and at 24 Lord of the Treasury. William Pitt II was 24 when he became Prime Minister of Great Britain. Washington was a dished colonel at 22. Napoleon commanded the army of France at 25. Before he was 17 Shelley was already an author and had translated half of Pliny’s *Natural History* . John Calvin wrote his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* before he was 23. Spurgeon, the renowned Baptist preacher, was drawing the largest audiences of his generation before he was 21. How relevant, then, are Paul’s words!

## I. Youth Has Something to Offer

“Let no man despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity” ( 4:12 ). Paul was addressing these words to a young man who was about to assume pastoral responsibilities of the church in Ephesus, as great metropolis. Because of his youth, Timothy stood in danger of being despised or looked down upon. Paul, therefore, exhorts him to be an example, a pattern, a model of the believers in a fivefold way:

## **1) The Example of Conversation**

“... be an example ... in word ...” ( 4:12 ). Timothy was to watch his speech rife. He was to recognize that “Death and life are in the power of the tongue” ( Prov. 18:21 ). Like the psalmist, he was to pray this prayer daily, “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth. Keep watch over the door of my lips” ( Ps. 141:3 ).

Never before has youth had so much to say as today. Thinking has been shaped in our homes, our churches, on our campuses, and in the country generally by the conversation of youth. There are many reasons for this. The mass media has made knowledge instantly available. Social pressures have also had a contribution; and the permissive climate of contemporary life has lifted the restrictions that once silenced our young people. However it has come about, it is nonetheless an outstanding phenomenon of the day in which we live. Youth is speaking out. The question is, what are they saying? What effect will their words have upon the world they are shaping? That is where Christian youth has its golden opportunity. God has spoken His final word in Jesus Christ (see Heb. 1:1–2 ). It is the only word that can bring salvation, peace, and harmony to a sin-ridden world. That redemptive word can be relayed by young men and women who are prepared to be conversationalists for Jesus Christ. All rife is shaped by words and our generation is no exception. What a responsibility rests upon the young to speak, and to speak well of Jesus Christ

## **2) The Example of Conduct**

“... be an example ... in conduct” ( 4:12 ). Timothy was to remember that he was under the watchful eyes of young and old; therefore, his behavior had to be exemplary as befitted a man of God.

What a word this is for the young of our day! Youth makes an impact in our modern times by their behavior patterns, e.g., the style of hair, dress code, music, speech, etc. Historians will someday record that this was the age when young people “did their thing.” Here is where Christian youth can have its moment of destiny. Jesus Christ said that believers were to be as “... the salt of the earth... [and] the light of the world ...” ( Matt. 5:13–14 ). Salt arrests corruption and light dispels darkness. This is what we are called to be in our homes, our churches, our offices, and in every area of national life. Conduct must never be neutral: it is either redemptive or destructive.

## **3) The Example of Compassion**

“... be an example ... in love ...” ( 4:12 ). This is the great word of the Bible—particularly in the New Testament. Such love comes only from heaven; it is the nature of God, mediated through Jesus Christ, and imparted by the Holy Spirit. Timothy was to show this love to God, to his fellow Christians, and to non-believers.

We live in a world of lovelessness today. Hatred, racism, poverty, and bloodshed are all about us. There is only one cure for these evils: the love of God released in redemptive action. It is an interesting fact of history that all the major revivals that have swept churches, countries, and continents in the past have been channeled through young people. Joel prophesied this when he said that the Spirit of God would be poured out upon all flesh so that sons and daughters would prophesy, and young men would see visions (see Acts 2:16–17 ). Renewal comes through prophetic vision and action, and young people can make a difference in this area.

## **4) The Example of Confidence**

“... be an example ... in faith ... ( 4:12 ). The faith spoken of here is trust in God. Timothy was to believe God, for “... with God all things are possible” ( Matt. 19:26 ). Here again is a word to our contemporary youth. In an age of skepticism and faithlessness we need to return to God, His Word, and His church. without faith it is impossible to please God (see Heb. 11:6 ), to establish the home, the church, or the nation. Our whole democracy was founded on the God in whom we trust. We must recapture this faith by ‘looking unto Jesus, the

author and finisher of our faith ...” ( Heb. 12:2 ), and by hearing and obeying the Word of God, which is the channel of faith. Faith is the victory that overcomes the world (see 1 John 5:4 ). It is something to cherish and to share.

## **5) The Example of Chastity**

“... be an example ... in purity” ( 4:12 ). Timothy was to conduct himself in such a way that his character would be honorable before men and blameless before God. In an age of permissiveness and relativistic values, we need an army of young people who are going to reveal the character of God in terms of holy living. We need young men and women who can demonstrate that laughter can be holy, love can be holy, sex can be holy, pleasure can be holy, and business can be holy. While we are encouraged by youthful protests against pornography and other forms of immorality, we need still more examples of chastity and purity in our time.

## **II. Youth Has Something to Suffer.**

Paul reminds Timothy that “... we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe” ( 4:10 ). Timothy was to realize from the start that his trust in God was going to meet with opposition and rejection from many of his contemporaries. This is the way it has been throughout the centuries. No one can stand for the quality of life which youth has to offer without facing suffering and sacrifice.

### **1) There is the Tyranny of Resistance**

“... we ... labor ... because we trust in the living God ...” ( 4:10 ). The word “labor” here means “toiling against odds,” “working against opposition.” Timothy was being warned that Christian living and witness would not always meet with public approval. He would face the tyranny of resistance from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

What was true in his day is just as true today. This is where we need the reality of Christian experience and the power of Jesus Christ in our lives. Let us not fool ourselves. Even in this day of so-called “tolerance” God is hated, Christ is hated, and the gospel is hated. The Bible says: “... the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him ...” ( 1 Cor. 2:14 ); and again: “... the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” ( Rom. 8:7 ). In fact, “... friendship with the world is enmity with God. Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” ( James 4:4 ). To face this tyranny of resistance is a constant battle requiring not only the armor of God, but also the power of Christ. A dead fish will swim with the current, but it takes a live one to swim against it. Are we prepared for the ministry of suffering? Remember the apostle said, “... it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” ( Phil. 1:29 ).

### **2) There is the Agony of Reproach**

“... we ... suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God ...” ( 4:10 ). Timothy was called upon to face the fact that, like his Savior before him, he was to face shame, embarrassment, and reproach. This has been true throughout the history of the church. Sometimes it is open and brazen; other times it is silent and subtle—but just as hurtful. As we read the Gospels we note the jibes that were leveled at our Savior. People mocked Him in that day and they mock Him in ours, along with His followers. We have to be ready to face the agony of reproach. Thank God for those who will take a stand, who are prepared to endure the cross and despise the shame.

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **III. Youth Has Something to Master**

“Till I come, give attention to reading.... Do not neglect the gift that is in you.... give yourself entirely ...” ( 4:13–15 ). If Timothy was going to prove that youth should not be despised, then he had to offer something, suffer something, but also master something. The passage before us suggests three areas that youth can master in order to find fulfillment in life:

#### **1) There is the Discipline of Time**

“... give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” ( 4:13 ). Timothy was to give time to the public and private reading of Scripture, to the exhortation of his congregation, and to teaching. The application here is primarily pastoral, but the principles apply to all of Christian Life. What he is saying is that we must give due attention to reading and to all that flow out of a Life of study. Nothing is more tragic than to shrivel up in the areas of our thinking, reading, and study. Indeed, the whole purpose of early education is that we might set the pattern for disciplined study for the rest of our lives. The Bible is true when it says, “... as [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he ...” ( Pr. 23:7 ). We are only the measure of our capacity to think and to go on thinking. When this process dies we are no longer the people God intended us to be.

#### **2. Illustrate**

#### **2) There is the Development of Gift**

“Do not neglect the gift that is in you ...” ( 4:14 ). Undoubtedly, Paul is here referring to the one distinctive talent which was recognized by the elders at the time of his ordination to the ministry, and the apostle was concerned lest Timothy might neglect this distinctive gift which God had given him to use in the ministry.

It is so easy for a minister or layman to lose the special abilities that God has given him by failure to exercise those powers in the cause of the gospel. Every person has a distinctive gift. There is something which God can do in us and through us that He cannot perform through anyone else. Therefore it is imperative that we develop that particular talent. To wrap it up in a sweat cloth and bury it in the ground is to merit our Lord’s condemnation in the day of judgment. We must see, then, that we develop the powers that God has given us and then use them for His glory and the good of man.

#### **3) There is the Dedication of Life**

“Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself ...” ( 4:15–16 ). Timothy was to think through all that Paul had said and then to dedicate himself not only to teaching, but to the One from whom such teaching had come, even the Lord Jesus Christ. Truth is only as sure as its source. Life is only as real as its source. Power is only as authentic as its source. When we dedicate ourselves we must think of the source of truth, of life, of power, and of all things good. Our commitment must be, first of all, to God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, and made real through the Holy Spirit. Youth cannot offer anything, suffer anything, or master anything without commitment to Christ.

#### **3. Illustrate**

### **Conclusion**

Jesus Christ is calling for young people who will face the challenge of their role in the contemporary life of today, who will be an example to their generation. The secret of such character and quality of living and serving is a personal relationship to the One who came, died, and rose again that we might have “... life, and ... have it

more abundantly” ( John 10:10 ). We must respond, as did the apostle Paul on the Damascus road, and say, “... Lord, what do You want me to do? ...” ( Acts 9:6)?

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Years ago a small group of Japanese believers were heckled and abused whenever they assembled to worship the Savior. But the persecutors could not shake the faith of the new converts. Each time the Christians gathered, the mob would throw stones at them, but they still fairly continued to have their weekly meetings. Eventually the opposition became so great that the outdoor services had to be temporarily abandoned. Later, when a time of relative peace and tolerance had come to the community, many were wened to Christ. Returning to the spot where the believers had frequently been attacked, they began to pick up some of the rocks. Using them as part of the building materials, they constructed a small house of worship, rejoicing that God had worked all things together for good. Jesus says that His followers will meet with suffering and heartache, but He admonishes them not to be discouraged. Earth’s sorrows are meant to be stepping stones in the process of sanctification. Indeed, we “must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God” ( Acts 14:22 ). Glorifying in affliction will turn our troubles into spiritual triumphs!

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 3/86.3).

### **2. Illustrate**

... Some years ago *Newsweek* printed a clever ad entitled “ *Advice to a ( Bored ) Young Man.* ” It read as follows: Died, age 20; buried, age 60. The sad epitaph of too many Americans. Mummification sets in on too many young men at an age when they should be ripping the world wide open. For example: Many people reading this page are doing so with the aid of bifocals. Inventor? *B. Franklin* , age 79. The presses that printed this page were powered by electricity. One of the first *harnessers*? *B. Franklin* , age 40. Some are reading this on the campus of one of the Ivy League universities. Founder? *B. Franklin* , age 45. Others, in a library. Who founded the first library in America? *B. Franklin* , age 25. Some got their copy through the U.S. Mail. Its father? *B. Franklin* , age 31. Now, think fire. Who started the first fire department, invented the lightning rod, designed a heating stove still in use today? *B. Franklin*, ages 31, 43, 36. Wit. Conversationalist. Economist. Philosopher. Diplomat. Favorite of the capitals of Europe. Journalist. Printer. Publisher. Linguist (spoke and wrote five languages). Advocate of paratroopers (from balloons) a century before the airplane was invented. All this until age 84. And he had exactly two years of formal schooling. It’s a good bet that you already have more sheer knowledge than Franklin ever had when he was your age. Perhaps you think there’s no use trying to think of anything new, that everything’s been done. Wrong. The simple, agrarian America of Franklin’s day didn’t begin to need the answers we need today. *Go do something about it!* Tear out this page and read it on your 84th birthday. Ask yourself what took over in your life, indolence or ingenuity?

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### **3. Illustrate**

... It is estimated there are some sixty thousand serious mountain climbers in the United States, and within that number a small elite group known as “hard men.” For them, climbing mountains and scaling sheer rock faces is a part of their whole commitment to life. Their ultimate experience is called free soloing”.. climbing with no equipment and no safety ropes. John Baker is considered by many to be the best of the hard men. HIS skill has been acquired through commitment, dedication and training. When he isn’t climbing, he can be found in his California home hanging by his fingertips to strengthen his arms and hands. Where are the hard men and women for Jesus? Where are those who will bring all their energies to bear for the sake of Christ? That’s the

kind of people it is going. to take to spread the gospel throughout the world in these closing years of the twentieth century.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 9/87.11).

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## Forty-two Sermon

### FORTY-TWO, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** GOD'S MAN

**SUBJECT:** God's Man: Introduction

**READING:** 1 Kings 9:4 ; 11:4 , 6 , 38 ; 14:8 ; 15:5 ; Acts 13:22

**TEXT:** "... I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will" ( Acts 13:22 ).

### Introduction

The life of David is one of the most interesting, inspiring, and instructive of all the narratives in the Bible. Though he was guilty of adultery, murder, and many other deadly sins, yet he reflected aspects of the divine nature so that God regarded him as a man after His own heart. In this introductory study of this great leader, observe:

- I. The Integrity of His Heart ( 1 Kings 9:4 )
  1. Openness of Heart ( Ps. 26:1–2 )
  2. Brokenness of Heart ( Ps. 51:17 )
  3. Truthfulness of Heart ( Ps. 15:1–2 )
  4. Holiness of Heart ( Ps. 24:3–4 )

- II. The Maturity of His Heart ( 1 Kings 11:4 )
  - 1. The Perfection of His Walk ( Ps. 101:2 )
  - 2. The Perfection of His Worship ( Pss. 1–150 )
  - 3. The Perfection of His Witness ( Ps. 40 )
- III. The Fidelity of His Heart ( 1 Kings 14:8 )
  - 1. His Allegiance to God ( Ps. 86:11 )
  - 2. His Obedience to God ( Ps. 40:8 )

## Conclusion

We have considered three characteristics of “the heart” experience of this sweet singer of Israel. A person whose integrity, maturity, and fidelity matches that of David is an individual whose life is a powerful testimony to the world of God’s saving grace. May He make us men and women through whom the beauty of Jesus can be seen.

## FORTY-TWO, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** GOD’S MAN

**SUBJECT:** God’s Man: Introduction

**READING:** 1 Kings 9:4 ; 11:4 , 6 , 38 ; 14:8 ; 15:5 ; Acts 13:22

**TEXT:** “... I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will” ( Acts 13:22 ).

## Introduction

The life of David is one of the most illustrious, interesting, inspiring, and instructive of all the narratives in the Bible. His character is more fully portrayed than any other person in the Old Testament. Although David was guilty of adultery, murder, and many others of the deadly sins, yet he was said to be “... a man after [God’s] own heart ...” ( Acts 13:22 ).

We shall understand this tribute to David’s life if we remember that the person who lives closest to God’s heart is not necessarily the one who lives most virtuously, but rather the one in whose life the moral struggle has been most faithfully maintained. There are people who may be more virtuous, because it is easier for them to live that way; but there is something heroic about the man who, all his days, has had to fight with moral infirmities and passion; who, though often conquered and crushed, has gotten up again with resolve in his heart and victory in his life.

David, the shepherd, singer, and sovereign, was such a man. He lived so close to God that he reflected aspects of the divine heart in the manner of his integrity, maturity, and fidelity. Solomon tells us that “... as [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he” ( Prov. 23:7 ). Let us then consider the “heart” experience of David as an introduction to the more general studies that follow.

## I. The Integrity of His Heart

“... David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that [was] commanded ...” ( 1 Kings 9:4 ). The word “integrity” here denotes simplicity and is a key to the understanding of David’s PERSONAL LIFE, as revealed in the Psalms. Notice that he was a man who knew something of:

### **1) Openness of Heart**

“Vindicate me, O Lord, For I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip. Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; *Try my mind and my heart* ” ( Ps. 26:1–2 ). It is generally supposed that this appeal to heaven was written by David at the time when Ish-bosheth was assassinated by Bannah and Rechab, when David was protesting his innocence of complicity in that treacherous murder. With absolute integrity he calls upon God to search him thoroughly, to make a minute survey.

C. H. Spurgeon points out that there are three types of trial that are suggested in the original:; i.e., trial by touching, trial by smelling, and trial by fire. The psalmist was so clear of the charge laid against him that he submitted himself unconditionally to any form of examination which the Lord might see fit to employ. On another occasion David could pray, ‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting’ ( Ps. 139:23–24 ). The dominant thought in this psalm is the omniscience and omnipresence of God. David knew that he could not hide from those eyes that burn as a flame of fire so he opens his heart to divine examination that he might be free of any wickedness that would lurk in the inner recesses of his being.

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **2) Brokenness of Heart**

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, A broken and a contrite heart—These, O God, You will not despise” ( Ps. 51:17 ). These are words that were wrung from David’s heart after his fearful moral lapse. They occur in the prayer-psalm of penitence which he poured out before God after his serious sins of immorality, adultery, and murder.

There is a self-righteousness which would never descend to immorality of this kind; yet reflects a heart of stone almost incapable of penitence. God can do nothing with such hardness of heart. On the other hand, where there is brokenness and contrition there can be cleansing and forgiveness.

### **3) Truthfulness of Heart.**

When David asks, “Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle? Who may dwell in Your holy hill?” he replies, “He who walks uprightly, And works righteousness, And speaks the truth in his heart” ( Ps. 15:1–2 ). David wrote this psalm to depict the worthy worshiper. Though he lived hundreds of years before Christ, yet he was aware of the fact that “... those who worship [God] must worship in spirit and truth” ( John 4:24 ). God cannot tolerate a lying heart in His presence. As the sweet singer of Israel puts it in another place, God desires “... truth in the inward parts ...” ( Ps. 51:6 ).

### **4) Holiness of Heart.**

Once again, David is thinking of God’s holy presence, so he asks, “... who may stand in His holy place?” Back comes the answer, “He who has clean hands and a pure heart ...” ( Ps. 24:3–4 ). No wonder he cried out under the burden of his sin, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me” ( Ps. 51:10 ).

Are we characterized by such integrity? Is our heart open, broken, truthful, and clean? Can God say of our individual life, “I have found a man after Mine own heart, which shall fulfill all my will”?

## 2. Illustrate

### II. The Maturity of His Heart.

“... when Solomon was old, ... his heart was not loyal [or perfect] to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David” ( 1 Kings 11:4 ). The word “perfect” means “finished” or “whole,” and suggests to us the maturity of David’s SPIRITUAL LIFE. To demonstrate this we turn, once again, to the Psalms, where we see something of the perfection of David’s walk, worship, and witness.

#### 1) The Perfection of His Walk.

Addressing God, David says, “I will behave wisely in a perfect way.... I will walk within my house with a perfect heart” ( Ps. 101:2 ). C. H. Spurgeon remarks that “this is just such a psalm as the man after God’s own heart would compose when he was about to become king. It is David all over, straightforward, resolute, devout; there is no trace of policy or vacillations—the Lord has appointed him to be king, and he knows it, therefore, he purposes in all things to behave as becomes a monarch whom the Lord himself has chosen” (The *Treasury of David*, vol. 4. 1950 ed. Reprinted—London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1957), p. 239.

When David says, “..I will walk within my house with a perfect heart” ( Ps. 101:2 ) he realizes that piety must begin at home. The reality of a man is what he is in his heart and in his home. He cannot sing in the choir and yet sin in the office. He cannot be a saint in public and act like a devil at home.

Although David failed tragically at one point in his reign, yet there is every reason to believe that deep down in his heart he really wanted to walk wisely and perfectly before his God.

#### 2) The Perfection of His Worship

( Ps. 1–150 ). This is where we are overwhelmed in attempting to select the best expressions of David’s wholehearted worship. All his psalms are replete with expressions of adoration, thanksgiving, praise, and worship. For example: “I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works” ( Ps. 9:1 ); and again: “I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, And I will glorify Your name forevermore” ( Ps. 86:12 ); and still again: “Praise the Lord! I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation” ( Ps. 111:1 ).

Isaac Walton contends that David was said to be a man after God’s own heart because he abounded more and more with thankfulness than any other that is mentioned in Holy Scripture. He points out that in the Psalms there is such a commixture of his confessing of sins and unworthiness, and such a thankfulness of God’s pardon and mercies, as made him wholly acceptable to God.

One of the appalling evidences of immaturity in Christian experience today is the imperfection of worship. Gordon Dahl defines it this way: “Most middle-class Americans tend to worship their work, to work at their play, and to play at their worship. As a result, their meanings and values are distorted. Their relationships disintegrate faster than they can keep them in repair and their lifestyles resemble a cast of characters in search of a plot” ( *Sermons Illustrated*, 8/87.30). It is pathetic at times to listen to the attempts of some to offer their prayers and praises. In the light of David’s devotional life, they have hardly begun. How tragic this is in a day when we have the full revelation of God as it is in Jesus Christ!

3 ) *The Perfection of His Witness* Perhaps Psalm 40 seems to express David’s witnessing heart best. Look at verses 1–3 : “I waited patiently for the Lord; And He inclined to me, And heard my cry. He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, Out of the miry clay, And set my feet upon a rock, And established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth—Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the Lord.” In view of

such an experience of deliverance, direction, and devotion, David goes on to say in verse 10 : “I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth From the great congregation.”

This is true maturity of experience. No one who has experienced God in such a deep way can be possessive of the gospel and hide it in their heart. It must be declared to all. It was the Lord Jesus who taught the same principle when He said, “... out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” ( Matt. 12:34 ).

### **3. Illustrate**

## **III. The Fidelity of His Heart**

“... My servant David ... kept My commandments and ... followed Me with all his heart, to do only what was right in My eyes” ( 1 Kings 14:8 ). The phrase, “followed Me” indicates a “going on after,” and suggests to us the fidelity of David in his PRACTICAL LIFE. This fidelity expresses itself first in David’s allegiance, and then in his obedience to God.

### **1) His Allegiance to God.**

In a beautiful prayer recorded in Psalm 86:11 , David says, “Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.” A person with a divided heart can never be faithful to God; so David pleads for a united heart. The idea behind the word “unite” is that of union or conjunction, and suggests unity of purpose. As an adverb, the same word is rendered “together” and is used three times in Genesis 22 , where “... the two of them [Abraham and Isaac] went together” (vv. 6 , 8 , 19 ). It is the opposite of being doubleminded.

True allegiance, then, springs from a heart that is united to know God’s way, to walk in His truth, and to fear His name. No wonder God could say of HIS servant: “... My servant David ... kept My commandments and ... followed Me with all his heart, to do only what was right in My eyes” ( 1 Kings 14:8 ).

With all his wisdom and privileges, Solomon did not follow the Lord in the same way. It is recorded of him that he “... did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David” ( 1 Kings 11:6 ). In a day of faithlessness and irresponsibility on every hand, we need David’s kind of allegiance to God.

### **2) His Obedience to God.**

In his psalm of testimony ( Ps. 40 ), David could say, “I delight to do Your will. O my God, And Your law is within my heart” ( v. 8 ). The literal translation of that last phrase is, “Thy law is in the midst of my bowels.” The Old Testament writers—and later the Greeks—located all feeling in the intestines. So the thought here then is that obedience to God was something of which he was always acutely

The writer of the book of Kings supports this in a comprehensive testimony to David’s obedience. He says: “... David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” ( 1 Kings 15:5 ). Even in light of the grievous sin which David committed, the Spirit of God has recorded that the manner of his obedience was that he “... did what was right in the eyes of the Lord ...” The measure of his obedience was that he “... had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life ...” ( 1 Kings 15:5 ). Even when he did fall he got up again,, sought cleansing and forgiveness, and pursued the same path of obedience.

### **4. Illustrate**

## Conclusion

We have considered three characteristics of “the heart” experience of this sweet singer of Israel. In the integrity of his heart we have seen something of his personal life; in the maturity of his heart we have observed something of his spiritual life; and in the fidelity of his heart we have noted something of his practical life of allegiance and obedience. Little wonder that God could say, through the lips of the apostle Paul: “... I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will” ( Acts 13:22 ). Then the apostle continues: ‘From this man’s seed, according to the promise, God raised up for Israel a Savior-Jesus” ( Acts 13:23 ). A person whose integrity, maturity, and fidelity matches that of David is an individual through whose life God can reveal His Son Jesus, in all His saving grace, to a world of desperate need. As the chorus puts it, “What the world needs is Jesus, Just a glimpse of Him.” God make us men and women through whom the beauty of Jesus can be seen.

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... Lafayette tells us that he was once shut up in a little room in a gloomy prison for a great while. In the door of his little cell was a very small hole cut. At that hole, a soldier was placed night and day to watch him. All he could see was the soldier’s eye; but that eye was always there. Day and night, every moment when he looked up, he always saw that eye. Oh, he said, it was dreadful! There was no escape, no hiding; when he lay down and when he rose up, that eye was watching him.

J. H. Bornberger, Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 505.

We can never flee God’s presence (see Ps. 139:7–12 ). His eyes are constantly upon us—seeking, searching, probing, loving, guiding, correcting. With Sarai, Abraham’s wife, we can call the Lord, “You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees” ( Gen. 16:13 ; see also Heb. 4:13 ). One day the eye of God will be upon the sinner in judgment. How dreadful an occasion that will be!

### 2. Illustrate

... When the father of the great Emmanuel Kant was an old man he made a perilous journey through the forests of Poland to his native country of Silesia. On the way he encountered a band of robbers who demanded all his valuables, finally asking: “Have you given us all?” and only letting him go when he answered, “All.” When safely out of their sight his hand touched something hard in the hem of his robe. It was his gold, sewn there for safety and quite forgotten by him in his fear and confusion. At once he hurried back to find the robbers, and having found them, he said meekly: “I have told you what was not true; it was unintentional. I was too terrified to think. Here, take the gold in my robes.” Then to the old man’s astonishment nobody offered to take his gold. Presently one went and brought back his purse. Another restored his book of prayers, while still another led his horse toward him and helped him to mount. They then unitedly entreated his blessing, and watched him slowly ride away. Goodness had triumphed over evil.

J. A. Clark. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, p. 1529.

### 3. Illustrate

... A man once laid a piece of chocolate candy on a table. Then, picking up an ant, he put it near the delicious bon-bon. He was surprised to see it take a single bite and then hurry off to inform the rest of the colony. Soon the little creature returned, followed by a long train of other ants who enjoyed the treat with him.

Many Christians who have tasted that the Lord is good can learn a lesson from that little insect! Having found God's rich supply of grace, they ought to spread the glad tidings to others.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 4/86.29).

#### 4. Illustrate

... It is said of Henry of Bavaria that at one time, becoming weary of court life, he determined to enter a monastery. When he presented himself to Prior Richard, the faithful monk gave him the strict rules of the order. The king listened eagerly and enthusiastically expressed pleasure at the prospects of such complete consecration. Then the prior insisted that obedience, implicit and expressed, was the first requisite of sainthood. The monarch promised to follow his will in every detail. "Then go back to your throne and your duty in the station God assigned you," was the prior's word to him. The king took up his scepter again and from then until he died his people said of him, "King Henry has learned to govern by learning to obey."

*The Treasury*. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7, 700 Illustrations*, p. 406.

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## Forty-three Sermon

### FORTY-THREE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** GOD S MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Discovers His Man

**READING:** [1 Samuel 16](#)

**TEXT:** "... the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" ( [16:7](#) ).

#### Introduction

God is always looking for men and women whom He can "set apart" for some specific service. This raises the question as to how He discovers His man. The chapter before us gives the answer and illustrates governing principles on how God chose David.

I. God Discovered Character in David ( [16:13](#) )

1. Fellowship in the Spirit ( 16:13 )
2. Faithfulness in the Spirit ( 16:18 )
3. Fearlessness in the Spirit ( 16:18 )

## II. God Discovered Capability in David ( 16:18 )

1. A Capable Shepherd ( 16:11 )
2. A Capable Singer ( 2 23:1 )
3. A Capable Soldier ( 16:18 )

## III. God Discovered Comeliness in David ( 16:12 )

1. Physically Healthy ( 16:12 )
2. Physically Happy ( 16:12 )
3. Physically Handsome ( 16:12 )

### **Conclusion**

We end where we started: God is still looking for men and women whom He can set apart for some specific service. What is He going to discover as He comes to Your life? May your prayer be:

Lord, make me useful to Thee,

Send now thy Spirit to me;

Lord, make me useful to Thee.

Lord, make me useful to Thee.

E.H.G. Sargent

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## **FORTY-THREE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** GOD'S MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Discovers His Man

**READING:** [1 Samuel 16](#)

**TEXT:** "... the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" ( [16:7](#) ).

### **Introduction**

God is always looking for men and women whom He can “set apart” for some specific service. This is a solemn thought, when we remember that it can be said of each one of us, “There’s a work for Jesus none but you can do.” What a tragic thing it must be to be found unprofitable!

This, of course, raises the question as to how God discovers His man. The chapter before us gives the answer, for here is illustrated governing principles which determined God’s choice of David— “... a man after God’s own heart ...” ( Acts 13:22 ). As we examine what God pleurably discovered in this lad of fifteen years of age we notice that:

## **I. God Discovered Character in David**

“... the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward ...” ( 16:13 ). In SPIRIT David was “... a man after God’s own heart ...” ( Acts 13:22 ); he had a spirit which was alive unto God. In other words, before the day of anointing, referred to in this chapter ( 16:13 ), David experimentally knew the three essentials of spiritual character.

### **1) Fellowship in the Spirit**

“... the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward ...” ( 16:13 ). God was satisfied with David’s heart experience, and so witnessed to the fact by pouring out His Spirit upon him.

Notice in our reading that when Samuel interviewed David’s seven brothers God had to remind the prophet that what mattered first was not appearance, but experience. “... the Lord said to Samuel, “... man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” ( 16:7 ). In this respect God had found a man after His own heart, who would fulfill all His will. There was that “otherness” about David; in his presence one could sense God.

There are other significant inferences given us in the Scriptures which lead us to conclude that, though a lad, David had a real experience of God in the fellowship of the Spirit. Consider:

#### **A) HIS DEVOTIONAL LIFE.**

Here we can draw on Psalm 23 where we read: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (vv. 1–4 ). It is generally believed that this psalm was composed by David in the days when he shepherded his father’s sheep. What depths of devotion and spirituality are reflected in these beautiful words!

#### **B) HIS VOCATIONAL LIFE.**

When later he was brought before King Saul, David could testify of his experience in the Spirit, when he was up against danger and death. 1 Samuel 17:37 records his words: “... The Lord, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear ... will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine ...” Later, when facing Goliath, he could declare: “... I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel ...” ( 1 Sam. 17:45 ). Fellowship in the Spirit was the basis and foundation of his character.

### **2) Faithfulness in the Spirit.**

The testimony of others concerning David was that he was ‘ ... a man ... prudent [quick-witted] in speech ...’ ( 16:18 ). That expression is most enlightening and reveals something of the keenness, honesty, and

faithfulness of this young man's service, whether by life or by lip. Whatever he said or did was, in a very real sense, "... as to the Lord ..." ( 16:23 ). In the realm of the spirit, he was ever conscious and aware of the fear of the Lord and of his stewardship of faithfulness. It was because he was so faithful in that which was least that, later, God made him faithful in that which was great.

### **3) Fearlessness in the Spirit.**

David is spoken of as "... a mighty man of valor ..." ( 16:18 ). Even though a lad, he believed with all his heart that there is no danger in the path of duty. Later, when telling King Saul about his encounter with Goliath, he witnessed to his fearlessness in the Spirit. David could say: "... Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught it by its beard, and struck and killed it" ( 1 Sam. 17:34-35 ).

Solomon reminds us that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" ( Prov. 9:10 ).

#### **1. Illustrate**

In the purpose of God, David was set apart because there was discovered in him the sterling character which springs from fellowship, faithfulness, and fearlessness in the Holy Spirit.

## **II. God Discovered Capability in David.**

The "... son of Jesse ... who is skillful in playing ..." ( 16:18 ). Here was a young man with a soul for heavenly music. There can be no capability without sensitivity. In other words, in SOUL he was a man after God's own heart. Within the humble and mundane sphere in which he had been placed David saw to it that he was one hundred percent capable. He was:

### **1) A Capable Shepherd.**

When Samuel inquired about him he was informed, "... he [was] keeping the sheep ..." ( 16:11 ). Though he was the youngest of his brethren, he had showed himself so capable in the art of shepherd-hug that his father was happy to leave all his sheep in his care. There is an impressive reference in Chapter 17 which reveals how devoted to his job David was. Having been asked by his father to visit his brethren at the battle front we are told that "... David rose early in the morning [and] *left the sheep with a keeper* ..." ( 1 Sam. 17:20 ). He saw to it that a suitable worker came to take over the responsibility of shepherding before he left for other service.

### **2) A Capable Singer**

"... skillful in playing" ( 16:18 ). He is also spoken of in another place as "... the sweet psalmist [singer] of Israel" ( 2 Sam. 23:1 ). He was a capable musician, composer, and singer. He believed that God's endowments and gifts should be developed and exercised to the best of his capabilities.

### **3) A Capable Soldier**

"... a mighty man of valor, a man of war ..." ( 16:18 ). Moffatt renders these words as 'a brave man, a soldier.' He had proved himself an expert marksman with the sling, a fearless fighter with his shepherd's rod, and in all a capable soldier.

Such capability brought pleasure to the heart of God, not because of any intrinsic value in shepherding, singing, or soldiering, but because David was a man who believed and practiced “nothing but the best” for God. He strove for excellence both in character and capability. Truly, he was a man after God’s own heart!

### **III. God Discovered Comeliness in David**

“... Now [David] was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking. And the Lord said, ‘Arise, anoint him; for this is the one!’ ” ( 16:12 ). In body he was a man after God’s own heart. Far too little emphasis is placed upon the health of the body, in our Christian teaching. We fail to remember that when we are born again our bodies become the very temples of the Holy Spirit. We forget that the fact of the Incarnation places a sacred and high value on all believers’ bodies. This is why Paul tells us to “... glorify God in [our bodies] ...” ( 1 Cor. 6:20 ).

This view of our bodies casts no reflection upon those who, through no fault of their own, are called upon to suffer. Indeed, the suffering body can be the instrument of even greater glory. Paul experienced this when he proved that God’s grace is sufficient for an afflicted body, since divine strength is made perfect in human weakness. He could say, “... most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” ( 2 Cor. 12:9 ). David would have never become such a man of physical fitness and enduring strength, had he not cared for the body which God had given him. The chapter before us reveals that he was:

#### **1) Physically Healthy**

“... Now he was ruddy ...” ( 16:12 ). This word denotes that he was healthy and strong. Unless a Christian is caned upon, in some sovereign and mysterious way, to suffer physically, there is no reason why he shouldn’t be one hundred percent healthy. Indeed, it is his duty to God to see to it that he takes sufficient exercise to keep his body ruddy and healthy. Paul’s instructions to Timothy (who was undoubtedly threatened by physical weakness) was “... bodily exercise profits a little ...” ( 1 Tim. 4:8 ). Every believer should diligently seek, by good diet, adequate sleep, and proper recreation, to keep his body fit, ever available for God to use.

#### **2. Illustrate**

#### **2) Physically Happy**

“... with bright eyes” ( 16:12 ); “A lad with fine eyes” (Moffatt). This is a phrase which beautifully expresses the sparkle, alertness, and vitality which twinkle in the eyes of one who is physically healthy and happy. How many Christians fall short of this standard! Nor can this fact be attributed necessarily to suffering and physical weakness. Rather, it is often those who suffer excruciating pain who show forth the glory, joy, and radiance of the Lord Jesus. Their very suffering has enriched their spiritual experience, and this is reflected in their countenance. There should be a glow and a radiance about our appearance, witnessing to our physical and spiritual health. When Stephen appeared before the council to answer charges of blasphemy it is reported that all who looked ‘ ... steadfastly at him saw his face as the face of an angel’ ( Acts 6:15 ). The glory of the Lord shone through his physical appearance.

#### **3. Illustrate**

#### **3) Physically Handsome**

“... he was ... good-looking” ( 16:12 ). The term ‘handsome’ does not convey merely the thought of attractiveness. There is a sense in which a person can be attractive without being handsome. To be handsome means to be physically well-proportioned and looked after. How many Christians could look better if only they cared for themselves in a sensible and disciplined manner. Listen to Paul’s testimony on this point: “... I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” ( 1 Cor. 9:27 ). The apostle likens the subjection of his body to discipline and mastery with that of

athletes and fighters in the Olympic Games. He says, "... everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things ..." ( 1 Cor. 9:25 ). If these athletes did it for a crown of laurel leaves, how much more should we strive for an incorruptible crown? Whatever else this meant for the apostle, it certainly involved a constant concern. Indeed, he states that care in this realm of his life determined whether or not he was finally approved or disapproved at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

A surrendered Christian has yielded not only his spirit and soul, but also his body. That is the whole significance of Paul's appeal in Romans 12:1 where he says, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.'

## Conclusion

These qualities of character, capability, and comeliness are within the possibility of everyone; they are the result of the man or woman who is prepared to yield spirit, soul, and body unreservedly to the Holy Spirit. Only when God discovers a man or woman who will do this does He anoint them for specific service.

Having discovered his man, God commanded Samuel to fill his horn with oil, single out David among his brethren, and pour the oil of anointing upon his head. It was not until some years later that David fully realized all that for which God had apprehended him. At the same time, having been set apart by anointing, David knew that God had a great future for him, and quietly and obediently waited for the gradual unfolding of His will.

God is still looking for men and women whom He can set apart for some specific service. What is He going to discover as He comes to our lives? Oh, that our prayer might be:

Lord, make me useful to Thee,

Send now Thy Spirit to me;

Thy perfect will, in me fulfill,

Lord, make me useful to Thee.

E. H. G. Sargent

(Used by kind permission of Scripture Union from SU Songs & Choruses)

## Additional Annotations

### 1. Illustrate

... Of all the memorials in Westminster Abbey there is not one that gives a nobler thought than that inscribed on the monument to Lord Lawrence—simply his name, with the date of his death, and these words: "He feared man so little, because he feared God so much."

*Sunday School Chronicle*. Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 277. Used by permission.

### 2. Illustrate

... If you are a person of average size, you perform in each day of 24 hours the following functions: Your heart beats 103,689 times; your blood travels 168,000,000 miles. You breathe 23,040 times; you inhale 438 cubic feet of air. You eat between 3 and 4 pounds of food, and drink 3 quarts of liquid, and perspire about 2 pints through your skin; your body maintains a steady temperature of 98.6 degrees under all weather conditions. You generate 450 foot tons of energy; you speak 4800 words (men only), move and use over 700 muscles, use 7,000,000 brain cells, and walk 7 miles (women only in the home—NOT MEN). And this body belongs to God. With all this activity, how much of it is dedicated to the Creator? ... Make it a PRESENT to God today.

M. R. De Haan. *Our Daily Bread* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, n.d.).

Having presented our bodies “a living sacrifice” to God, let us take time to thank Him for them. Dr. Alton Ochsner of New Orleans, Louisiana, a distinguished physician, has said it well in an uplifting prayer entitled:

### **My Body**

Thank you, God, for this body.

For the things it can feel—

The things it can sense,

Thank you for the wondrous things it can do.

For the bright figure of my body at the day's beginning.

For its weariness at the day's end.

Thank you even for its pain—

If only to sting me into awareness of my own existence upon Earth.

I look upon Your creation in amazement.

For we are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made.

All its secret, silent machinery—the meshing and churning—

What a miracle of design!

Don't let me hurt it,

God Or scar it or spoil it,

Or overindulge or overdrive it.

But don't let me coddle it, either, God.

Let me love my body enough to keep it agile.

And able, and well, and strong.

### **1. Illustrate**

... It is related that one day Charles Finney looked at a scoffer, and the scoffer got saved; such was the power of the Spirit in a sanctified life. It is said that Evan Roberts used to look around an assembly, and souls came under conviction; such was the flow of the Spirit's power through a clean channel. How much of the Spirit-filled look is radiated through our faces?

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on the life of David see Vol. 6, Qtr. 4, Ch. 42

## Forty-four Sermon

### FORTY-FOUR, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** GOD'S MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Distinguishes HIS Man

**READING:** [1 Samuel 17:1-51](#) , [57-58](#)

**TEXT:** "... David prevailed over the philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David" ( [17:50](#) ).

### Introduction

When God has discovered His man He distinguishes him, He brings him into relief against the background of others. He points him out publicly as the man after His own heart. There are three ways in particular in which God disguises His man, and we shall see them as we follow God's dealings with David in this chapter:

- I. God Distinguished David by Employing Him ( [17:32](#) )
  1. Ready For Any Call ( [17:15](#) , [17](#) , [32](#) )
  2. Ready For Any Circumstance ( [17:20](#) )
  3. Ready For Any Cost ( [17:32](#) )
- II. God Distinguished David by Enabling Him ( [17:45-47](#) )
  1. He Fought Dissuasive Cowardice ( [17:24](#) )
  2. He Fought Destructive Criticism ( [17:28](#) )
  3. He Fought Deflective Concern ( [17:33](#) )
  4. He Fought Depressive Competence ( [17:44](#) )
- III. God Distinguished David by Exalting Him ( [17:57](#) )
  1. God is Honored ( [17:26](#) )

2. Others Are Helped ( 17:53 )

3. Self is Hidden ( 17:58 )

## Conclusion

We have seen that God distinguishes His man by employing him, enabling him, and exalting him. Have you proved this in your life, or are you too unready to be employed, too unwilling to be enabled, and too unusable to be exalted? God grant that we might come to the place where we can pray the words of Frances R. Havergal:

“O use me, Lord, use even me,

Just as Thou wilt, and when, and where;

Until Thy blessed face I see,

Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share.”

## FORTY-FOUR, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** GOD’S MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Distinguishes His Man

**READING:** [1 Samuel 17:1–51](#) , [57–58](#)

**TEXT:** “... David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. But there was no sword in the hand of David” ( [17:50](#) ).

## Introduction

When God has discovered His man He distinguishes him. In other words, He brings him into relief against the background of others. He points him out publicly as the man after His own heart. There are three ways in particular in which God distinguishes His man, and we shall see them as we follow God’s dealings with David in this chapter:

### I. God Distinguished David by Employing Him

“Then David said to Saul, ‘Let no man’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine’ ” ( [17:32](#) ). The significance of this becomes apparent when we realize that David was employed at a time when everyone else was failing God for fear of the enemy. Apart from David, there was no one upon whom God could lay HIS hand; so once again David is marked out as a man after God’s own heart.

Notice how God’s employment of David distinguished him as:

#### 1) Ready For Any Call

Recall three statements in this connection: verse 15 : “... David ... returned from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem”; verse 17 : “... Jesse said to ... David, ... ‘run to your brothers at the camp’ ” verse 32 : “... David said ... ‘your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’ ” It did not matter what the call was—to feed sheep, to find his brothers, or to fight the Philistine: David was ready. The apostle Paul has beautiful expectations of women who are true helpers in the life of the church. He says that they are to be “... faithful in

all things” ( 1 Tim. 3:11 ). This was David. Like the motto “R.F.A.” in the British Army during World War II, David was “ready for anything.” What a challenge to us!

## **2) Ready For Any Circumstance**

“... David rose early in the morning, ... and went as Jesse had commanded him” ( 17:20 ). There is nothing to indicate that David know what lay before him on that memorable day; but in spite of this he was not taken by surprise. As a man of God, he had learned how to react to any circumstance. This is why God employed him. The true test of ‘quality Christianity’ is not only action, but reaction. It is the ability to react to any situation as Jesus would react. How do we react to circumstances which happen to be outside of our plans?

## **3) Ready For Any Cost**

“Then David said to Saul, ‘Let no man’s heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine’ ” ( 17:32 ). When David told Saul that God would deliver him out of the hand of the Philistine ( 17:37 ) he was not presuming on God; rather, he was resting in the will of God. If the encounter with Goliath meant death for him he was prepared to pay the price; on the other hand, if it meant deliverance, David was just as ready.

How does this compare with our lives? Can we look into the face of the risen Savior and say, “Anywhere, at any time, at any cost, Lord”? When God employs a man He enables him.

### **1. Illustrate**

## **II. God Distinguished David by Enabling Him**

“Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s, and He will give you into our hands’ ” ( 17:45–47 ).

David was still very young and, humanly speaking, was not equal to what was demanded of him. However, David had long learned that “little is much when God is in it.” This was summed up in his words, “... I come ... in the name of the Lord of hosts ... ’ ( 17:45 ). With the Lord of Hosts, David knew that he was always in the majority. With God’s enabling grace:

### **1) He Fought Dissuasive Cowardice**

“And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were dreadfully afraid” ( 17:24 ). David’s answer to this was one of God-enabled COURAGE: “... who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” ( 17:26 ).

Solomon tells us that ‘The fear of man brings a snare ...’ ( Prov. 29:25 ). This is illustrated again and again throughout the Scriptures. Without doubt, it was largely because of the fear of man that Peter denied his Lord. He was scared lest he should be found to be one of the disciples. It was “... for fear of the Jews ...” that the disciples locked themselves in the Upper Room ( John 20:19 ). Cowardice is a very real problem that has to be faced and overcome by the divine enabling—if a person is ever to be used by God. One of the evidences of the anointing of the Holy Spirit in the early church was that the apostles could speak with boldness. God grant us to know a similar courage to David’s as we learn to count on the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

## **2. Illustrate**

### **2) He Fought Destructive Criticism**

“... Eliab his oldest brother ... said, ‘Why did you come down here? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle’ ” ( 17:28 ). David’s answer to this was one of God-enabled CHALLENGE: “... ‘what have I done now? Is there not a cause?’ ” ( 17:29 ).

A subtle method which the devil employs for paralyzing Christian witness is that of destructive criticism. We are so familiar with that hurtful approach of Eliab, which insinuates that our service for Christ is nothing more than personal conceit, pride, or even self-expressionism. But David’s reply was as sound as it was shattering. He could sincerely say that there was a deeper cause than mere curiosity or interest. The honor and glory of God had been brought into question, and it was his duty to answer that challenge.

What effect has destructive criticism on our inner convictions and determination to stand true to what we know to be the true evangelical cause?

### **3) He Fought Deflective Concern**

“And Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth’ ” ( 17:33 ). David’s answer to this was one of God-enabled CONFIDENCE: “... The Lord ... will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine ...” ( 17:37 ).

Once again, this represents a cunning approach of the devil. There is the fatherly, or sometimes motherly, concern shown for our protection and welfare, which is nothing more than an attempt to deflect us from the path of duty.

How dramatically this is illustrated in the life of our Lord, when Peter—with a perfectly legitimate and human concern—attempted to persuade the Master from walking the way of the cross. Jesus had been showing His disciples how that He must go to Jerusalem and “... suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Then we read that Peter “... took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men’ ” ( Matt. 16:21–23 ).

Like the Lord Jesus, David was confident that God had called him to face the giant Goliath, and that—if it were His will—He was able to deliver him out of the hand of the Philistine. To the Israelites, Goliath was “too big to hit”; but to little David, he was “too big to miss.”

### **4) He Fought Depressive Competence**

“And the Philistine said to David, ‘Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!’ ” ( 17:44 ). David’s answer to this was one of God-enabled CONQUEST: “So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone ...” ( 17:50 ).

The stature, armor, and manner of Goliath could have had a devastating effect on David, had he not been assured of the victory which is available to those who rely on God in simple trust. God’s answer was victory for His servant with a mere sling and stone.

When the apostle Paul points out to us the enemy of our souls he uses language which could be quite terrifying. He says, “... we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers,

against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” ( Eph. 6:12 ). Here is Satan with his myriads of supporters. But in another place, the same apostle reminds us that “... the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds” ( 2 Cor. 10:4 ). Our task is not to pit our strength against the formidable enemy, but rather to “... submit to God. Resist the devil and [see him] flee from [us]” ( James 4:7 ). John puts it in a nutshell when he says, “... this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith” ( 1 John 5:4 ).

Thus we see again how God distinguished His servant by enabling him to do the impossible. What a tremendous difference it would make in our lives if we really believed that the God who lived in David’s day is just the same today! Dissuading influences made no difference to David. His determination was to fulfill all God’s will. Having put his hand to the plow he would not look back.

### **III. God Distinguished David By Exalting Him**

“Then, as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand” ( 17:57 ). God always exalts a man who is humble and usable enough to stand the wonder of divine exaltation. What is more, when God exalts a man there are unmistakable marks which demonstrate it:

#### **1) God is Honored**

“Then David spoke to the men who stood by him, saying, ‘What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?’ ” ( 17:26 ). These words, together with the general trend of the chapter, make it plain that David’s real concern was the honor and glory of the Lord; nothing else seemed to matter. This is beautifully summed up when he says, “... all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s ...” ( 17:47 ).

#### **2) Others Are Helped.**

Israel was saved. We read, “Then the children of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their tents” ( 17:53 ).

This is an eternal law. When God exalts a man, the name of the Lord is honored; and from the exalted life flows saving and sanctifying power. A life that is promoted by God becomes a personality which is consciously and unconsciously redemptive.

#### **3) Self is Hidden.**

The last verse of this chapter crowns the whole story: “And Saul said to him, ‘Whose son are you, young man?’ And David answered, ‘I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite’ ” ( 17:58 ). How incomparably beautiful! A moment’s reflection will reveal what David might have said. He could have told of his being chosen from among all his brothers; of his anointing, and of the Spirit of God coming upon him; but, instead, he quietly and naturally hides all of self behind the glory of the Lord.

This, then, is the threefold mark of the man whom God has exalted. God is honored, others are helped, and self is hidden.

### **3. Illustrate**

## **Conclusion**

We have seen in our study that God distinguishes his man by employing him, enabling him, and exalting him. Have we proved this in our lives, or are we too unready to be employed, too unwilling to be enabled, and too unusable to be exalted? God grant that we might come to the place where we can pray:

O use me, Lord, use even me,

Just as Thou wilt, and when, and where;

Until Thy blessed face I see,

Thy rest, Thy joy, Thy glory share.

Frances R. Havergal

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... It was Dwight L. Moody who said, "I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And that which I can do, by the grace of God, I will do." With that simple commitment he became a great and effective preacher and evangelist. Through his campaigns in England, Ireland, Scotland, and America, God used his ministry to bring revival to both sides of the Atlantic. It is said that Moody traveled more than one million miles, addressed more than one hundred million persons, and personally dealt with nearly seven hundred and fifty thousand individuals. Despite his meager education he became a noted educator and builder of schools; in particular, Moody Bible Institute, the first Bible school of its kind in this country.

### **2. Illustrate**

... In 1953 a columnist of the Chicago News by the name of Harris, a man who acquired a large reader following by his frank and often caustic comments, wrote what he called "A Prayer for the President"—"O Lord ... give him the courage, not of his convictions, but of Your commandments."

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 283. Not a bad prayer to pray for any leader!

### **3. Illustrate**

... In conversation with Professor S.F.B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph, the Rev. George W. Hervey asked this question: "Professor Morse, when you were making your experiments ... in your room in the university, did you ever come to a [standstill], not knowing what to do next?" "Oh, yes, more than once." "And at such times what did you do next?" "I may answer you in confidence, sir," said the professor, "but it is a matter of which the public knows nothing. I prayed for more light." "And the light generally came?" "Yes, and may I tell you that when flattering honors came to me from America and Europe on account of the invention which bears my name, I never felt I deserved them. I had made a valuable application of electricity, not because I was superior to other men, but solely because God, who meant it for mankind, must reveal it to someone, and was pleased to reveal it to me." In view of these facts, it is not surprising that the inventor's first message was, "What hath God wrought!"

*Moody Monthly*. Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*, pp. 480–481.

## **For Further Research**

## Forty-five Sermon

### FORTY-FIVE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** GODS MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Develops His Man

**READING:** 1 Samuel 18:1–5 , 15 , 30

**TEXT:** "... the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" ( 18:1 ).

#### Introduction

There can be no full-orbed development of personality without social life. For this reason God has graciously given man the gift of friendship. One of the most beautiful illustrations of human friendship, recorded in Scripture, is that of David and Jonathan. God developed David through:

- I. The Attraction of Friendship ( 18:1 )
  1. It Developed A Sense of Being Personally Watched ( 18:5 , 15 , 30 )
  2. It Developed a Sense of Being Personally Wanted ( 1 Sam. 19:1 )
  3. It Developed a Sense of Being Personally Worthy ( 18:4 )
- II. The Affinity of Friendship ( 18:1 )
  1. The Mind, or the Intellectual Life ( Prov. 27:17 )
  2. The Heart, or the Emotional Life ( Prov. 27:19 )
  3. The Will, or the Volitional Life ( Eccles. 4:9–10 )
- III. The Affection of Friendship ( 18:3 )
  1. A Spiritual Life ( 18:3 )
  2. A Spiritual Love ( 18:3 )
  3. A Spiritual Loyalty ( 1 Sam. 20:16–17 )

#### Conclusion

Friendship, in the highest sense, is the gift of God for the development of human personality—physically, psychically, and, ultimately, spiritually. We should see to it, therefore, that we know something of the use—and not abuse—of this priceless gift until there is real life, love, and loyalty in the Lord.

## **FORTY-FIVE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** GOD'S MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Develops His Man

**READING:** 1 Samuel 18:1-5 , 15 , 30

**TEXT:** "... the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" ( 18:1 ).

### **Introduction**

There can be no full-orbed development of personality without social life. For this reason God has graciously given to man the gift of friendship.

This was true in the case of David. Indeed, such was the level and lastingness of his friendship with Jonathan that it has come to be recognized as one of the most beautiful illustrations of God's purpose in human friendship. In the verses before us, we learn how God developed David through:

### **I. The Attraction of Friendship**

"And it was so, when he [David] had finished speaking to Saul that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul" ( 18:1 ).

This was a development which was mainly PERSONAL. It was after Jonathan had witnessed David's behavior before Saul, following the slaying of the giant, Goliath, that his soul went out to David. Such physical attraction always makes an impact upon the physical natures involved. In the case of David:

#### **1) It Developed a Sense of Being Personally Watched**

"... David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely.... Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him.... David behaved more wisely than all the servants of Saul, so that his name became highly esteemed" ( 18:5 , 15 , 30 ). There is no man with physical good taste who does not become disciplined and developed through a sense of being watched. From a Christian point of view, this is of utmost importance. What we are in spirit and soul will be interpreted to the world by the way we behave. This is why the apostle commands us to "... walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise" ( Eph. 5:15 ); and again: "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside ..." ( Col. 4:5 ). We can only achieve this standard of behavior when we are careful to "... glorify God in [our bodies] ..." ( 1 Cor. 6:20 ).

#### **2) It Developed a Sense of Being Personally Wanted**

"... Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David" ( 1 Sam. 19:1 ). Try to imagine what it must have meant to David, the farmer's son, to feel that he was wanted as a friend of the heir to the throne! There is nothing more exhilarating than this. It even makes a difference in the personal appearance of the person who is made aware that he or she is wanted as a friend; it makes them radiant. How true this is of the highest friendship of all! Every Christian knows something of the transforming friendship of Jesus, when ' ... with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, [he is] being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" ( 2 Cor. 3:18 ).

#### **1. Illustrate**

#### **3) It Developed a Sense of Being Personally Worthy**

“And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt” ( 18:4 ). You will remember that David refused to wear Saul’s armor when it was offered him to fight Goliath. HIS language was, “... I cannot walk with these, for I have not tested them ...” ( 1 Sam. 17:39 ). The reason he refused the king’s military dress was because he had not yet proved himself worthy of the friendship of the royal house; but after slaying Goliath he felt quite different about it. The friendship which sprang up between Jonathan and himself developed that sense of being worthy now to don the apparel and armor of Prince Jonathan. If he had earned a place at all in the king’s palace, then he must walk worthily of that high vocation.

Similarly, if our friendship with the Lord Jesus and His people is genuine, then we, too, should “... walk worthy of the calling with which [we] were called” ( Eph. 4:1 ). Only through the enrichment of such sanctifying friendship can we ever be made to feel worthy, for in ourselves we are totally unworthy and unprofitable.

We see, then, how personal development was enhanced through the attraction of friendship. In the same way, Christian fellowship ought to have an impact upon us. Our appearance and demeanor ought to express something of the purifying and beautifying effect of Christian friendship.

## **II. The Affinity of Friendship**

“... the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David ...” ( 18:1 ).

This was a development which was mainly PSYCHICAL. The word “knit” means “to bind by drawing closer and closer.” This knitting was effected in the realm of the soul, which is the seat of the mind, heart, and will. This affinity of soul developed:

### **1) The Mind, or the Intellectual Life.**

Solomon tells us that “As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens ... his friend” ( Prov. 27:17 ). Nothing develops the mind more than mental stimulation; but such stimulation is only possible where there is mental affinity. As part of the human race, each of us is a separate individual, having our own personality and identity; yet we are members of a larger community. The Word of God reminds us, “... none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself” ( Rom. 14:7 ). We influence others and are, in turn, affected by them. This implies involvement with society, rather than isolation from it. In fact, the Bible tells us, “... It is not good that man should be alone ...” ( Gen. 2:18 ). Solitude rigidly maintained over a long period of time produces insanity. We are told that one half of our human faculties are intended for interaction with others, while the other half is occupied with powers for regulating such social intercourse. How important it is, then, that we should know friendship (generally, if not personally), if our minds are to be developed.

### **2. Illustrate**

### **2) The Heart, or the Emotional Life**

“As in water face [mirrors] face, So a man’s heart reveals the man” ( Prov. 27:19 ). There is nothing like heart-to-heart friendship for searching, sanctifying, and satisfying our emotional life. The wise man says, “As in water face [mirrors] face, So a man’s heart reveals the man” ( Prov. 27:19 ); that is to say, as my face is reflected in the pool of water, so my heart answers to the heart of my friend. In the language of friendship, this is healthy and strengthening. That is why Solomon reminds us, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend ...” (Prov, 27:6 ).

Dinah Craik in her little book, *Life for a Life*, says of friendship: “Oh, the comfort—the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, Having neither to weigh thoughts, Nor measure words—but pouring them all right out—just as they are—Chaff and grain together—Certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them—Keep what is worth keeping—And with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.” Only heart friendship can produce such understanding and faithfulness as this.

### **3) The Will, or the Volitional Life.**

Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 reminds us, “Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up.” Strength of will is not willfulness, but willingness, and such willingness can only be developed through the experience of deep friendship. When the Lord Jesus said “... not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42 ) it was because He had “... learned obedience by the things which He suffered” ( Heb. 5:8 ).

The friendship between David and Jonathan was such that Jonathan could say to him, “... Whatever you yourself desire, I will do it for you” ( 1 Sam. 20:4 ).

Our volitional life can never be developed through the willfulness of individualism. We can only be strong in the realm of our wills as we submit to the sovereignty of Christ and the friendship of fellow believers. This lays an importance upon personal friendship as well as on our relationship to and responsibility within the church of Jesus Christ.

## **III. The Affection of Friendship**

“Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul” ( 18:3 ).

This was a development which was mainly SPIRITUAL.

Affection, in its purer sense, always elevates until it develops:

### **1) A Spiritual Life**

“... Jonathan and David made a covenant ...” ( 18:3 ). The word “covenant” denotes a mutual agreement. Such covenants of brotherhood or friendship were common in the East and were an outward token of a common life upon which the covenanters had embarked. David and Jonathan had agreed that their lives were going to be lived not only for God, but in God; so they made what they called ‘ ... a covenant of the Lord ...’ ( 1 Sam. 20:8 ). In that same chapter (verse 16 ) we read that “... Jonathan made [or cut] a covenant with the house of David ...” This indicates that each man bared his arm and made an incision, mingling the blood, thus searing their friendship in Jehovah their God. What a level of friendship this was!

### **3. Illustrate**

If we are to know a friendship which is deep and in-dissoluble, it must be in the Lord and on the basis of blood that was shed at Calvary. Only this kind of friendship will develop our spiritual life. The test of true affection can always be based on whether friendship leads to spirituality or carnality.

### **2) A Spiritual Love**

“... Jonathan ... loved him as his own soul” ( 18:3 ). When the affection of friendship leads to spiritual life it is transformed into divine love. No longer is it the sentimental, sickly affection of sinful men and women, but

rather the love that never faileth. This is why David lamented, in later years, over the death of Jonathan with these words: “Your love to me was wonderful, Surpassing the love of women” ( 2 Sam. 1:26 ).

Spiritual love is sacrificial love, and this is beautifully illustrated in Jonathan’s love for David. 1 Samuel 18:4 tells us that “... Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.” Sacrificial love is always ready to surrender its rights, responsibilities, and riches for others. In the passage before us we see Jonathan sacrificing:

#### A) HIS RIGHTS IN THE INTERESTS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH DAVID

“... Jonathan took off the robe that was on him ... with his armor ...” ( 18:4 ). The cloke or robe was the insignia of his princely life in the palace, while his armor speaks of his professional Life. Whatever rights he had as a prince or professional soldier were now willingly surrendered to David.

#### B) HIS RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE INTERESTS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH DAVID

“... Jonathan ... gave ... to David ... his sword and his bow ...” ( 18:4 ). These were the weapons of warfare and represented his responsibilities as second only to his father, the king. The act of handing them over to David was highly significant. As friends, they now shared both the responsibilities and the honors.

#### C) HIS RICHES IN THE INTERESTS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH DAVID

“... Jonathan ... gave ... David ... his belt” ( 18:4 ). The military belt was the chief ornament of a soldier and highly prized. It was a rich present, a token of remembrance. Belts were only worn by the wealthy and were of costly materials. Indeed, they were often used as pockets for money and jewels; therefore, they represented wealth. True love and friendship always share wealth in the interests of the one loved. What a sacred and purifying power such love can be in Christian friendship!

### 3) A Spiritual Loyalty

“So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, ‘Let the Lord require it at the hand of David’s enemies.’ And Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul” ( 1 Sam. 20:16–17 ). Even though this friendship between David and Jonathan incurred the danger of death from Saul and his servants, they continued to be loyal to one another, right to the end of their days. When they had to separate from each other, Jonathan could say to David, “... Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘May the Lord be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever’ ...” ( 1 Sam. 20:42 ). We see how friendship developed a loyalty which neither danger nor death can destroy.

Indeed, the history of the church reveals that when the friendship of Christian people has developed into spiritual loyalty, no amount of persecution or peril can separate believing people from the Lord or from one another. It was the Savior Himself who said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” ( John 13:35 ).

#### 4. Illustrate

### Conclusion

We have seen how God develops His man through the attraction, affinity, and affection of friendship. Such friendship, in the highest sense, is the gift of God for the development of human personality. We should see to it

that we use, and not abuse, this priceless gift, developing the physical, psychical and spiritual part of our beings until there is real Fife, love, and loyalty in the Lord.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... In olden time there reigned in Persia a great monarch, Shah Abbas, who loved his people. To know them more perfectly he used to mingle with them in various disguises. One day he went as a poor man to the public baths, and there in the tiny cellar he sat beside the fireman who tended the furnace. At mealtime he shared his coarse food and talked to the lonely man as a friend. Again and again he visited him until the man grew to love him. Then one day he told him he was the Emperor, and he waited for the man to ask some gift from him. But the fireman sat gazing on him with love and wonder, and at last he spoke: "You left your palace and your glory to sit with me in this dark place, to partake of my coarse fare, to care whether my heart is glad or sorry. On others you may bestow rich presents, but to me you have given yourself; and it only remains to pray that you never withdraw the gift of your friendship."

*Letters to Light-Keepers.* Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Win. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952, p. 300. Used by permission.

### **2. Illustrate**

... Thomas A. Edison, the great inventor, was talking one day with the governor of North Carolina, and the governor complimented him on his inventive genius. "I am not a great inventor," said Edison. "But you have over a thousand patents to your credit, haven't you?" queried the governor. "Yes, but about the only invention I can really claim as absolutely original is the phonograph," was the reply. "Why, I'm afraid I don't understand what you mean," said the governor. "Well," explained Edison, "I guess I'm an awfully good sponge. I absorb ideas from every source I can, and put them to practical use. Then I improve them until they become of some value. The ideas which I use are mostly the ideas of other people who don't develop them themselves."

*Just A Moment.* Quoted in *Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations.* Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 1468.

### **3. Illustrate**

... Soon after Jack Benny died, George Burns, the quintessential song and dance man, was interviewed on a TV talk show. When asked about his relationship to Jack, George flicked his unfit cigar and answered with that distinctive voice so experienced in delivering punchy lines, "Well," he said, "Jack and I had a wonderful friendship for nearly fifty-five years; Jack never walked out on me when I sang a song, and I never walked out on him when he played the violin." Though couched in jest, Burns expressed the fact of commitment. He and Benny were genuinely close friends—committed friends. While they were not given to a formal covenant, hardly a day went by when they didn't talk, at least by telephone. Each would have done anything for the other. People who knew them envied their commitment. Reciprocal commitment does not require a formal covenant, although in the biblical friendship of Jonathan and David, such a pact existed ( 1 Sam. 20:16–17 ). In fact, one does not know early in most relationships if and when the blossom of commitment will occur, but there is no doubt about its beauty and fragrance once it bursts forth.

"Must Men Be Friendless?" by Paul D. Robbins. *Leadership*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Carol Stream: *Christianity Today*, Fall 1984), pp. 28–29.

### **4. Illustrate**

... When Confederate spy Sam Davis was captured, he was found to possess some important papers of great value to the Union Army. The officers knew that, ultimately, he was not responsible for having those papers, so as he stood blindfolded before a firing squad, he was given a final chance for reprieve. The officer in charge said to him, "If you will give us the name of the man who furnished you this information, you may go free." He refused, saying, "If I had a thousand lives I would give them all before I would betray a friend." Here was true friendship.

*3000 Illustrations for Christian Service*, p. 299. Used by permission.

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on the life of David see Vol. 6, Qtr. 4, Ch. 42.

## Forty-six Sermon

### FORTY-SIX, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** GOD'S MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Delivers His Man

**READING:** [1 Samuel 20](#)

**TEXT:** "... come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel" ( [3:19](#) ).

### Introduction

David's spiritual experience, in this chapter, closely parallels Paul's conflict in Romans 7 . There the apostle cries, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" ( Rom 7:24 ). Here David says, "... there is but a step between me and death' ( 20:3 ). The "body of death" represents Saul—the man of the flesh. David had to decide whether he would be mastered by Saul, or learn God's day of deliverance and victory. Fortunately, he chose God, and the verses before us illustrate how God delivered His man.

- I. The Price of Deliverance ( 20:3 )
  1. There was the Price of Laxity ( 20:1 )
  2. There was the Prize of Victory ( 20:12–13 )
- II. The Place of Deliverance ( 20:10 )
  1. The Stone Marked the Place of Deed ( 20:19 )
  2. The Stone Marked the Place of Direction ( 20:19 )
  3. The Stone Marked the Place of Detachment ( 20:20–22 )
- III. The Path of Deliverance ( 20:42 )
  1. Peace ( 20:42 )

## 2. Progress ( 20:42 )

### **Conclusion**

God has a plan for each of our lives: a way of escape and a way of service. May He therefore lead us to face the price, place, and path of deliverance so that we will miss nothing that He has intended for our lives.

## **FORTY-SIX, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** GOD'S MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Delivers His Man

**READING:** 1 Samuel 20

**TEXT:** "... come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel" ( 20:19 ).

### **Introduction**

In terms of spiritual experience, David, in this chapter, had reached a point which paralleled Paul's conflict in Romans 7 . There Paul cries, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" ( Rom. 7:24 ). This was precisely David's concern. He says, "... there is but a step between me and death" ( 20:3 ). The "body of death," for David, was represented by Saul, the man of the flesh. David had to decide whether he would be mastered by the body of death, or learn God's way of victory and deliverance. This crisis was the inevitable result of David's development in the things of God. The issue plainly was Saul or God. David decided for God against Saul, and in the verses before us we have the story of how God delivered His man. The stages of this deliverance could be set out as follows:

### **I. The Price of Deliverance**

"... there is but a step between me and death" ( 20:3 ). David had reached the point where he had to count the cost.

#### **1) There was the Price of Laxity**

"Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah, and went and said to Jonathan, 'What have I done? What is my iniquity, and what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?' " ( 20:1 ). From this and other verses we see that the price of laxity, for David, was a return to Saul, who represented life in the flesh. To go back to him would have appeared to be popular and exceedingly brave, but, in the last analysis, would have involved a compromising laxity which would have led to the defeat of God's purpose for David.

What a lesson to those of us who want to pander to Saul, the man of the flesh! The commentary of the New Testament on such an attitude, is extremely solemn and searching. The apostle Paul says: "... to be carnally minded is death,... Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" ( Rom. 8:6-8 ). And again: "... if you live according to the flesh you will die ..." ( Rom. 8:13 ). Galatians 6:8 adds: "... he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption ..." ( Gal. 6:8 ).

#### **1. Illustrate**

#### **2) There was the Price of Victory**

“Then Jonathan said to David: “The Lord God of Israel is witness! When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, or the third day, and indeed there is good town David, and I do not send to you and tell you, may the Lord do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father to do you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And the Lord be with you as He has been with my father” ( 20:12–13 ). The price of victory, for David, meant leaving Saul once and for all, and cleaving to his God. This would appear outwardly unpopular and cowardly. Ultimately, however, it would mean deliverance from all that would frustrate God’s purpose for David. What a challenge this brings! Are we prepared to pay the price of victory?

Once again, the New Testament has something to say about this approach in the Christian experience: “... if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will by” ( Rom. 8:13 ). David could have argued that, having faced Goliath, he was surely able to confront a cowardly king like Saul; but this would have been acting in the flesh. God, who had protected his life from Goliath’s spear, could not shield His servant from the consequences of operating with such carnal-mindedness.

We, too, can overcome our Goliaths in the power of the Spirit; but to act in the energy of the flesh is to fail tragically and fatally. Every course of action, therefore, must be weighed carefully, in terms of the price of laxity or victory. David counted the cost and was prepared to go through with God.

## **2. Illustrate**

### **II. The Place of Deliverance**

“... come to the place where you hid on the day of the deed; and remain by the stone Ezel” ( 20:19 ). God never leaves His people in any doubt as to the place of deliverance. Indeed, there is only one such place, and that is Calvary’s cross. How beautifully this is typified and foreshadowed in the story before us. Jonathan (whose name means “the gift of God) leads David to the stone Ezel—the place of deliverance. The significance of this becomes apparent when we discover that:

#### **1) The Stone Marked the Place of Decision**

“... the place where you hid on the day of the deed [the day of the business M.R.] ...” ( 20:19 ). David had transacted business at this spot before (see Ch. 19:1–3 ), and on that occasion had experienced deliverance, but now Jonathan leads him back for a deeper experience.

In a similar way, God calls us back to the cross. It is only at the cross that decisions are made. It is only at the cross that we can know deliverance over the “Saul” who would master our lives. In terms of a spiritual principle, we hear the echo of this truth in the Epistle to the Romans: “knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin” ( Rom. 6:6–7 ).

## **3. Illustrate**

#### **2) The Stone Marked the Place of Direction**

“... the stone Ezel” ( 20:19 ). Its very name, according to the marginal rendering, means “the place that showeth the way.” What the stone meant to David is what the cross means to us today. We cannot attend the drama that was enacted there without following Christ from the cross to the grave, and up to the throne, where He now sits as the risen, all-powerful and glorious Lord. It is as we face these great facts of our faith that we learn our directions for living. “... He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” ( 2 Cor. 5:15 ); and once more: “I have been crucified with Christ; it

is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” ( Gal. 2:20 ).

### **3) The Stone Marked the Place of Detachment.**

Speaking of the stone Ezel, where David was commanded to hide, Jonathan said, “... I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I shot at a target; and there I will send a lad, saying, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I expressly say to him, ‘Look, the arrows are on this side of you; get them and come’—then, as the Lord lives, there is safety for you and no harm. But if I say thus to the young man, ‘Look, the arrows are beyond you’—go your way, for the Lord has sent you away’ ” ( 20:20–22 ).

Jonathan had planned with David to shoot the arrows before or beyond the stone. Arrows before the stone meant peace with Saul; arrows beyond the stone meant separation from Saul and his worldly kingdom. How significant that arrows beyond left the stone Ezel between the distance covered.

So the believer finds that if he is going to live the detached life of separation to God the cross must come between. Paul refused to “... glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world [had] been crucified to [him], and [he] to the world” ( Gal. 6:14 ). In the light of the cross, the place of deliverance calls for decision, direction, and detachment. To know such deliverance in our lives we must be able to say:

Jesus, I my cross hazy

All to leave and follow Thee;

Destitute, despised, forsaken,

Thou, from hence, my all shalt be:

Perish every fond ambition,

All I’ve sought, and hoped, and known;

Yet how rich is my condition,

God and heaven are still my own!

Henry P. Lyte

### **4. Amplify**

## **III. The Path of Deliverance**

“Then Jonathan said to David, ‘Go in peace, since we have both sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, ‘May the Lord be between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants, forever.’ So he arose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city” ( 20:42 ). From this verse we learn that the path of deliverance is one of:

### **1) Peace**

“Go in peace” ( 20:42 ). This is a peace which flows from knowing victory and fellowship in the Lord. It is the peace which passes all understanding. It cannot be explained, but it can be experienced by all who will walk the path of deliverance.

## **2) Progress**

“... So [David] arose and departed ...” ( 20:42 ). David was not going back to Saul. He was rather going forward into all God’s purpose for his life. It is always true that to be in the path of God’s deliverance is to be in the path of progress. Peace follows a life of victory; and progress follows a life of peace.

God has called each of us to such a life of advancement and achievement. If we are not progressing it is because we are defeated; there is a fixation point somewhere in our experience. To remain in this condition is to stagnate and to frustrate the tidiness of life which God has prepared for all them that love Him.

## **Conclusion**

As Christians, we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” ( Eph. 2:10 ). He will not be satisfied unless, and until, we have found, followed and fulfilled that plan. May we be willing to face the price, place, and path of deliverance so that we will miss nothing that He has intended for our lives.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... When the Bastille, a castle-like prison in Paris, was about to be destroyed in 1789, a convict was brought out who had been confined in one of its gloomy cells for many years. But instead of joyfully welcoming his liberty, he begged to be taken back. It had been a long time since he had seen the sunshine; [consequently], his eyes could not endure its brightness. His only desire was to die in the murky dungeon where he had been a captive. In the same way, some men ... become so hardened in their sin that they prefer the dark ways of eternal death.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 11/85.23).

### **2. Illustrate**

... The story is told of a rising young physician in one of our larger cities who had a successful practice, earning thousands of dollars a year. One day he walked into the office of a missionary organization and laid down his application before the Board for appointment as a medical missionary. Dumbfounded, the Board asked him if he had carefully considered this action and what it would cost him. He replied he was doing what he felt God had led him to do. They asked him if he knew what salary he might expect as a missionary if he were given the appointment, and he said he did. It would be \$50.00 a month for himself, the same amount for his wife, and a smaller amount for his two children. He was accepted and became one of the great medical missionaries of this generation. Position and salary, comfort and convenience, did not count with him, once he had committed everything to God, desiring only to live for His glory.

*Evangelistic Illustrations for Pulpit and Platform*, compiled and edited by G. Franklin Allee, pp. 118–119, adapted.

### **3. Illustrate**

... He was a long, lanky, ungainly backwoodsman from ‘up-country’ who had come down the mighty Mississippi aboard a barge that was loaded with produce for the markets of New Orleans. And new he was walking along the docks taking in the sights. Suddenly he was aware of a crowd that stood close together, listening to the strident voice of an auctioneer. Out of curiosity he approached the group, and to his horror saw that they were auctioning off a number of slaves. He saw them sell a man to one master and his wife to another, saw them tear children from the arms of their parents, and he lifted a long muscular arm toward Heaven and made a vow: “God helping me, someday I’ll strike a deathblow to that traffic in lives.” God heard that vow, and later on He gave Abraham Lincoln the opportunity to fulfill it. On the cross of Calvary Jesus was fulfilling a vow He had made long before to strike an eternal deathblow to sin and all it stands for, to release anyone from its hellish fetters. The Father, having heard that vow, paved the way for its fulfillment, and then veiled His face in darkness when the hour of Christ’s agony came.

G. Franklin Allee in *Evangelistic Illustrations for Pulpit and Platform*, p. 137.

#### **4. Amplify**

... Dr. Alan Redpath, in his book on the life of David, points out that at times, under the pressure of some trial, God purposely shoots an arrow from heaven beyond us to take us out into some great destiny for our lives. He writes that in such a situation we have “... to be still and wait ... You have leaned upon Christian friends, seeking their counsel in prayer. You have agonized and wept and prayed. You have tried to hold on to the immediate circumstances, for your heart clings to the familiar, to the beloved, to the things around you with their promise of shelter and security. But the arrow has landed on target beyond you—perhaps because God has called you to some far distant surroundings, or it may be because He will leave you where you are. The message of the arrow beyond you is not primarily geographical, it is spiritual. To all of us today the Lord Jesus is holding out nail-pierced hands and saying, ‘Come ye after me, and I make you to become ...’ And you know what is involved in going onward with Him, being poured from vessel to vessel until every prop is stripped from you and you have nothing and nobody upon whom you can depend, except God and His promises. Trust not in the shelter of home and family ties. They will not last, no matter how precious they are. Live sacramentally like broken bread and poured-out wine. Let God empty you out that He may save you from becoming spiritually stale, and lead you ever onward. He is always calling us to pass beyond the thing we know into the unknown. A throne is God’s purpose for you; a cross is God’s path for you; faith is God’s plan for you. The arrow of God on the target may leave a scar on your heart. In the years to come you may look back upon this time and your eyes fill with tears as you remember the moment when the arrow went beyond. But the Saviour is alongside: He is reminding you that the blood which He shed for you, which takes you within the veil—to the place of constant access to His presence—is the blood that takes you outside the camp to the place of consecrated availability for His plan.... He has brought you in and sealed you as His own, but now He has shot the arrow beyond you, and He is taking you out.”

*From The Making of a Man God* by Alan Redpath. Copyright © 1962 by Fleming H. Revell Company. Used by permission.

#### **For Further Research**

For bibliography on the life of David, see Vol. 6, Qtr. 4, Ch. 42.

## **Forty-seven Sermon**

### **FORTY-SEVEN, SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** GOD'S MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Directs His Man

**READING:** 1 Samuel 23:1-5

**TEXT:** "Then David inquired of the Lord ... And the Lord answered him and said, 'Arise, go ...'" ( 23:4 ).

## **Introduction**

When a man is prepared to walk the path of the will of God he may depend on God's guiding and directing hand. David trusted God to direct him by using sanctified common sense. But there are times when this is not sufficient. In such instances direction for any given action may be obtained by following a threefold guideline:

- I. The Witness of the Circumstantial Signs ( 23:1 , 3 )
  1. What was Seen ( 23:1 )
  2. What was Said ( 23:3 )
- II. The Witness of the Controlling Spirit ( 23:2 )
  1. His Prayerfulness to Seek the Will of God ( 23:2 )
  2. His Preparedness to Serve the Will of God ( 23:2 )
- III. The Witness of the Confirming Scriptures ( 23:4 )
  1. The Commanding Word ( 23:4 )
  2. The Confirming Word ( 23:4 )

## **Conclusion**

God's principles of guidance are eternal. If God's man would be guided, then he must be prepared to bring his will into alignment with God's will. It is only when this is done that the peace of God holds sway over the soul. God make us willing to pray, day by day:

Teach me Thy will O Lord, Teach me Thy way;

Teach me to know Thy word, Teach me to pray.

Whate'er seems best to Thee, That be my earnest plea,

So that Thou drawest me closer each day.

Katherine A. Grimes

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**SERIES:** GOD'S MAN

**SUBJECT:** How God Directs His Man

**READING:** 1 Samuel 23:1–5

**TEXT:** “Then David inquired of the Lord ... And the Lord answered him and said, ‘Arise, go ... ’ ” ( 23:4 ).

## Introduction

When a man is prepared to walk the path of the will of God he may depend on God's guiding and directing hand, for in the Christian life “a guided way in a guarded way.” This fact remains true, whether we consider guidance in its more general aspect or in its particular aspect. It is quite clear that in the general issues of life David trusted God to direct him, using sanctified common-sense, but he did not make this the sole basis of guidance when weightier problems were involved, such as the issue he faced in this chapter.

Similarly, in our lives, the witness of sanctified common sense is sufficient for those matters which do not involve grave doubts and uncertainty—provided the believer is experiencing the real joy of abiding in Christ. This is made clear in Proverbs 3:5–6, where the believer is exhorted to “Trust in the Lord with all [his] heart, And lean not on [his] own understanding; In all [his] ways [he is to] acknowledge Him, And He shall direct [his] paths.”

There are times, however, when particular direction is required and common-sense judgment is not enough. Accordingly, God has graciously given us principles by which He guides and directs His people, and it is imperative that we should know them. A study of these verses reveals that direction for any given action comes through the agreement of a threefold witness.

In directing David, the man after God's own heart, there was:

## I. The Witness of the Circumstantial Signs

“Then they told David, saying, ‘Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors’.... And David's men said to him, ‘Look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?’ ” ( 23:1, 3 ). These circumstantial signs made it obvious to David that he must adopt a line of action. The signs were interpreted through:

### 1) What was Seen

“... the Philistines are fighting against Keilah, and they are robbing the threshing floors” ( 23:1 ). Such a state of affairs demanded an answer from David. Action was called for. This fact illustrates how God's direction is usually first suggested. As Christian people, we must keep our eyes open. “Where there is no revelation [or prophetic vision], the people cast off restraint ...” ( Prov. 29:18 ). Our problem is that we are so often blind to the circumstances around us.

### 2) What was Said

“And David's men said to him, ‘Look, we are afraid here in Judah. How much more then if we go to Keilah against the armies of the Philistines?’ ” ( 23:3 ). The Philistines were stronger than David the fugitive with his few men; thus creating a situation which called for special thought and procedure.

The warrant of circumstances is one way in which God works today, but it is not sufficient in and of itself. Like David, we must seek further light.

## 1. Illustrate

### II. The Witness of the Controlling Spirit

“Therefore David inquired of the Lord, saying, ‘Shall I go and attack these Philistines?’ And the Lord said to David, ‘Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah’ ” ( 23:2 ). While the Holy Spirit is not specifically mentioned in this verse, it is obvious that the Lord communicated with David— “The Lord said ...” And as in New Testament times, so in Old Testament times God spoke by His Spirit. The evidence that David was being controlled by the Spirit is seen in:

#### 1) His Prayerfulness to Seek the Will of God

“Therefore David inquired of the Lord ...” ( 23:2 ). David sought the Lord’s direction concerning the issue which had been raised by the witness of the circumstantial signs. Prayer is an indispensable factor in the understanding of the Lord’s will for our lives. He who never prays for direction will never know the certainty and joy of divine guidance.

## 2. Illustrate

#### 2) His Preparedness to Serve the Will of God

“... Shall I go and attack these Philistines? ...” ( 23:2 ). David did not dictate to God what he wanted to do. Though a man of war, and as happy in baffle as out of it, he demonstrated his preparedness to do whatever the Lord commanded him.

The intellectual and spiritual confusion in this matter of guidance is usually due to our unwillingness to do God’s will, even when the path of direction has been pointed out. It is important not only to know the will of God but to do it.

## 3. Amplify

God’s Spirit will always confirm a certain course of action where there is prayerfulness and preparedness of heart. Notice how the conviction of God’s direction deepened in David’s soul— “... And the Lord said to David, ‘Go and attack the Philistines, and save Keilah’ ” ( 23:2 ). This is the way God works today. He deepens the conviction of His direction by the witness of the Holy Spirit, as we wait in His presence with prayerfulness and preparedness of heart.

But even the witness of circumstances and the controlling Holy Spirit were not sufficient for David; and, indeed, can never be for us. There must be:

### III. The Witness of the Confirming Scriptures

“Then David inquired of the Lord once again. And the Lord answered him and said, ‘Arise, go down to Keilah. For I will deliver the Philistines into your hand’ ” ( 23:4 ). David went back into the presence of God to await a commanding and confirming word, and he was not disappointed. Notice:

#### 1) The Commanding Word

“... And the Lord answered him, and said, ‘Arise, go down to Keilah ... ’ ” ( 23:4 ). This is how God still speaks to us as we read His Word. Without forcing the interpretation or significance of a passage, a command seems to leap out of our reading of God’s Word, urging us to do this or that. The light of biblical revelation is

not so much the flash of one isolated Bible verse as it is the blaze which seems to shine from the Word in the course of the believer's daily devotions and other biblical instruction.

## **2) The Confirming Word**

"... I will deliver the Philistines into your hand" ( 23:4 ). Observe how the word of Scripture only serves to confirm outward circumstances and the inner witness of the Spirit. Here is our assurance of guidance when all three agree. With this David was satisfied. There was nothing left but to obey—whatever the cost. Verse 5 tells what happened: "... David and his men went to Keilah and fought with the Philistines, struck them a mighty blow, and took away their livestock. So David saved the inhabitants of Keilah." God more than honored David's obedience. He became more than conqueror in that given situation.

He'll do the same for us in this day of grace. When God's peace rules in our heart, and the signs, the Spirit, and the Scriptures all witness to a certain line of action, it is imperative that we obey. To disobey is to cancel out the guidance given and to destroy all sense of direction.

The challenge which emerges from this study is just this: Am I, are you, prepared to walk straight ahead when God directs?

Now it is important to point out that the principles of guidance have always been the same. Consider these principles as illustrated in the

### **OLD TESTAMENT**

Example: the children of Israel. They were guided by:

#### **i) The Witness of Circumstantial Signs**

"... Moses said to Hobab ... 'We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, "I will give it to you."'

Come with us, and we will treat you well: for the Lord has promised good things to Israel.... you can be our eyes' " ( Num. 10:29–31 ). Hobab knew the desert like the back of his hand. He was acquainted with all the geography, circumstances, and expected situations of a journey such as the children of Israel were undertaking. His advice, therefore, constituted the witness of circumstantial signs. Moses said, "... you can be our eyes" ( Num. 10:31 ).

#### **ii) The Witness of the Controlling Spirit**

"... on the day that the tabernacle was raised up, the cloud covered the tabernacle ... from evening until morning it was above the tabernacle like the appearance of fire" ( Num. 9:15 ). The pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night, were the outward symbols of the presence of Jehovah in the camp. In the language of the New Testament, this would represent the Holy Spirit within our bodies. When the pillar of cloud and of fire moved it was the leading from God that the camp should move also.

#### **iii) The Witness of the Confirming Scriptures.**

God instructed Moses, saying: "Make two silver trumpets ... you shall use them for calling the assembly and for directing the movements of the camps" ( Num. 10:2 ). The two trumpets are a beautiful illustration of the commanding and confirming Word of God. When they sounded out across the camp, it was to call the assembly to dismantle their tents and prepare to march.

Now consider these same principles embodied in the

## NEW TESTAMENT

Example: the children of God. We are guided by:

### **i) The Witness of the Circumstantial Signs.**

The apostle Paul exhorts us, saying: "... do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" ( Eph. 5:17 ); and James adds: "... you ought to say, 'If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that' " ( James 4:15 ).

In practical experience, we see this remarkably illustrated in the vision that came to Paul at night where "... A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them" ( Acts 16:9–10 ). Dr. Campbell Morgan suggests that the man Paul saw in the vision was none other than Luke. He does not deny that Paul experienced an inner consciousness of a vision of opportunity, but he maintains that we miss the whole value of the story if we try to rob this incident of all the everyday signs with which God seeks to lead His people. Therefore, we should always be on the alert to discern the mind of God in the circumstances and happenings around us.

### **ii) The Witness of the Controlling Spirit.**

We read that "... as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" ( Rom. 8:14 ). How this is exemplified in the passage in Acts which we have just considered! In verse 6 ( Acts 16 ) we read that the apostle and his companion were "... forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia," and in verse 7 we are told "... the Spirit did not permit them" to go into Bithynia. As a result, they concluded that the Spirit was leading them to preach the gospel in Macedonia.

The Holy Spirit will guide the man who is in the attitude in which it is possible for him to be guided. It is an attitude of loyalty to the Lord, faith in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and constant watchfulness.

## **4. Illustrate**

### **iii) The Witness of the Confirming Scriptures.**

David could pray, "Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path" ( Ps. 119:105 ); and again in that same chapter: "Direct my steps by Your word ..." (v. 133 ). We are reminded in Romans 15:4 that "... whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." The Word of God confirms guidance—not so much in the matter of detail as in the matter of duty. No one can be seeking the mind of the Lord and reading the Scriptures regularly without receiving some word of command and confirmation which settles the question of procedure and direction.

## **5. Illustrate**

## **Conclusion**

God's principles of guidance are eternal. If God's man would be guided, then he must be prepared to bring his will into alignment with God's will. It is only when this is done that the peace of God holds sway over the soul. God make us willing to pray, day by day:

Teach me Thy will, O Lord, Teach me Thy way;  
Teach me to know Thy word, Teach me to Pray.  
Whate'er seems best to Thee, That be my earnest plea,  
So that Thou drawest me closer each day.

Katherine A. Grimes

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## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Abraham Lincoln was a man who placed great faith in “providential” guidance. Things that he saw during the Civil War were to him a divine mandate which ultimately led to his issuing the Emancipation Proclamation. He said, on one occasion: “If it were not for my belief in an overruling Providence, it would be difficult for me, in the midst of such complications, to keep my reason on its seat. But I am confident that the Almighty has His plans and will work them out; and, whether we see it or not, they will be the wisest and best for us. I have always taken counsel of Him, and referred to Him my plans, and have never adopted a course of proceeding without being assured, as far as I could be, of His approbation. I should be the most presumptuous blockhead ... if I for one day thought that I could discharge the duties which have come upon me since I came into this place, without the aid and enlightenment of One who is wiser and stronger than all others.”

*Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), p. 267. Used by permission.

### **2. Illustrate**

... Dr. George Washington Carver was a man of prayer, and in the simplicity of his faith made answered prayer his natural habitat. Someone once asked him if he had ever found prayer for guidance (in connection with his discoveries) to no avail. “Of course,” he said, “That goes without saying. You see, there is no need for anyone to be without direction, or to wander amid the perplexities and complexities of this life. Are we not plainly told, ‘In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths’? Why go blundering along on our poor, blind way when God has told us He will help us? God can always be depended upon. Here is a radio. It is little use standing there unless I turn it on and dial the station I want. Then I will have what I seek. It is all so simple; just *opening* up the avenues of approach to God through prayer.”

*From Saint, Seer, and Scientist* by J. H. Hunter. Quoted in *Knight's Master Book of New Illustrations*, p. 271. Adapted. Used by permission.

### **3. Amplify**

... George Mueller was once asked how he ascertained the will of God. Among other things he said: ‘I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord’s will, whatever it may be.’ When one has reached this point it is relatively easy to discover what His will is.

#### 4. Illustrate

... It is said that a certain guide lived in the deserts of Arabia who never lost his way. He carried with him a homing pigeon with a very fine cord attached to one of its legs. When in doubt as to which path to take, he threw the bird into the air. The pigeon quickly strained at the cord to fly in the direction of home, and thus led the guide accurately to his goal. Because of this unique practice he was known as “the dove man.” So, too, the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Dove, is willing and able to direct us in the narrow way that leads to the more abundant life if in humble self-denial we submit to His unerring supervision.

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 5/86.25).

#### 5. Illustrate

... A man started out through a forest so thickly covered with trees that one day he could not see the sun or sky. After traveling for a long time he knew it was getting night time, so he started for what he thought was home. He was so certain that his direction was right that he did not look at his compass; in fact, he almost threw it away. But when he did look at it, he was surprised to find that he was going west when he thought he was going east. Mentally, he remarked to his compass, “You have never told me an untruth, and I’ll trust you now.” He followed the compass and came out right. We, too, have a compass that will never tell us an untruth. It is God’s Word—the Bible. If we always follow it we will be safe. However, should it tell us something different, even though we think we are right, then let us follow what it says for that is the only safe thing.

Adapted from *Knight’s Master Book of New Illustrations*, p. 270. Used by permission.

#### For Further Research

For Bibliography on the life of David, see Vol. 6, Qtr. 4, Ch. 42.

## Forty-eight Sermon

### FORTY-EIGHT, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THANKSGIVING SUNDAY

**SUBJECT:** The Duty of Thankfulness

**READING:** Psalm 92:1–15

**TEXT:** “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night” ( 92:1–2 ).

#### Introduction

Psalm 92 is a hymn of gratitude. The author—whoever he may have been—goes beyond formal theology to express his profound thanksgiving to a God who had become intensely real to him. As we examine the first five verses, in particular, we learn that for the true child of God:

I. The Duty of Thankfulness is a Moral Necessity ( 92:1 )

1. We Must Gratefully Appreciate God’s Blessings Which Are Behind Us ( 92:4 )

2. We Must Gratefully Anticipate God's Blessings Which Are Before Us ( 92:4–5 )

II. The Duty of Thankfulness is a Major Activity ( 92:1–2 )

1. Spiritual Thankfulness ( 92:1 )

2. Personal Thankfulness ( 92:1 )

3. Musical Thankfulness ( 92:2–3 )

## Conclusion

We have seen that the duty of thankfulness is a moral necessity and a major activity. Let us see to it that we remember to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises unto His name, and to show forth His lovingkindness in the morning and His faithfulness every night. Only then shall we fulfill God's purpose in our creation and redemption.

## FORTY-EIGHT, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THANKSGIVING SUNDAY

**SUBJECT:** The Duty of Thankfulness

**READING:** Psalm 92:1–15

**TEXT:** “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And your faithfulness every night” ( 92:1–2 ).

## Introduction

Psalm 92 is a hymn of gratitude. The author—whoever he may have been—goes beyond formal theology to express his profound thanksgiving to a God who had become intensely real to him. As we examine the first five verses, in particular, we learn that for the true child of God:

### I. The Duty of Thankfulness is a Moral Necessity

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord ...” ( 92:1 ). Such a statement carries a serious implication with it. If it is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord then, quite obviously, it is a bad thing to withhold such gratitude. Sad to say, this is one of the prevalent sins of our time.

When the apostle Paul lists the stages in man's descent, from the true knowledge of God to vile wickedness, he names thanklessness as the source of all other sins. He phrases it this way: “because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became ...” ( Rom. 1:21 ). Then follows one of the darkest descriptions of man's corrupt nature and practice.

Sir Walter Scott maintained that “ingratitude comprehended every vice.” Shakespeare wrote of ingratitude as ‘the marble-hearted fiend.’ So the duty of thankfulness is a moral necessity because it is a good thing. The psalmist leaves us in no doubt as to why we should give thanks to the Lord:

#### 1) We Must Gratefully Appreciate God's Blessings Which Are Behind Us

“For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work ...” ( 92:4 ). The psalmist is taking a backward look and recounting how God had gladdened his heart through past blessings. And who can fall to agree with the psalmist in this respect? Think, for a moment, of:

### A) PAST SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS

“For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work ...” ( 92:4 ). Who among us can withhold praise to God as we think of His work in our lives whereby God became our Father, the Lord Jesus became our Savior, the Holy Spirit became our Comforter, the Bible became our guide, the church became our fellowship, and heaven became our home? Truly, we have to exclaim with the apostle Paul, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” ( Eph. 1:3 ). We sometimes sing, “Count your many blessings, name them one by one,” but, surely, this is an impossible task! God has so lavished His good hand upon us that we just have to cry, “For you, Lord, have made me glad through Your work ...” ( 92:4 ). Do you thank the Lord Jesus every day for saving your soul?

#### 1. Illustrate

### B) PAST SOCIAL BLESSINGS

“For you, Lord, have made me glad through Your work ...” ( 92:4 ). The psalmist tells us that “God sets the solitary in families ...” ( Ps. 68:6 ). This is exactly what has happened to us. Whether we think of the circle of our family, our friends, or the fellowship of saints, just consider for a moment the enjoyment and enrichment that have been brought into our lives through the men and women, boys and girls, who have crossed our path. What a miserable world it would be without mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, and the fellowship of the Christian church! The hymnist expresses it well:

For the joy of human love,  
Brother, sister, parent, child,  
Friends on earth, and friends above,  
For all gentle thoughts and mild,  
Lord of all, to Thee we raise  
This our hymn of grateful praise.

Folliott S. Pierpoint

### C) PAST TEMPORAL BLESSINGS

“For you, Lord, have made me glad through Your work ...” ( 92:4 ); and again: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits” ( Ps. 103:2 ). The psalmist undoubtedly includes temporal blessings in the comprehensiveness of that little word “work”; and so must we. God’s favor upon our homes, prosperity in our businesses, and health-giving food to our bodies, are all part of the divine work of Providence.

The Puritan writer, William Law, considered a thankful spirit an essential quality of sainthood. He wrote: “Would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? It is not he who prays most or fasts most; it is not he who gives alms or who is most eminent for temperance, chastity or justice, but it is he who is always thankful to God, who receives everything as an instance of God’s goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it.”

If we study this psalm carefully we shall notice that there is not only a backward look for which we are to be thankful, but there is also a forward look:

## 2) We Must Gratefully Anticipate God's Blessings Which Are Before Us

"... I will triumph in the works of Your hands. O Lord, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep" ( 92:4-5 ). This is a thrilling statement! The psalmist has looked back with gladness and gratitude because of the blessings God has lavished upon his life, but now with expectation he exults in the possibilities of the future. He says, "O Lord, how great are Your works! Your thoughts [more literally, designs and purposes] are very deep" ( 92:5 ). Whatever has been experienced in the past is not to be compared with what lies ahead.

Paul must have been thinking of words like this when he wrote, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit: "... Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him" ( 1 Cor. 2:9 ). Thank God, there are no limitations attached to God's purposes of blessings, except those we impose by unbelief. It is one thing to drop on our knees and give thanks to God for blessings past and present, but it is quite another matter to thank God in faith for HIS great work and deep purposes that He has in store for us.

Major Ian Thomas once said at a conference, "A prayer which does not give thanks to God for what He is going to do is not a prayer of faith, for faith is more than asking: it is taking from the hand of God and 'thank you.' "

How good is the God we adore,  
Our faithful, unchangeable Friend,  
Whose love is as great as His pow'r,  
And knows neither measure nor end.  
'Tis Jesus, the First and the Last,  
Whose Spirit shall guide us safely home;  
We'll Praise Him for all that is past,  
And trust Him for all that's to come.

J. Hart

(From THE KESWICK HYMNBOOK . Used by permission of Marshall-Pickering.)

## II. The Duty of Thankfulness is a Major Activity

"It is good to give thanks to the Lord, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night" ( 92:1-2 ). Thankfulness is a major activity inasmuch as it engages the total man—spirit, soul, and body. The psalmist speaks here of:

### 1) Spiritual Thankfulness

“It is good to give thanks to the Lord ...” ( 92:1 ). There is a level of praying and praising which cannot be expressed in words. It is an activity of worship within the realm of the spirit. Paul speaks of it in his First Epistle to the Corinthians when he talks about praying with the spirit and singing with the spirit (see 1 Cor. 14:14–15 ). How the Father in heaven seeks such worship from His redeemed people! Do we know anything about this activity within the realm of our spirits?

## **2. Amplify**

### **2) Personal Thankfulness**

“It is good ... to sing praises to Your name, O Most High” ( 92:1 ). This is praising-not so much with the spirit as with the understanding (see 1 Cor. 14:15 ). It involves the use of our mental and vocal powers. “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever,” and there can be no greater activity than to sing praises to the name of the Most High God.

Although this psalm was used for public worship on the Sabbath day, its message contains a far wider application. We not only praise God with our lips when we stand up to sing in church, our lips should sound His glories wherever we find ourselves: in the home, in business, or in the world at large.

But even more important than the testimony of our lips is the thanksgiving of our lives. We must be able to say and mean, “For ... me, to live is Christ ...” ( Phil. 1:21 ); and again: “... we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” ( Titus 2:12 ). If what we are does not exalt the ‘name of the Most High,’ then what we say or sing is virtually worthless.

## **3. Amplify**

### **3) Musical Thankfulness**

“To declare your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night, On an instrument of ten strings ...” ( 92:2–3 ). The ‘instrument of ten strings,’ or psaltery, was a kind of harp that was used in the worship of God, both in the temple and in smaller groups throughout Old Testament times. The instrument symbolizes the outgoing of the total human personality in a ministry of praise. Those who played the harp were usually professional musicians, and their time was mostly spent morning and night strumming their praise to God, or in leading in the worship of God’s house.

What was true of those harpists should be equally true of our lives. Every day we should show forth the lovingkindness of our God, and every night we should celebrate His faithfulness. Our total beings should be a symphony of thankfulness. Only then will men and women come to believe that Christ is real to us.

When David describes his great deliverance in Psalm 40 he says, “[God] has put a new song in my mouth— Praise to our God; Many will see it and fear, And will trust in the Lord” (v. 3 ).

When we think about musical thankfulness we are reminded of Paul and Silas in that prison in Philippi. If ever men had a right to bemoan their sad lot it was these two warriors of the cross. Even though beaten and bleeding, and put into the innermost cell of the prison where their feet were fastened in stocks, Luke tells us that “... at midnight Paul and Silas were [worshiping] and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them” ( Acts 16:23–25 ). The word ‘listening’ is a rare verb. It means “to listen with pleasure as to a recitation or music” (Page). It was a new experience for the prisoners and a wonderful testimony of Christian trustfulness and thankfulness. The result of such triumphant thankfulness was that a great earthquake, shook the prison, so that the prisoners were released, and the jailer was saved! Paul reminds us that when we are filled with the Holy Spirit we make “... melody in [our hearts] to the Lord, giving thanks ...” ( Eph. 5:19–20 ).

## **Conclusion**

We have seen what constitutes the duty of thankfulness. It is a moral necessity and it is a major activity. Let us see to it that we remember to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises unto His name, and to show forth His lovingkindness in the morning and His faithfulness every night. Only then shall we fulfill God's purpose in our creation and redemption.

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Some years ago the late Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse was traveling from Alabama to Florida. Feeling a tire going flat, he pulled to the side of the road and inwardly groaned at the thought of removing the hundreds of books in the trunk, so as to reach his spare tire. Seeing a jeep coming over the hill, he hailed the driver and offered him money to fix the flat. The big, strapping fellow was soon hard at work. When he expressed curiosity about the books, Dr. Barnhouse told him he was a preacher. The man said, 'My wife would be interested, but I'm not interested in those things.' All the time the man worked his dog stood close to him, licking him every minute. Now and again the man stopped to pat it. The man shared how the dog had once saved his life by pulling him out of quicksand and for that reason he was devoted to the dog. "It eats at my table and, though my wife does not like it, he sleeps at the foot of my bed." Looking into the man's face, Dr. Barnhouse commented, "How strange! The dog has saved your life from quicksand and you are devoted to it. Yet Christ has done more than the dog and you are not interested in Christ. You are in a worse plight than quicksand, from which Christ came to save you. The dog did not die for you, but Christ did; yet you thank the dog, but are not thankful to Christ." How that story ought to make us thank the Savior every moment for saving us from eternal perdition.

### **2. Amplify**

... Next time you're having your Quiet Time, why not pick up your hymnal and use the words of a grand old hymn to express to the Lord something of the 'wonder, love, and praise' felt in your own heart. For hymns of this nature, see the sections on Adoration, Devotion, God's Attributes, Praise, Worship, etc. It will quicken your own spirit as you wait on God.

### **3. Amplify**

... In praising God with our understanding, let's be specific and intelligent in rendering our thanks. The words of a Swedish hymn, "Thanks to God," written by August Ludvig Storm, a Salvation Army officer, can help us in this regard. It is worth noting that the author gives thanks for many of the negative aspects of life-tears, storms and pain. He himself experienced a partial paralysis from the age of thirty-seven.

#### **Thanks to God!**

Thanks, O God, for boundless mercy from Thy gracious throne above;

Thanks for ev'ry need provided from the fulness of Thy love!

Thanks for daily toil and labor and for rest when shadows fall;

Thanks for love of friend and neighbor and Thy goodness unto all!

Thanks for thorns as well as roses, thanks for weakness and for health;

Thanks for clouds as well as sunshine, thanks for poverty and wealth!

Thanks for pain as well as pleasure—all Thou sendest day by day;

And Thy Word, our dearest treasure, shedding light upon our way.

Thanks, O God, for home and fireside, where we share our daily bread;

Thanks for hours of sweet communion, when by Thee our souls are fed!

Thanks for grace in time of sorrow and for joy and peace in Thee;

Thanks for hope today, tomorrow, and for all eternity!

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on the Psalms see Vol. 6, Qtr. 3, Ch. 38.

*\*Available on cassette-Order #7446-147*

## Forty-nine Sermon

### FORTY-NINE, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

**SUBJECT:** The Wonderful Counselor

**READING:** Isaiah 9:1-7

**TEXT:** “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; ... And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor ...” ( 9:6 ).

#### Introduction

One of the most popular words of the hour across the Western world is the term “counselor” or “counseling.” With the pressures and problems of our modern age we are becoming a people who cannot live without counselors or counseling. How reassuring to be able to turn to One who is described as the Wonderful Counselor. Isaiah 9:6 spells out for us:

- I. The Attributes of This Wonderful Counselor ( 9:6 )
  1. Christ is Full of Wisdom ( Col. 2:3 )
  2. Christ is Full of Knowledge ( Col. 2:3 )
- II. The Attractiveness of This Wonderful Counselor ( 9 :s- 7 )
  1. He Attracts People Wherever They Are ( Gen 49:10 )
  2. He Attracts People Whoever They Are ( John 12:32 )

3. He Attracts People Whatever They Are ( Acts 10:34 )

### III. The Ability of This Wonderful Counselor ( 9:6 )

1. He Has the Ability To Analyze the Condition of Men and Women ( John 3–5 )

2. He Has the Ability To Apply the Corrective to Men and Women ( John 3–5 )

## Conclusion

There is no human malady which Jesus cannot remedy. To become your wonderful Counselor Christ was born at Bethlehem, died at Calvary, and rose triumphantly. Only He can rid you of your complexes, give you a new life, and be your Guide until your journey's end.

## FORTY-NINE, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

**SUBJECT:** The Wonderful Counselor

**READING:** Isaiah 9:1–7

**TEXT:** “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; ... And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor ...” ( 9:6 ).

## Introduction

Isaiah 9:6 is one of the most remarkable prophecies concerning Christ's first coming that we find in Old Testament literature. A careful examination of this verse within its context will reveal that its truth spans the ages. Every dispensation from the beginning of time until the universal reign of Christ is comprehended by these majestic titles of the Lord Jesus Christ. The preexistent Son was born into the human family in order that He might become The Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Isaiah uses the words of this prophecy to describe the reign of Christ over a people emancipated out of terrible bondage and unspeakable darkness. The final fulfillment of this great utterance has yet to be realized when “Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run.” Meanwhile, we can know the transforming experience of Christ in our lives as The Wonderful Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. In this four-part series on “The Christ of Christmas” we shall take each of these four great titles and learn something of the fullness of our gospel and the sufficiency of our glorious Savior.

One of the most popular words of the hour across the Western world is the term “counselor” or “counseling.” Because of the development of the science of psychology, together with the pressures and problems of our modern age, we are becoming people who cannot live without counselors or counseling.

Some years ago the *New York Herald Tribune* published a series of articles on the subject, “How Mentally Fit Are We New Yorkers?” In one penetrating article the writer pointed out that after an eight-year study by a five-man team at New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, it was concluded that “only one out of five is mentally well; one out of four is so psychologically disturbed as to be impaired in his social relations. The rest have some symptoms of psychological illness but they do not interfere with their lives.” The researchers were quick to add, “The frequency of symptoms does not appear to differ much from other parts of the United States.” In the light of such facts, how comforting and reassuring to be able to turn to One who is described as The Wonderful Counselor. Isaiah spells out:

## I. The Attributes of This Wonderful Counselor

“... His name will be called Wonderful Counselor ...” ( 9:6 ). The majority of scholars are satisfied to link these two words together. The term “Wonderful” is in itself deeply suggestive. As someone has said, ‘It both expresses and hides the incomprehensible’ (F. C. Jennings). Then the thought behind ‘Counselor’ is that of one who gives advice and counsel. He is the only One in the universe who requires no counsel Himself. So Paul asks, ‘For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?’ ( Rom. 11:34 ). The apostle sums up the attributes of this Wonderful Counselor best when he declares in Colossians 2:2-3 , “... Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Note:

## 1) Christ is Full of Wisdom

“... in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom ...” ( Col. 2:3 ). James tells us that “... the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” ( James 3:17 ). What a contrast to the earthly, sensual, and devilish wisdom of the world! Observe carefully that it is described as “... wisdom that is ... pure ...” ( James 3:17 ). It is not tainted by worldliness or selfish gain. It is not contaminated by our own ideas; rather, it is characterized by the very life, light, and love of God. Anyone can give advice, but how seldom is their counsel right and pure?

### 1. Illustrate

It is “... *wisdom that is ... peaceable ...*” ( James 3:17 ). When people have the right answer they usually have the wrong attitude. We do not help people by arguing with them. Instead, we set up walls of resentment, frustration, and defeat.

When we turn to Christ He always speaks peace to our disturbed spirits. Indeed, as we follow Him throughout the Gospels we find Him using an often repeated expression, “Go in peace.” His last words to His disciples were ‘Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid’ ( John 14:27 ).

But look again. Here is “... *wisdom that is ... gentle, willing to yield ...*” ( James 3:17 ). As we shall see a little later, Jesus Christ was the most approachable person who ever lived, the perfect Gentleman. His enemies had to admit it. Sin-sick souls crowded around Him, and little children sought the blessing of His arms. This Wonderful Counselor never breaks a broken reed or puts out a smoking flax (see Isa. 42:3 ).

Then observe that this “... *wisdom ... is ... full of mercy and good fruits ...*” ( James 3:17 ). Our approach to people is usually critical, overbearing, and unforgiving. Not so when we come to Jesus in all our need and brokenness. He is full of mercy and good fruits. Not only does He forgive our sins, but He regenerates us by His Spirit so that in the place of hatred there is love; in the place of sorrow there is joy; and in the place of unrest there is peace.

Our text goes on to speak of “... *wisdom that is ... without partiality ...*” ( James 3:17 ). It is humanly impossible to be impartial. However objective we may try to be in making our judgments, invariably our own feelings and prejudices enter into our counseling. But the wisdom from heaven which is embodied in the Lord Jesus Christ never takes sides, except against sin. We can trust Him to be utterly fair and just in all His dealings with us.

Finally, we are told that this “... *wisdom ... is ... without hypocrisy*” ( James 3:17 ). It is free from doubts, wavering, and insincerity. Very often we get advice from people who repudiate their counsel by the rotten lies they are living themselves. This is never true of our Wonderful Counselor. God is never an Actor. When He speaks He does so genuinely, sincerely, and transformingly. What a glorious attribute is this characteristic of wisdom!

## 2) Christ is Full of Knowledge

“... in whom are hidden all the treasures of ... knowledge” ( Col. 2:3 ). While wisdom refers mainly to spiritual insight, knowledge, in this context, has to do with the saving gospel. In other words, Jesus not only knows all about us, but He has the answers to our problems, for in the knowledge of the gospel there is a solution to every problem of life. The darkness of sin is expelled by the entrance of the gospel light. It was Paul who declared, “... God who commanded light to shine out of darkness ... has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” ( 2 Cor. 4:6 ).

“Remind the Lord Jesus Christ that as He is Counselor to the church of God, He will be in your particular case Counselor and Guide, and will direct you; and if you wait believingly, expectantly, you will find that the waiting is not in vain, that the Lord will prove Himself a Counselor both wise and good” (George Mueller).

## **II. The Attractiveness of This Wonderful Counselor**

“... His name will be called ... Counselor.... Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end ... ’ ( 9:6-7 ). Each of the titles in this verse emphasizes the supreme ability of our Savior to administer the government which is placed upon His shoulders. He is going to win all the nations because of His wise and masterful government. Just as the Queen of Sheba came from far to test out the wisdom of Solomon, so people of every tongue and nation under heaven will converge around the throne of the greater Solomon, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

In describing the magnetism of Jesus Christ, Mark says, “... they came to Him from every quarter” ( Mark 1:45 ). There was a universal appeal about this Wonderful Counselor. Indeed, He is the only One in the universe who could stand among men and say, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” ( Matt. 11:28 ). Since the mosaic of humanity is totalized in Him:

### **1) He Attracts People Wherever They are.**

Prophetic language declares that “... to Him shall be the obedience of the people” ( Gen. 49:10 ). It is an historical fact that while the religions of the world have suffered varying fortunes in different parts of the world, Christianity has never failed to strike root wherever the gospel has been worthily preached. Thus Jesus appeals to people everywhere.

### **2) He Attracts People Whoever They Are.**

He Himself said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself ( John 12:32 ). Men sought His counsel, women came to Him for advice, and little children responded to His welcoming smile. This has been the history of the Christian church ever since this Wonderful Counselor came into the world.

### **3) He Attracts People Whatever They Are**

“... God shows no partiality” ( Acts 10:34 ). Theologians sought His wisdom, sin-sick souls came to Him for counsel; and when His enemies attempted to trap Him in His words they all came back, saying, “... No man ever spoke like this Man!” ( John 7:46 ); “for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” ( Matt. 7:29 ).

Who is He the people bless for His words of gentleness ?

Who is He to whom they bring, All the sick and sorrowing?

‘Tis the Lord! oh wondrous story!

‘Tis the Lord! the King of glory!

At His feet we humbly fall,

Crown Him! crown Him, Lord of all!

Benjamin R. Hanby

### **III. The Ability of This Wonderful Counselor**

“... His name will be called Wonderful Counselor ...” ( 9:6 ). Some scholars translate this to read, ‘As a Counselor, He is a wonder’; that is to say, whenever He counsels miracles happen, transformations take place, the supernatural is seen. This is why there is a sense in which the word “wonderful” should never be used, except to describe the wonder-working power of Jesus Christ. Wherever He extends His governmental counsel there is lasting peace. As the Wonderful Counselor.

#### **1) He Has the Ability To Analyze the Condition of Men and Women**

“As a Counselor, He is a wonder” beyond all human perception or comprehension. Take, for example, three successive chapters in the Gospel of John and watch Him in His analysis of three completely different types of need.

In John 3 a theological professor came to see Him and started the conversation with a remarkable eulogy: “... Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” ( John 3:2 ). Jesus recognized instantly that here was a man who had religion without life. In spite of his theological training and religions influence, Nicodemus knew nothing about life from above.

Then we turn to Chapter 4 and find Jesus speaking with a woman who knew every trick in the book to escape analysis; but the Savior saw through her and discerned that behind her charming and attractive personality was a sordid, frustrated, and defeated sex rife. Jesus said to her, “... Go, call your husband, and come here” ( John 4:16 ). This at once revealed that this woman had had five husbands and was now living with a man who was not her husband. Here, then, was a woman with passion but without power. She was helpless when it came to controlling the native energies locked up inside her.

In John 5 we have a man who suffered with an infirmity for thirty-eight years. Time and again he had sought the healing virtues of the pool of Bethesda but had been disappointed. But when Jesus saw him He detected a sick man without hope. This explains His whole approach when He asked the incredible question, “... Do you want to be made well?” ( John 5:6 ).

A study of these three stories is rich with lessons concerning Christ’s ability to analyze the condition of men and women. No wonder Jeremiah says, “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart ...” ( Jer. 17:9–10 ).

#### **2) He Has the Ability To Apply the Corrective to Men and Women**

“As a Counselor, He is a Wonder.” Returning to those three stories again, we notice that Jesus was never satisfied with analyzing people: He always applied the corrective.

How different it is with human means of straightening out lives. While we thank God for Christian psychologists, doctors, and even pastors who are able to provide help to sin-sick souls, there is no guarantee of success. But with Jesus there is never any chance of failure!

To Nicodemus He said, "... You must be born again" ( John 3:9 ), and something happened in that man's life, for later he was found at the foot of the cross affectionately overseeing the burial arrangements of the body of Jesus—thus openly confessing his Savior and Lord.

With the woman of Samaria, Jesus said: "... If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" ( John 4:10 ). The woman accepted His offer. she stooped and drank and lived. Indeed, such was the overflow of this spring of living water in her life that she affected her entire city.

The man with the infirmity was commanded to "... Rise, take up your bed and walk." And we read, "... immediately the man was made well ..." ( John 5:8–9 ).

## **2. Amplify**

### **Conclusion**

So we see that there is no human malady which Jesus cannot remedy. To become your Wonderful Counselor, Christ was born at Bethlehem, died at Calvary, and rose triumphantly. Now He waits to change that life of yours. Only He can rid you of your complexes, give you a new rife, and be your Guide until your journey's end.

### **Additional Annotations**

#### **1. Illustrate**

... A Christian girl went to an unsaved psychiatrist for help with an emotional problem. The psychiatrist, among other things, suggested that she should 'throw off all crippling restraints and live it up? Here was earthly, sensual, and devilish wisdom. When we turn to our Wonderful Counselor, Jesus Christ, we can always be sure of wisdom which is pure.

#### **2. Amplify**

... Christ is "Wonderful" in HIS being, in HIS work, in His ways, and in His words. He can take the sinner sunken in sin and degraded by vice, transform him into an heir of glory, a child of light and holiness. He can take the weak and helpless one and in His own might use him to the pulling down of strongholds. So in His dealings with us in providence, as well as in redemption, how wonderfully He makes the light to shine out of darkness, and the crooked things straight! Let us not be afraid to expect wonders in our life, when we have such a wonderful Savior to undertake for us. It is His delight to reveal to those who trust Him the wonders of His love and power and wisdom—as He leads them onward in their walk of faith (Remarks by Evan H. Hopkins found on a Christmas card).

### **For Further Research**

For Bibliography on Isaiah, see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 2.

\*Series available on cassette - Order #7348–52

## **Fifty Sermon**

## FIFTY, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

**SUBJECT:** The Mighty God

**READING:** Colossians 1:1–18 ; Isaiah 9:6

**TEXT:** “For unto us a child is born, Unto us a Son is given; ... And His name will be called ... Mighty God” ( Isa. 9:6 ).

### Introduction

The second title given to our Lord Jesus Christ is one of unusual significance. Eminent scholars throughout the centuries have sought to understand its full meaning, and the literature which has been written on the subject is a study in itself. Dr. Alexander Maclaren says that the word “mighty” implies “one who is victorious in battle,” suggesting power, strength, and victory. The prophetic name of the coming Savior reveals

- I. Christ’s Power as Creator ( 9:6 )
- II. Christ’s Power as Sustainer ( 9:6 )
- III. Christ’s Power as Redeemer ( 9:6 )
  1. Christ’s Power to Come to Earth ( 9:6 )
  2. Christ’s Power to Live on Earth ( Rom. 1:4 )
  3. Christ’s Power to Speak on Earth ( Mark 1:22 )
  4. Christ’s Power to Work on Earth ( Luke 24:19 )
  5. Christ’s Power to Die on Earth ( John 10 :17.18)
  6. Christ’s Power to Rise on Earth ( John 10:18 )
  7. Christ’s Power to Save on Earth ( Matt 9:6 )

### Conclusion

What a glorious Christmas message this is to a world waiting in the shadow of darkness and death. His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God—mighty as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer. Will you claim Him as your Redeemer here and now?

## FIFTY, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

**SUBJECT:** The Mighty God

**READING:** Colossians 1:1–18 ; Isaiah 9:6

**TEXT:** “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; ... And His name will be called ... Mighty God’ ( Isa. 9:6 ).

### Introduction

The second title given to our Lord Jesus Christ is one of unusual significance. Eminent scholars throughout the centuries have sought again and again to understand its full meaning; and the literature which has been written on the subject is a study in itself. Some have maintained that the name might be translated “The Radiator” or “the One who gives light to men.” Others have suggested that the title means “The Illustrious” or “The Bright and Shining One.” The majority of Bible students insist that our English rendering is the best and nearest expression of the original. In other words, our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Mighty One, The Strong One, The Omnipotent One. Dr. Alexander Maclaren tells us that the word “Mighty” implies “one who is victorious in battle”—a hero who has made a name for himself in triumphant warfare. The essential message of this title is that of power, strength, and victory. Thus the prophetic name of the coming Savior reveals:

## **I. Christ’s Power As Creator**

“... His name will be called ... Mighty God ...” ( 9:6 ). Centuries later, John interpreted this title by telling us that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” ( John 1:1–3 ). Paul adds, “For by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him” ( Col. 1:16 ).

It is a matter of fact that the universe is not self-produced. Biological analysis has failed to show that a single particle of matter can transmute itself into visibility and movement. Furthermore, to create is a personal act; and the divine order and activity seen in creation demands an absolute Being as the first cause of all things. Therefore, as we look at the glory of the heavens and the handiwork of the earth, as we examine the expansiveness of the universe through the telescope, and the minuteness of that same universe through the microscope, we have to stand back with adoring worship and declare the Mighty God!

### **1. Illustrate**

## **II. Christ’s Power As Sustainer**

“... His name will be called ... Mighty God ...” ( 9:6 ). The New Testament expands this by stating: “who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” ( Heb. 1:3 ); and again: “... He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” ( Col. 1:17 ). Here we are told that not only were all things created through the word of His power, but they are sustained and governed by that same power; in other words, it requires as much power to conserve and to create.

Materialists who attribute the sustained power of creation to “natural laws” cannot prove their position, for to any thoughtful person it is obvious that laws that have no power to create even an atom cannot sustain a world. The truth is that the secret behind all phenomena is the Mighty God. As we look about us we are amazed at this stupendous fact. No leaf that flutters in the breeze, no blade of grass that stands erect, consists or holds together without the sustaining power of the Mighty God.

What a concept this is of the One who came to be born at Bethlehem! Let us remember these lofty views of our God as Christmas draws near. John Peterson expresses it well in his hymn of adoration:

All glory to Jesus, begotten of God,

great I AM is He;

Creator, sustainer—but wonder of all,

The Lamb of Calvary!

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### **III. Christ's Power As Redeemer**

“His name will be called ... Mighty God ...” ( 9:6 ). Isaiah beautifully brings these two concepts together when he puts the following words into the mouth of the preexistent Son: “... I, the Lord, am your Savior, And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” ( Isa. 49:26 ). As we think through the saving activity of the mighty Son of God, we are impressed with seven aspects of His redeeming work. Consider:

#### **1) Christ's Power To Come to Earth.**

The prophet tells us, “... unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called ... Mighty God ...” ( 9:6 ). The Redeemer's Advent was utterly unique. His was a sinless and supernatural birth. He was born of Mary, He was begotten of the Holy Spirit. The message of the angel to this highly favored woman is found in Luke 1:35 : “... The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” Although Jesus passed through the natural processes of human birth, the conception was initiated by the Holy Spirit. The holy life of the preexistent Son was united with the seed of the woman and the Mighty God was born into the world. Not to believe this is to rob Jesus Christ of His sinless life and His saving virtue. On the other hand, to accept these facts by faith is to kneel worshipfully at His cradle, recognizing His sovereignty in the gift of gold, His deity in the gift of frankincense, and His humanity in the gift of myrrh.

#### **2. Illustrate**

#### **2) Christ's Power to Live on Earth.**

In a most revealing statement found in Romans 1:4 , Paul tells us that Jesus Christ was “... declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” For our purpose, we must content ourselves with observing that the Lord Jesus manifested Himself as the Mighty God by the Spirit of holiness with which He lived in a sinful world. It was because of His sinless life that God raised Him from the dead so that His body saw no corruption. It is true that He mingled with sinners, yet the Bible says that He was “... holy, harmless, ... separate from sinners ...” ( Heb. 7:26 ). It is true that He confronted Satan, but He could testify, “... the ruler of this world is coming, and ... has nothing in Me” ( John 14:30 ). Right throughout His life He was characterized by the Spirit of holiness. Only the Mighty God could have lived a life of this caliber and quality. This is why Paul, in another of his epistles, declares that the only life worth living is the LIFE of the indwelling Son of God (see Gal. 2:20 ).

#### **3) Christ's Power to Speak on Earth.**

Again and again throughout the Gospels we read that people “... were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes’ ( Mark 1:22 ). No nation in history was more instructed in the theology of religion like the Jewish nation. Patriarchs, potentates, poets, and prophets spoke throughout the centuries; but now One appeared among them who spoke with such authority and power that no one could resist Him. In every sense of the word, He spoke as the Mighty God. The power of the Savior's utterances were not only unique because of the authority of HIS statements, but because of the originality of His sources. While the scribes and Pharisees quoted their masters, Jesus stood before men and declared, “You have heard that it was said to those of old,... But I say to you ...” ( Matt. 5:21–22ff ). Truly, He was the Mighty God!

### **3. Amplify**

#### **4) Christ's Power to Work on Earth.**

When the two disciples on the way to Emmaus were reviewing the ministry of the Lord Jesus, they summed it up by saying He was "... a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" ( Luke 24:19 ). Supernatural power and strength were demonstrated in all that He did which could not be denied. When He healed the sick the people cried, "... He has done all things well ..." ( Mark 7:37 ). When He miraculously fed the hungry it is recorded that onlookers said, "... This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world" ( John 6:14 ). When He stilled the waves His disciples "... marveled, saying, ' ... Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?' " ( Matt. 8:27 ). When He exorcised the demon out of a mute man "... the multitudes marveled, saying, 'It was never seen like this in Israel!' " ( Matt. 9:33 ). When He forgave sinners "... the multitudes ... marveled and glorified God who had given such power to men" ( Matt. 9:8 ).

#### **5) Christ's Power to Die on Earth.**

Man is born to live; Jesus came to die. This is why Jesus declared, "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down ..." ( John 10:17-18 ). This is one of the most remarkable statements Jesus Christ ever made on earth to describe the character of His death. Notice it was voluntary as to motive. With the cross before Him He could say, "... the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" ( Matt 20:28 ); and again: "... for this purpose I came to this hour" ( John 12:27 ). Even more amazing, Christ's death was voluntary as to method. While He escaped lynching and stoning a number of times, He could tell His disciples with complete composure that He would be delivered to the Gentiles to be mocked, scourged and crucified (see Matt. 20:19 ). Perhaps the most astonishing aspect of this truth is the fact that His death was voluntary as to the moment. When the hour struck He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (see John 19:30 ).

This voluntary character of the death of Christ lifts it out of the realm of ordinary deaths into the place of uniqueness, infinite wonder, and redemptive significance. It is not surprising, therefore, that a hardened centurion standing by the cross exclaimed, "... Truly this Man was the Son of God!" ( Mark 15:39 ). Needless to say, only such a death could redeem sinners like you and me.

### **4. Illustrate**

#### **6) Christ's Power to Rise on Earth.**

He said, "... I have power to lay [My life] down, and I have power to take it again ..." ( John 10:18 ). Now the Bible records a number of stories of people who were raised to life; but to be absolutely accurate in our definition, all such persons were resuscitated rather than raised from the dead. The proof of this is that they died again. Dr. F. B. Meyer said in one of his sermons, "These people had one cradle, but two coffins." But when Jesus rose from the dead He conquered death forever: "... Death no longer has dominion over Him" ( Rom. 6:9 ); He is "alive forevermore" ( Rev. 1:18 ). So in the resurrection of Jesus Christ the omnipotence of God was manifested proving He was and is the Mighty God.

### **5. Illustrate**

#### **7) Christ's Power to Save on Earth.**

When Jesus was still here in the flesh He could say, "... the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins ..." ( Matt. 9:6 ). This forgiving and saving ministry continues through His mediatorial office as Intercessor. The writer to the Hebrews puts it this way: "... He is ... able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He ever lives to make intercession for them" ( Heb. 7:25 ). What a glorious gospel this is! It includes salvation from the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and, one day, from the presence of sin. Here is

salvation in all its fullness and completeness. Every aspect of God's redeeming purpose is included in that phrase, "... able to save to the uttermost ..." ( Heb. 7:25 ). It matters not who or what you are: the Mighty God can save you. If you are a religious sinner He can save you; if you are a pagan sinner He can save you; if you are an intellectual sinner He can save you; if you are an ignorant sinner He can save you; if you are a cultured sinner He can save you; if you are a depraved sinner He can save you. The truth of this text in Hebrews is all-inclusive: it embraces everyone.

## **Conclusion**

What a glorious Christmas message this is to a world waiting in the shadow of darkness and death: "... His name will be called ... Mighty God ..." ( 9:6 )—mighty as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer. Will you claim Him as your Redeemer here and now?

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... The famous English deist, Anthony Collins of the 17th century, met a plain countryman one day while out walking. He asked him where he was going. "To church, sir." "What are you going to do there?" "To worship God." "Is your God a great or a little God?" "He is both, sir." "How can He be both?" "He is so great, sir, that the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him; and so little that He can dwell in my heart." Infidel Collins later declared that this simple answer from the countryman had more effect upon his mind than all the volumes which learned doctors had written against him. This simple countryman had ... the right concept of God, the God of the Bible, who as a spirit is the Creator of all things and yet indwells the heart of His believing creatures in the person of Jesus Christ.

Quoted by Spiros Zodhiates in *his book, was Christ God?* Reprinted in *Pulpit Helps*, published by AMG International, Chattanooga, TN 37422, December 1984, p. 30.

### **2. Illustrate**

... Among the thousands thronging Trafalgar Square in London every day some doubtless look up in passing at the statue of Lord Nelson on top of its colossal column and try to make out what it is really like. The effort is not easy. In his well-meaning concern to give the famous admiral as exalted a position as possible the sculptor has set him too high to be distinctly discernible from the pavement below; the elevation precludes revelation. At the Ideal Home Exhibition in Olympia in 1948, however, an exact replica in plaster of the figure surmounting the tremendous pillar was placed at eye-level where all could closely examine it, on a balcony of the vast building. Thus for the first time many had an immediate view of the features which before they had only beheld from afar. That is what Jesus did for God. That is the Christmas message. He brought Him down, as it were, to our level, within range of our dimly finite vision, so that we might see Him face to face. At Bethlehem the Most High became the most nigh. 'And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory' ( John 1:14 ).

*Prophetic Witness*, vol. 10, no. 12 (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, December 1986), p. 9.

### **3. Amplify**

... Jesus left no book, no tract or written page behind him ... yet He is more quoted than any writer in all history. His sayings at times are on almost every tongue, and His words have literally gone out into all the world. No man ever laid down his life in Asia or in Africa to translate Plato or Aristotle, Kant or Hegel,

Shakespeare or Milton, but hundreds have died to carry Jesus' priceless words to the ends of the earth. Several hundred languages have been reduced to writing in order to transmit His life-giving message. Savage tribes have been uplifted, cannibals civilized, head-hunters converted, schools and colleges founded, and the character and culture of individuals and of peoples have been changed as the result of the influence of His words which are creative spirit and life.

Sherwood Eddy. Quoted by Spiros Zodhiates in his book, *Was Christ God?* Reprinted in *Pulpit Helps*, December 1984, p. 31.

#### **4. Illustrate**

... It was during the funeral procession of Abraham Lincoln that a humble Negro mother, standing respectfully behind the crowd of white people, held her baby high above her head as the martyred President's body passed, and said, "Take a long look at him, son; that's the man who died for you." To look unto Christ who died for you is to receive life, to find cleansing from sin, to discover a motive for the defeat of temptation. Christian, take a long look at Him today;

He's the Man who died for you.

*Evangelistic Illustrations for Pulpit and Platform.* Compiled and edited by G. Franklin Allee, p. 61.

#### **5. Illustrate**

... The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Without it the believer has no hope for this life or for the life to come ... Our belief in this great teaching is not based upon some religious feeling or upon an unfounded idea about what may have happened in the past. Nor are we talking about an isolated rumor, but about a historical fact with solid evidence to support it. In the early part of this century, a group of lawyers met in England to discuss the biblical accounts of Jesus' resurrection. They wanted to see if sufficient information was available to make a case that would hold up in an English court of law. When their study was completed they published the results of their investigation. They concluded that Christ's resurrection was one of the most well-established facts of history!

*Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 5/86.13).

### **For Further Research**

For Bibliography on Isaiah see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 2.

## **Fifty-one Sermon**

### **FIFTY-ONE, SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

**SUBJECT:** The Everlasting Father

**READING:** Revelation 1:19–20 ; Isaiah 9:6

**TEXT:** "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; ... His name will be called ... Everlasting Father" ( *Isa. 9:6* ).

## Introduction

The name “Everlasting Father” is perhaps the most mysterious and puzzling of the four titles that are accorded our Lord in this remarkable prophecy of Isaiah. This title has reference to the second person of the trinity and not to God the Father. It is designed to describe a glorious aspect of the ministry of the Lord Jesus which is well supported throughout the rest of Scripture. As Everlasting Father, He is:

- I. The Final Head of a New Revelation ( 9:6 )
  1. The Father of Eternal Life ( John 1:1–4 )
  2. The Father of Eternal Light ( John 1:4 )
  3. The Father of Eternal Love ( John 1:18 )
- II. The Founder-Head of a New Religion ( James 1:27 )
  1. The Word of the Father ( James 1:22 )
  2. The Work of the Father ( James 1:27 )
- III. The Federal Head of a New Race ( Rom. 8:29 )
  1. Believe the Everlasting Father ( John 1:12 )
  2. Receive the Everlasting Father ( John 1:12 )

## Conclusion

Have you any room for Jesus? May your response be:

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus!

There is room in my heart for Thee.

Emily E. S. Elliott

## FIFTY, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

**SUBJECT:** The Everlasting Father

**READING:** [Revelation 1:19–20](#) ; [Isaiah 9:6](#)

**TEXT:** “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; ... His name will be called ... Everlasting Father” ( [Isa. 9:6](#) ).

## Introduction

The name “Everlasting Father” is perhaps the most mysterious and puzzling of the four titles that are accorded our blessed Lord in this remarkable prophecy of Isaiah. As C. H. Spurgeon remarks, “How complex is the person of our Lord Jesus Christ! Almost in the same breath the prophet calls Him ‘a Child,’ ‘a Son,’ ‘a

Counselor,’ and ‘a Father.’ ” The more we look into this title, the greater becomes the unfoldings of divine truth concerning this glorious Savior of mankind. One thing we should make clear from the very start is that this title has reference to the second person of the trinity and not to God the Father. The Son is not the Father, neither is the Father the Son—though they are essentially and eternally co-equal. The title is rather designed to describe a glorious aspect of the ministry of the Lord Jesus which is well supported throughout the rest of Scripture. As Everlasting Father, He is:

## **I. The Final Head of a New Revelation**

“... His name will be called ... Everlasting Father ...” ( 9:6 ). John tells us that “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” ( John 1:18 ). The Father-heart of God would never have been revealed to mankind had not the Lord Jesus come to live among men as the revelation of the Father. It is true that, to some degree, the Fatherhood of God was known in Old Testament times by patriarchs, priests, poets, and prophets who ever looked onward to a final revelation. The Hebrew writer expresses it perfectly: “God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ...” ( Heb. 1:1–2 ). So in knowing the Lord Jesus Christ we are introduced to the nature and character of the Everlasting Father. Again John writes: “... He who has seen Me has seen the Father ...” ( John 14:9 ).

Now there are three all-inclusive revelations of God the Father which Jesus Christ came to interpret to men:

### **1) The Father of Eternal Life.**

In his prologue John reminds us that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... In Him was life ...” ( John 1:1 , 4 ). Throughout HIS entire ministry Jesus was ever speaking of this eternal life. Indeed, forty-five times at least in the New Testament this life is spoken of as God’s supreme gift to all who believe. For example, the Savior stood among men and announced, “... I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” This was eternal life in its quantitative measure. But Jesus also added, “... I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” ( John 10:10 , 28 ). This was eternal life in its qualitative measure. So as the revelation of the Father of eternity, the Christ of Christmas brought eternal life to a human race “dead in trespasses and ... sins” ( Eph. 2:1 ).

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **2) The Father of Eternal Light**

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men” ( John 1:4 ). Later the Master could add, “... I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” ( John 8:12 ). As Eternal Light, Jesus revealed every aspect of the holiness, righteousness, and justice of God the Father. At the same time He exposed every aspect of the wickedness, lawlessness, and sinfulness of man. Men and demons tried to extinguish that light but never succeeded. Out of the darkness and gloom of Calvary the light shone when Christ the Son of God cried “It is finished!” ( John 19:30 ). He was buried, but the light shone on, for the third day He arose as “... The Sun of Righteousness ... With healing in His wings ...” ( Mal. 4:2 ). The Bible tells us that “God is light” ( 1 John 1:5 ). This fact has been revealed supremely in the person of the Lord Jesus.

#### **2. Illustrate**

### **3) The Father of Eternal Love**

“No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him” ( John 1:18 ). Could words better describe the revelation of the heart of God? He came from the

very bosom of the Father to tell a lost world that "... God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" ( John 3:16 ). Such sacrificial love involved the accomplishment of an eternal redemption for you and for me. So the writer to the Hebrews says, "... with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" ( Heb. 9:12 ). Because of that eternal redemption we have an eternal salvation, for "... having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" ( Heb. 5:9 ). "God is love" ( 1 John 4:8 ). This is what distinguishes the Christian conception of a heavenly Father from all other religions of the world. How wonderful, then, that He came into this world as the Everlasting Father?

## **II. The Founder-Head of a New Religion.**

James speaks of "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father ..." ( James 1:27 ). Without doubt, Jesus was the Father and Founder of this. The Hebrews were in the habit of calling a man father of the thing which he invented. For instance, Jubal is called "... the father of all those who play the harp and flute" ( Gen. 4:21 ); and Jabal "...was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock" ( Gen. 4:20 ). Later in history, men followed this custom in naming certain great men as the fathers (or founders) of their particular science or system. For instance, Socrates was called "the father of philosophy"; Galen was named "the father of medicine"; whereas Herodotus has been known throughout the centuries as "the father of history." In a very real sense, therefore, we can talk about Christ as the Founder-Head of a new religion, or "the Founder of Christianity." The New Testament reveals that this new religion is characterized by:

### **1) The Word of the Father.**

James exhorts that we are to "... be doers of the word, and not hearers only ..." ( James 1:22 ). We know that the Lord Jesus was the Word, and brought the Word of the Father to this world. "... the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" ( John 1:17 ). He declared, "... I am ... the truth ..." ( John 14:6 )—not only incarnate truth, but the Author of inspired truth, as we have it in the Bible. Paul tells us that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" ( 2 Tim. 3:16 ). There is no other safe guide in matters of faith and life outside the covers of the Book we call the Holy Scriptures. The manifesto of heaven for life on earth was introduced into this world by Jesus Christ. In this sense He is the Founder-Head of a new religion, for He not only included the Law and the prophets of an old economy, but transcended them.

### **3. Amplify**

### **2) The Work of the Father**

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" ( James 1:27 ). James is here restating the truth which our Lord enunciated regarding the Day of Judgment when He would recognize those who rendered Him service, and those who withheld service (see Matt. 25:36–43 ). In fact, "James uses precisely the same word here for 'visit' ... when he says that pure religion and undefiled in the eyes of the Father-God is to visit those who are bereft of human fathers" (see *The General Epistle of James* [ *TNTC* ], 1979, p. 55). God Himself is revealed in the Bible as "A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows" ( Ps. 68:5 ); and again: "When my father and my mother forsake me, Then the Lord will take care of me" ( Ps. 27:10 ). It is certainly pertinent to remember that one of Christ's strongest condemnations was addressed to Pharisees who enriched themselves at the expense of the helpless—especially widows (see Mark 12:40 ). In this way the Lord Jesus manifested the Father's heart in what James calls "pure religion." God make us "pure and undefiled" in this respect.

## **III. The Federal Head of a New Race.**

Paul tells us that the Lord Jesus is "... the firstborn among many brethren" ( Rom. 8:29 ). This means that Christ's rank as firstborn declares Him to be the exalted Head of a new humanity. The apostle develops this important theme in 1 Corinthians 15 where he reminds us: "... as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive" ( v. 22 ). Adam was the federal head of all living, but by his fall he ruined us all. God said to him, "... in the day that you eat of [the fruit] you shall surely die" ( Gen. 2:17 ). In that death he incurred the death of the human race. Romans 5:12 tells us: "... as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, ... thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." In Adam all die; in Christ shall all be made alive. Jesus is the last Adam, and by union with this federal Head we become partakers of a new nature and a redeemed humanity. While generation makes us sons of Adam, regeneration makes us sons of God. In this sense Christ is the everlasting Father.

If the question be asked as to how this miracle takes place, then John gives us the answer when he says, "... as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" ( John 1:12-13 ). Our entry into this new humanity is not by human descent—it is "not of blood," nor of human desire—"not of ... flesh"; nor of human design—not "... of the will of man ..." ( John 1:13 ): it is an act of God in Christ. This miracle is effected when we:

### **1) Believe the Everlasting Father**

"... to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" ( John 1:12 ). As the Eternal Word, the Lord Jesus was also the Everlasting Father—the Father of eternity; therefore, the Father of eternal *life*, love, and light. To believe all this is the first great step into this miracle of regeneration and new birth. It must be more than head knowledge; there must be belief with the heart.

### **2) Receive the Everlasting Father**

"... as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God ..." ( John 1:12 ). This is an act of the mind, the heart, and the will whereby Jesus Christ, as the very Father of eternity, is received into the human personality. Just as He was born a little Babe in Bethlehem, so He must be born again in your heart and mind. Nothing less than this transaction makes us children of the Everlasting Father and, therefore, united to the federal Head of a new race.

## **4. Illustrate**

### **Conclusion**

Have you received the Lord Jesus Christ into your life? Or is your answer, "I have no room for Him."

No room for the Savior at Bethlehem's inn,

Only a cattle shed;

No place on earth for the dear Son of God,

Nowhere to lay His head.

Only a cross did they give to our Lord,

Only a borrowed tomb;

Today He is seeking a place in your heart—

Will you still say to Him, No room.

Rather, may your response be:

O come to my heart, lord Jesus!

There is room in my heart for Thee.

Emily E. S. Elliott

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... Dr. Walter Wilson once visited in a home where the members of the family were asked to quote Bible verses. One little girl quoted John 3:16 as follows: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have ETERNAL LIFE. Needless to say, he did not correct her, for it internal life, as well as everlasting life.

*Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations*. Copyright © 1979 by Paul Lee Tan (Rockville, Md.: Assurance Publishers), p. 441.

### **2. Illustrate**

... Bob Woods, in *Pulpit Digest*, tells the story of a couple who took their son, 11, and daughter, 7, to Carlsbad Caverns. As always, when the tour reached the deepest point in the cavern, the guide turned off all the lights to dramatize how completely dark and silent it is below the earth’s surface. The little girl, suddenly enveloped in utter darkness, was frightened and began to cry. Immediately was heard the voice of her brother: ‘Don’t cry. Somebody here knows how to turn on the lights.’ In a real sense, that is the message of the gospel: light is available. It is Jesus shining in the midst of the world’s darkness.

Adapted from *Leadership*, vol. 7, no. 2. (Carol Stream, Ill.: Christianity Today, Spring 1986), p. 47.

### **3. Amplify**

... Truth is exclusive, it denies and shuts out its opposite. The greater the truth the greater the realm in which it refuses rivalry. So Christ, as Savior, stands alone. He is God and no other voice can tell us anything about God. He alone is the way and the truth.

Paul Rader, “Who *is* Truth?” *Reality*, vol. 12, no. 9 (Washington, D.C.: September 1984), p. 3.

### **4. Illustrate**

... W.Y. Fullerton recalls his futile attempts to begin the Christian life. One Sunday morning he made up his mind to be a Christian, and never doubted that he knew what to do. He would leave off this evil thing—already evil things had a place in his life—he must do this good thing, read his Bible more, pray more, repent, and weep if possible; that evidently was the proper way. So he began. On Sunday he prospered well, on Monday and Tuesday he almost succeeded, but on Wednesday and Thursday he made some serious slips. By Friday he gave up in despair, but started in earnest again on Sunday. In his self-confidence he thought he knew where he had

gone wrong, and he would try to guard against the danger. So he read his Bible more diligently, prayed with increasing devotion (at times falling asleep on his knees beside the bed). He watched more carefully and imagined he repented more deeply. Often he wept and hid the tears. Then came the wonderful Sunday afternoon when the new minister was to give his first address to the Sunday School. Fullerton remembered just one sentence of all he said, but it was just what he needed to hear: "All you have to do to be saved is to take God's gift, and say 'Thank you.'" Here was a new and great light. Before he had been trying to get God to take his gift, trying to make it great enough to be worthy of HIS acceptance; now it was Fullerton who had to simply take the gift that was offered him. Quietly that Sunday afternoon his heart turned to God, and he took the gift for which ever after he said "Thank you."

Adapted from *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service* by Walter B. Knight (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 583. Used by permission.

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on Isaiah see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 2.

## Fifty-two Sermon

### FIFTY-TWO, SERMON OUTLINE

**SERIES:** THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

**SUBJECT:** The Prince of Peace

**READING:** [Isaiah 9:2-7](#)

**TEXT:** "For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; ... And His name will be called ... Prince of Peace' ( 9:6 ).

### Introduction

Of the four titles given to our Lord Jesus Christ this one is the greatest, for it speaks to the deepest needs of the human heart. The true Israelite sang and sighed for the coming Prince of Peace; but there will be no peace personally or generally until Christ is welcomed and enthroned. The title "Prince of Peace" represents:

- I. The Author of Peace ( 9:6 )
  1. Jesus Brought Peace at His Birth ( Luke 2:14 )
  2. Jesus Taught Peace in His Life ( John 16:33 )
  3. Jesus Bought Peace by His Death ( Col. 1:20 )
- II. The Arbitrator of Peace ( 9:6 )
  1. The Personal Life of the Christian ( Col. 3:15 )
  2. The General Life of the Church ( Col. 3:15 )
- III. The Authenticator of Peace ( 9:6-7 )

1. The Millennial Age of Peace ( 9:7 )
2. The Eternal Age of Peace ( 9:7 )

## **Conclusion**

An eternity of peace is a concept almost beyond human comprehension; it sums up everything the human heart longs for. If we are to be sharers in all that is implied and involved in this title we must open our whole being to this Prince of Peace who came at Christmas time to make peace, give peace, and preach peace.

## **FIFTY-TWO, EXPANDED SERMON OUTLINE**

**SERIES:** THE CHRIST OF CHRISTMAS

**SUBJECT:** The Prince of Peace

**READING:** [Isaiah 9:2-7](#)

**TEXT:** “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; ... And His name will be called ... Prince of Peace” ( 9:6 ).

## **Introduction**

Of the four titles given to our Lord Jesus Christ in Isaiah’s prophecy this one is the greatest, for it speaks to the deepest needs of the human heart. Peace was the supreme longing of the true Israelite and was the promised fulfillment of the Messiah’s reign; so they sang and sighed for the coming Prince of Peace.

What was true of that prophetic age is equally relevant to our war-ridden generation. Could anything be more welcome in this hour of unrest, conflict, and bloodied than the coming of the Prince of Peace? The fact of the matter is that there will be no peace personally or generally until Christ is welcomed and enthroned. Let us then examine this glorious title and learn what the Holy Spirit has to say to us from this combination of words. Observe that the title “Prince of Peace” represents:

## **I. The Author of Peace**

“... And His name will be called ... Prince of Peace” ( 9:6 ). There are no less than fifteen different Hebrew words that are translated “prince” in our Authorized Version. Basically, however, the idea behind the word is that of “ruler,” “leader,” and “captain”—though its Greek translation adds the further thought of “author” and “pioneer.” It is quite obvious, from the unfolding of divine revelation, that the Lord Jesus came into the world in order that He might make peace, give peace, and preach peace.

### **1) Jesus Brought Peace at His Birth.**

The angelic announcement was “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, good will toward men!” ( Luke 2:14 ). Never was there a time in history when the hour was more propitious for the coming of Christ into the world. The apostle Paul writes, “... when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son ...” ( Gal. 4:4 ). World conditions were ripe for God’s supreme act in His redemptive purpose. Search the pages of history and in all the story of the centuries you will not find any generation in which the Savior could better have come than the one in which He did come.

#### **1. Illustrate**

### **2) Jesus Taught Power in His Life.**

He could look into the faces of men and women and say, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” ( John 16:33 ); and again: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” ( John 14:27 ). That which attracted men and women to Him was not only His word of peace, but also His way of peace. In His life they could discern a composure, a calm and tranquility which was utterly removed from the worried and harassed looks of the religious teachers of that day. They saw Him silence storms, exorcise demons, heal diseases, and speak peace to those who were beaten by sin. Again and again His message to those who came to Him was “Go in peace” ( Mark 5:34 ; Luke 8:48 ).

## **2. Illustrate**

### **3) Jesus Bought Peace by His Death**

“... having made peace through the blood of His cross” ( Col. 1:20 ); that is to say, He paid the price for man’s reconciliation to God. With the human race alienated from a holy God, Jesus Christ established an honorable peace by His birth, life, and death. He slew the enmity which prevented peace, and by His mighty redemptive work He made a peace available which the world cannot give or take away. Have we entered into this experience of peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ?

## **II. The Arbitrator of Peace**

“... And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called ... Prince of Peace” ( 9:6 ). In his Epistle to the Colossians, the apostle has a very remarkable interpretation of this aspect of truth concerning the Prince of Peace. Exhorting the believers to forbear and forgive one another, Paul climaxes his instruction with the words, “And let the peace of God [more literally, the peace of Christ] rule in your hearts ...” ( Col. 3:15 ). Professor F. F. Bruce points out that the word “rule” here is better translated “arbitrate.” The fact of the matter is that wherever the government of Jesus Christ is welcomed and honored peace arbitrates and rules, for “... He Himself is our peace ...” ( Eph. 2:14 ). This is true of:

### **1) The Personal Life of the Christian**

“... let the word of Christ [arbitrate] in your hearts ...” ( Col. 3:15 ). Undoubtedly, the first application of this exhortation is to the individual believer. It is pointless to talk about peace in the church if there is no peace in the hearts of individual believers. Such peace, of course, comes through receiving and enthroning the Lord Jesus Christ as Prince of Peace within the heart and life. Where He reigns with undisputed authority the Spirit of God and the Word of God extend the peace of God to every area of the life. In other words, the Holy Spirit cannot produce the fruit of peace, nor can the Word of God extend the rule of peace, if there are areas which are not conquered by the indwelling presence of Christ. Only when His government is increased will the peace also be increased.

## **3. Illustrate**

### **2) The General Life of the Church**

“... let the peace of God [arbitrate] in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful” ( Col. 3:15 ). This is highly significant. The arbitrating peace of God is not only to affect the individual life of the Christian, but the general life of the church by smoothing out the differences and conflicts that arise in the body. This is what Paul means when he says, “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” ( Eph. 4:3 ); and again: “... as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” ( Rom. 12:18 ). By allowing Christ to reign supremely as Prince of Peace in our hearts we actually contribute to the elimination of discord within the church and, more essentially, to the harmony and true functioning of the body

of Christ on earth. The most outstanding evidence of the presence of the supernatural in the church is that of unity. This was the burden of our Savior before He went to heaven. He prayed “that they all may be one ... that the world may believe that You sent Me” ( John 17:21 ). The psalmist reminds us: “... how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! ... For there the Lord commanded the blessing—Life forevermore” ( Ps. 133:1 , 3 ).

#### **4. Illustrate**

Have we accepted the government of the Lord Jesus in our lives? Remember, the government He wants to establish and exercise in our lives rests upon His shoulder—the shoulder that once carried the cross to Calvary. We will never know peace until we recognize Jesus as the Author and Arbitrator of peace in our hearts and lives.

### **III. The Authenticator of Peace**

“... His name will be called ... Prince of Peace. Of the increase of HIS government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it ...” ( 9:6–7 ). Now while it is possible to know peace in the personal life of the Christian, and the general life of the church here and now, there is an actual age of peace yet to be established at the coming again of the Prince of Peace. There are two ways in which the Prince of Peace authenticates peace:

#### **1) The Millennial Age of Peace**

“Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end ...” ( 9:7 ). When the church (consisting of all genuine believers regardless of denominational affiliation), has gone to meet the Lord in the air, certain events will follow which will usher in what is known as the millennium, or one thousand years of peaceful rule.

First, there will be the emergence of the Antichrist who will reign for seven years with tyranny and terror. This period will conclude with the dread conflict of Armageddon when He, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords, will engage the massed armies of the Antichrist and consume the man of sin “... with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” ( 2 Thess. 2:8 ). The troops gathered in opposition to the Son of God will be scattered and left on the battlefield to be devoured by the birds of prey (see Rev. 19:21 ). Then Jesus will reign as Prince of Peace. He will establish His kingdom on earth and extend His government and peace to the ends of the world.

The prophets of the Old Testament looked across the centuries and described vividly the glories and excellencies of this kingdom where peace, order, and justice will prevail (see Isa. 9:6–7 ). They foretold a day when “... Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war any more” ( Micah 4:3 ). They described the hour when “righteousness will leave the scaffold and once more mount the throne” (see Isa. 11:1–9 ); when “... the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea” ( Isa. 11:9 ), and when prosperity will be the order of the day. What a glorious hope for those who are united by faith to the Prince of Peace! Are you ready for that millennial reign of Christ?

#### **2) The Eternal Age of Peace**

“Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end ...” ( 9:7 ). Implicit in the words of this text is something that goes beyond the thousand years of the millennial reign of Christ. Prophetic scripture teaches that at the end of this glorious reign there will be a sad, but brief, interlude, namely, Satan’s final ineffective effort to thwart the purposes of God (see Rev. 20:7–10 ). But, once again, the enemy of God will be overcome and consigned to the bottomless pit. The Great White Throne will be set up and the doom of all unbelievers will be forever sealed (see Rev. 20:11–15 ). Then the new heavens and the new earth will replace

the old heaven and the old earth by a process of a mighty, fiery convulsion which Peter describes in his second epistle (see 2 Pet. 3:12–13 ), and God will be all in all. The long, sad record of man’s treachery and rebellion will have come to an end, and peace will be established for ever and for ever. Anticipating that day, Peter says, ‘Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless’ ( 2 Pet. 3:14 ).

## 5. Illustrate

### Conclusion

When we sing about the Prince of Peace, in Handel’s oratorio *The Messiah*, let us remember that that title represents the Author of peace, the Arbitrator of peace, and the Authenticator of peace. If we are to be sharers in all that is implied and involved in this title we must open our whole being to this Prince of Peace who came at Christmastime to make peace, give peace, and preach peace.

The Prince of Peace came down to earth,

To bring “peace and good will”;

The angels sang with joy and mirth,

On Beth’lem’s silent hill

The Prince of Peace died on the cross,

To “make peace through His blood”;

He died to save us from our loss,

And give us “peace with God.”

Prince of Peace rose from the grave,

To “preach peace” to us all,

For in that word is pow’r to save,

When on His name we

The Prince of Peace now reigns above,

To give peace to each soul;

And he who yields to Him in love,

Is instantly made whole.

O, Prince of Peace! descend we Pray,

And in us live and stay:

Cast out our sin, and have full sway,

Until the eternal day.

Stephen F. Olford

## **Additional Annotations**

### **1. Illustrate**

... During the long war years a boy looked frequently at a picture of his daddy on the table. He had left when the boy was a young infant. After several years the boy had forgotten him as a person but he would often look at the picture and say, "If only my father could step out of that picture and be real ...". Christmas means that in a sad day of sin, when man had almost forgotten God, He stepped into the world in the form of His Son, and angels announced, "Peace on earth" ( Luke 2:10 ).

*Pulpit Helps*, published by AMG International, Chattanooga, TN 37422 (December 1984), p. 7.

### **2. Illustrate**

... A reporter asked the late President Herbert Hoover, "Mr. President, how do you handle criticism? Do you ever get agitated or tense?" "No," President Hoover said, seemingly surprised at the question, "of course not." "But," the reporter went on, "when I was a boy you were one of the most popular men in the world. Then for a while you became one of the most unpopular, with nearly everyone against you. Didn't any of this meanness and criticism ever get under your skin?" "No, I knew when I went into politics what I might expect, so when it came I wasn't disappointed or upset," he said. He lowered his familiar bushy eyebrows and looked directly into the reporter's eyes. "Besides, I have 'peace at the center,' you know," he added. Inner peace comes from looking to God, our source. Peace is the gift of Jesus Christ. Jesus, before leaving His disciples, said, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you' ( John 14:27 ). *Sermons Illustrated* (Holland, Ohio: 12/85.25).

### **3. Illustrate**

... When George V was crowned King of Britain, his eldest son went to the old Welsh castle of Carnarvon to be received as the Prince of Wales. Accompanied by David Lloyd George, the great Welsh statesman, he approached the castle door. All within was still. The door was closed and barred. He knocked, but there was no answer. Again he knocked, with no answer. He knocked a third time. The bar was drawn, the door was flung wide open, and, as he entered, the castle was glorious with light, and the hall was vocal with song. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in" ( Ps. 24:7 , KJV ). Open the door today, and begin rejoicing in the presence of Heaven's Crown Prince, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Rejoice! The Prince is Born" by T. S. Rendall. *The Praise Overcomer* , vol. 55, no. 8 (Three Hills, Alberta, Canada: Prairie Bible Institute, December 1982), p. 591.

### **4. Illustrate**

... In his book *The Mark of the Christian*, Francis Schaeffer told that Hitler, during World War II, ordered the union of all religious denominations in Germany. A Brethren group became deeply divided over the issue. One segment obeyed and suffered little persecution, but gradually their spiritual vitality was weakened. The group that resisted stayed vibrant, but many died in the concentration camps due to their stand. Following the war, feelings between these groups were sharp. Tensions were high. An elder of one of the groups told Francis Schaeffer that they knew the problem had to be resolved. So leaders of both groups to get alone in a quiet place to ask God to show each one where he had failed to keep Christ's commands. After several days of heart-

searching, they met together. “And what happened then?” asked Schaeffer. “We just were one!” the elder replied.

Dennis J. De Haan in *Our Daily Bread* (Grand Rapids: Radio Bible Class, December 15, 1985).

## 5. Illustrate

... One evening in the dark war days of 1940 Anthony Eden (Lord Avon, as he became) and Winston Churchill were dining alone. They were sitting debating which period of history they would have preferred to live in, had the choice been theirs. Churchill favored the age of Queen Anne and Marlborough’s wars. Eden preferred that of Pitt and the struggle with Napoleon. They were both attracted by the first Elizabethan Age. After they had been talking in this fashion for awhile, Churchill concluded: “Of course, of all of them this is the greatest! This is the one in which to love!” And he meant it, ... Nevertheless, as Browning said, “the best is yet to be.” Earth’s finest age lies not in the past but in the future—the Minennial Age in which Jesus Christ will personally preside over the affairs of this planet. And—wondrous thought!—every trueborn child of God will be alive on earth at that time!

*Prophetic Witness*. vol. 6, no. 9 (Eastbourne, England: Prophetic Witness Publishing House, September 1982), p. 13.

## For Further Research

For Bibliography on Isaiah see Vol. 6, Qtr. 1, Ch. 2.

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<sup>1</sup>Olford, S. F. (2002). *Vol. 6: Institutes of Biblical preaching : Volume six*. Institutes of Biblical Preaching. Memphis: Olford Ministries International.